

Exploring teacher collaboration practices in public primary schools in Mwanza Region, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the levels of teachers' collaboration practices in public primary schools in Tanzania. The study employed a convergent mixed design within the framework of a mixed research approach in the Ilemela and Misungwi district councils in the Mwanza region, Tanzania. The study was anchored in the Social Constructivism theory, which guided it. From a population of 2994 teachers in 218 primary schools, Yamane's formula yielded a sample size of 352 that included ordinary, academic and head teachers and the 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 used in data collection. The quantitative data were analysed descriptively in terms of mean, standard deviation and skewness, while the qualitative data were analysed through content analysis. The study found that the levels of teachers' collaboration were high. The study recommends the government to review and re-balance the work force as a strategic mechanism to offload teachers shouldering more teaching load than the recommended workload.

Keywords: Collaboration Practices, Public Primary Schools, Teachers, Teachers' Collaboration

I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' collaboration has widely been acknowledged in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in schools across the globe (Burton, 2015; Goldstein, 2015). Empirical evidence from literatures shows that, most of the current researches on classroom instruction highlight the significant effects of teacher's collaboration practices on improving teaching and learning (Kolleck *et al.*, 2021). This approach, which is marked by knowledge and skills sharing, engagement of teachers in determining common evaluation and assessment standards, supporting each other in developing their skills, sharing teaching and learning resources and receiving valuable feedback from their colleagues, inspires teachers and contributes to the overall school improvement (Bellibaş *et al.*, 2020; Johari *et al.*, 2022). More important, teachers' collaboration has been identified as a key factor that enhances 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 (United Republic of Tanzania [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, teachers' collaboration practices are a significant driver in the quality of education delivery as they help in shaping the teaching profession which ultimately enhance effective pupils' learning (Johari *et al.*, 2022; Kolleck *et al.*, 2021; Lofthouse & Thomas, 2017).

In her education development journey, Tanzania adopted decentralized governance structures and policies from the 1990s, that promoted school-based framework that facilitates teachers' collaboration through participatory governance structures, professional interactions, and shared decision-making platforms (Manaseh, 2016; Rwiza, 2016). Accordingly, URT (2017) recognizes the importance collaborative practices of teachers in enhancing their skills that help in linking their professional growth to pupils' achievement. As such, through collaborative practices, teachers are required to shift from passive seminars to transformative models with communities of learning (CoLs), where teachers meet regularly for peer observation, lesson study, mentoring, and sharing practices and reflect on instruction (URT, 2022a).

Similarly, Ampadu et al. (2024); Yousefi et al. (2025) posit that, collaborative practices such as joint lesson planning, team teaching, and participation in professional learning communities significantly enhance pupils' achievement, teacher performance, and instructional innovation. Moreover, empirical findings indicate that teacher collaboration strengthens teacher self-efficacy and serves as a mediating mechanism through which instructional leadership influences student outcomes. Collectively, these studies provide robust empirical support for the view that collaboration is a critical component of effective teaching and sustainable educational reform. Thus, teacher collaboration role has a decisive impact on teachers' commitment towards work, quality of teaching and pupils' achievements (Ismail, 2022).

The Education and Training Policy of 2014 version 2023 identified the need to promote teacher collaboration practices as key drivers of improving the provision of education in order to meet the objectives of education in the country (URT, 2014). In addition, the school improvement directive issued by the Education Commissioner in July 2013, implicitly aimed at promoting teacher collaboration by requiring the head teachers to facilitate teamwork, school-based professional development and participatory decision-making. Through mechanisms such staff meeting, peer support systems, and cascade capacity building models, the Toolkit institutionalises collaboration as a key strategy for promoting competences, willingness to work and improving pupils' learning outcomes. (URT, 2013, 2018).

Furthermore, studies conducted in Tanzania by Msonge and Lekule (2024) and Mugisha *et al.* (2023) show that, teachers passively embrace collaborative practices such as coaching, teaming and mentoring but as rarely as a professional development strategy with the potential to enhance instructional efficacy contrary to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) policy document. However, studies on teachers' collaboration conducted in Tanzania, for example, Msonge and Lekule (2024) and Mugisha *et al.* (2023) focused their attention on secondary school teachers as the study sample which are contextually different from the current study. Furthermore, although qualitative research approach employed in the previous studies, provide rich, in-depth insights, their exclusive use limits generalizability, hinder quantification of relationships, and increases susceptibility to bias. They also hinder systematic comparison and the generation of robust evidence for policy decisions. In contrast, mixed methods employed in the current study enhance validity through triangulation and enable both exploration of insights and measurement, making the findings more comprehensive and applicable (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Hurst, 2023). Additionally, the very small, non-probability sampling (N=25), and a case study design limits generalizability and prevents a full understanding of teachers' collaboration practices across Tanzanian schools.

Several initiatives have been undertaken by the government in attempting to enhance collaboration practices among teachers in Tanzania. Through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), the government implemented its key initiatives to foster teacher collaboration via continuous professional development (CPD) frameworks. These programs emphasize school-based and cluster-level groups where teachers share practices and reflect on instruction (URT, 2017). On the other hand, the Education and Training Policy 2014 revision 2023 provided a framework supporting teacher development, partnerships, and collaboration (URT, 2023). Furthermore, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and digital platforms adopted intended to support online learning, digital resource sharing, and teacher networking with a strong focus on promoting teachers' collaboration. In addition, Commissioner for education issued a policy directive that called upon school leaders to establish learning communities in the school to boost teachers' teamwork and share skills to foster effective teaching and learning process (URT, 2013).

Despite the emphasis on teachers' collaboration in educational policies and reforms in Tanzania, there is limited empirical evidence on the current levels of teachers' collaboration actual practices in public primary schools. The existing studies such as Kimaro (2025); Msonge and Lekule (2024); Mugisha *et al.* (2023) have largely focused on the significance and policy frameworks regarding collaboration instead of assessing its extent, and depth in the day-to-day instructional practices. This creates a gap between policy expectations and the actual collaborative realities, which the current study seeks to address by examining the current levels of teacher collaboration practices in public primary schools.

1.1 Research Question

What is the current level of teachers' collaboration in public primary schools in Tanzania?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Teacher collaboration is a collective action among teachers working together to improve teaching and learning in their schools (Bellibaş *et al.*, 2020). Johari *et al.* (2022) posit that teacher collaboration is the act of instructional school leaders to engage teachers in instructional practices in the school so as to inculcate teachers' work performance

to improve school learning outcomes. Teacher collaboration is key to professional learning communities, promoting shared practices like exchanging materials, discussing student development, and creating common assessment standards (Evertson, 2020; Sancar *et al.*, 2021). Other practices include attending departmental meetings, seeking colleagues' advice, peer mentoring, co-teaching, joint lesson planning, peer observation and feedback, collaborative professional development, sharing ideas and experiences to address diverse student needs, and reflecting on teaching methods to improve instructional quality (*ibid*).

Teacher collaboration is an effective stratagem for promoting professional growth and improving educational outcomes in Tanzania through the promotion of shared responsibility and continuous improvement in schools (URT, 2020, 2022a). It offers teachers the opportunity to share expertise, address challenges, and learn from one another, thus enhancing their teaching abilities (Blair *et al.*, 2024; Evertson, 2020; Mugisha *et al.*, 2023). Collaborative practices like coaching, collective lesson planning, mentoring, and teaming help teachers tackle classroom issues by offering mutual support, developing tailored instructional strategies, and improving teaching quality (Johari *et al.*, 2022; URT, 2022b; Wu, 2023). Supported by the Tanzanian government, school-based professional development programs emphasise collaboration to implement curricula effectively and align with global trends in education reform (James, 2020; Sharafat *et al.*, 2024; URT, 2022a). This approach enables teachers to address local needs and find practical solutions, making it more effective than traditional training methods (Ntebi, 2023).

2.1.1 Social Constructivism Theory

This study is grounded on the Social Constructivism Theory developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978). The theory focuses on learning as a socially mediated process in which individuals construct knowledge through interaction, collaboration, and shared experiences with others (Arshad *et al.*, 2024; Wadasen, 2024). The theory assumes that learning is inherently social, mediated by language, and enhanced through interaction with others who are more knowledgeable within the Zone of Proximal Development. Within the context of teachers' collaboration practices, these assumptions suggest that teachers improve their instructional competencies through collective engagement, dialogue, and peer support. The theory further acknowledges collaborative activities such as joint lesson planning, mentoring, coaching, professional discussions, experience sharing among teachers, supporting each other in developing their skills, and provide opportunities for scaffolding and construction of knowledge (Bellibaş *et al.*, 2020; Burton, 2015; Msonge & Lekule, 2024).

Furthermore, the theory acknowledges that collaboration is shaped by the school context and culture, making it highly relevant in explaining variations in collaborative practices across educational settings. Therefore, Social Constructivism is useful in this study because it provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how and why teacher collaboration practices are well-suited to driving improvements in teaching effectiveness and professional growth (Kashamba *et al.*, 2023; Mugisha *et al.*, 2023; URT, 2022a).

2.2 Empirical Review

Teacher collaboration has been acknowledged as a key drive in improving teaching and learning in schools (Bellibaş *et al.*, 2020; Cansoy *et al.*, 2022; Johari *et al.*, 2022). A good number of researchers attempted to establish the practicalities of the teachers' collaboration practices on the ground. For instances, Khasawneh *et al.* (2023) examined the influence of teacher collaboration within professional learning communities (PLCs) and collaborative teaching practices on both the professional growth and academic achievement of students in Jordan. The study employed a mixed-methods research design that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This research comprises both survey responses and interview transcripts obtained from K-12 educators who are currently engaged in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or collaborative teaching methodologies. The study established the importance of recognizing the advantageous effects that collaborative teaching methodologies can have on the academic achievements of students. It was further found that time for collaborative activities was inadequate. The study recommends the provision of adequate time for collaborative activities, encouraging supportive leadership within educational institutions, and allocating sufficient resources for collaboration. The study by Khasawneh *et al.* (2023) is important in the current study because it employed mixed research method and assessed teacher collaboration perspective similar to the current study. However, the previous study was conducted in a different geographical setting, whose findings could not be directly generalizable to the context of Tanzania, thereby necessitating content-specific investigation.

Another scholar, Yidana (2025) assessed the extent of collaboration and involvement of teacher educators in the design and implementation of the teacher education curriculum framework in Ghana. Guided by Taylor's Model of Participatory Curriculum Development (PCD), the study employed a cross-sectional survey design with a quantitative research approach, involving a sample of 357 teacher educators from 27 teacher education institutions across Ghana. Both inferential and descriptive statistics were employed for data analysis. The results indicate that the level of teacher educators' participation in the design of the teacher training curriculum in Ghana was statistically insignificant.

Similarly, their level of collaboration with other stakeholders during curriculum implementation was also found to be statistically insignificant. The study concludes that teacher educators in Ghana have limited involvement in both the design of the teacher training curriculum and its implementation in collaboration with other stakeholders. The study recommends that education authorities strengthen policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms to promote and institutionalize the participation and collaboration of teacher educators with other stakeholders throughout all phases of teacher education curriculum development. This study is important in the current study because it addresses issues of collaboration of educators 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). On the other hand, since the previous study was conducted in the different geographical settings, their findings could not be directly generalizable to the context of Tanzania, thereby necessitating content-specific investigation.

Additionally, Mugisha *et al.* (2023) employed a qualitative case study to investigate collaborative practices (CPs) among secondary school teachers, focusing on their role in enhancing teachers' professional development (PD). The research employed interviews and focus group discussions, along with thematic analysis, to gather and analyse data from thirty purposively selected participants, including heads of departments (HoDs) and heads of secondary schools (HoSSs) across three sampled secondary schools in Ilala Municipality. The results revealed three prevalent CPs among secondary school teachers: coaching, teaming, and mentoring. Teachers embraced these practices to address educational challenges and enhance their teaching knowledge and skills. The study advocates for broader integration of CPs as a professional development strategy with the potential to enhance instructional efficacy among secondary school teachers in Tanzania. The study by Mugisha *et al.* (2023) is useful in the current study because it addresses the teachers' collaborative practices similar to the current study. However, the previous study was conducted among secondary school teachers and employed qualitative approach and case study design. The current study employed mixed approach as a means to counterbalance the weaknesses inherent within one approach with the strengths of the other (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Correspondingly, Msonge and Lekule (2024) investigated the role of school heads in fostering teamwork among secondary school teachers in Nyamagana district, Mwanza region, Tanzania. Specifically, the study: explored the significance of teamwork among community secondary school teachers; examined the strategies employed by school heads to promote teacher teamwork; and identified the challenges they face in this endeavor. Utilizing a qualitative research approach and a case study design, the study employed non-probability sampling, selecting 25 teachers for group discussions, and interviewing 5 heads of schools. The findings revealed the importance of teamwork for both student performance and overall school success. Despite the efforts of school heads, the promotion of teamwork was found to be insufficient due to a lack of proper knowledge and techniques in establishing and conducting it. Various challenges were identified, including the inadequate technical and interpersonal skills among school heads, attributed to inadequate training. The study recommends that government leaders provide training to school heads on managerial techniques for promoting teamwork and offer motivation to teachers to enhance their morale and work motivation. The study concludes by advocating for recognizing teacher teamwork as a fundamental element in enhancing their collaboration and teamwork. The study by Msonge and Lekule (2024) is useful in the current study because it addresses the teachers' collaborative practices similar to the current study. However, the previous study was conducted among secondary school teachers and employed qualitative approach and a case study design, that limits its generalizability. This current study employed mixed approach as a means to counterbalance the weaknesses inherent within one approach with the strengths of the other (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

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 & Clark, 2018). 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 & Creswell, 2023). 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 effective collaborative practices in shaping teaching profession among teachers in 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 Head teachers 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). Head teachers constituted a necessary strategic group of respondents because they formed the core function of Instructional leadership practice within the school. On the other hand, head teachers, being the key supervisors of the school curriculum, provided valuable information regarding teachers' collaboration levels in executing their teaching role. Similarly, the teachers formed a significant group of respondents regarding their roles and responsibilities that require collaboration among themselves in the 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 Bellibaş *et al.* (2020), 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).

3.7 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

4.1 Findings

This section presents data analysis results that were intended to answer the research question of the study “What is the current level of teachers’ collaboration in public primary schools in Tanzania?” Noticeably, the aim was to determine the extent of respondents’ agreement with the observable indicators for the teachers’ collaboration practices on the five-Likert scale starting from “1= strongly disagree” to “5= strongly agree”. The teachers’ collaboration practices variable was measured by seven observable indicators whose results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Results on the Levels of Teachers’ Collaboration in Primary Schools

Statement	N	Mean	SD	SK
Teachers are collaborative in sharing teaching and learning materials	340	4.38	.912	-1.896
Teachers engage in discussions about the learning development of their pupils	340	4.42	.871	-1.908
Teachers work with other teachers to determine the common evaluation and assessment standards of their pupils	340	4.41	.852	-1.986
Teachers are collaborative in sharing their knowledge and skills	340	4.43	.851	-2.027
Teachers support each other in developing their skills	340	4.41	.876	-1.897
Teachers receive valuable feedback from their colleagues that help them improve their teaching	340	4.33	.914	-1.871
Teachers attend subject teachers' conferences	340	4.29	.995	-1.723
AVERAGE		4.38	0.90	-1.90

The results in Table 1 show that, the overall mean is ($M=4.38$) which is relatively closer to the maximum value (5) signifying that on average, respondents agree or strongly agree with the teachers’ collaboration practices from the given observable indicators. This suggests that the majority of respondents rated teachers’ collaboration very positively with respect to their practices such as: sharing of teaching and learning materials; engaging in discussions about the learning development of their pupils; working with other teachers to determine the common evaluation and assessment standards of their pupils; and sharing their knowledge and skills. Other practices that were rated very positively include teachers supporting each other in developing their skills; receiving valuable feedback from their colleagues that help them to improve their teaching; and attending subject teachers’ conferences. Such high mean score reflects a generally impressive evaluation of teachers’ collaboration practices and implies that most of the respondents feel confident and satisfied with the teachers’ collaborative spirit. Also, the average skewness value of ($SK= -1.90$) 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 teachers’ collaboration practices to the agree or strongly agree on the likert scale. The high ratings strongly suggest that teachers demonstrate a fairly good collaboration practice.

The results also show that the overall standard deviation among the responses was found to be ($SD=0.90$). This suggests that most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that teachers demonstrate high level of collaboration 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 ($SD=0.90$) indicates moderate variability of the responses implying that, despite a generally higher levels of teachers’ collaboration practices, there are noticeable differences among individuals, with some of them rating teachers’ collaboration practices much lower than the group average. The observed higher level of teachers’ collaboration practices suggests a strong and supportive professional environment where teachers work together to improve teaching and pupils’ learning. It indicates shared responsibility, open communication, and a focus on solving problems collectively rather than working in isolation.

However, the moderate variability ($SD = 0.90$) and presence of a few lower scores of assessed indicators indicate that, not all respondents feel equally satisfied with teachers’ collaboration practices, which highlights the need for targeted interventions or support strategies to address the concerns of teachers who may be experiencing lower level of collaboration practices. Overall, the findings reveal a strong foundation of teachers’ collaboration practices with a room for improvement to ensure consistency across all the teachers.

Although the overall results revealed a high level of collaboration practices by the teachers ($M = 4.38$), further examination of the data indicated notable extreme cases that enrich deeper insights on the teachers’ collaboration practices. For example, the respondents recorded an exceptionally higher mean score ($M= 4.43$) than the aggregate mean ($M=4.38$) on teachers’ collaboration in sharing their knowledge and skills suggesting that, the majority of teachers demonstrate a positive professional culture of supporting one another’s learning which can contribute to improved teaching practices and better overall performance. On the other hand, teachers scored a mean as lower as ($M=4.29$) than the aggregate mean ($M= 4.38$) on teachers attending subject teachers’ conferences suggesting that

teachers attend such conferences less frequently than they engage in other collaborative activities. This points to possible barriers such as limited opportunities, time constraints, and low emphasis on conference participation. The qualitative data from interviews on how teachers demonstrate collaboration was analyzed thematically, as shown in Table 2, and presented as narratives and verbatim, providing valuable insights into the quantitative data.

Table 2

Teachers' Collaboration Practices in Schools

S/N	Category	Themes	Theme-Explanations
1.	Teachers' collaboration practices	Sharing knowledge and skills at Teacher Resource Centres	Competent teachers teach complex and hard topics to fellow teachers. Teachers help each other in preparing teaching aids. Competent teachers demonstrate teaching methods to fellow teachers. Teachers help each other in lesson planning Teachers support each other in classroom team teaching
		Government intervention in enhancing teachers' collaborative practices	Provision of continuous professional development (CPD) guideline Provision of Communities of Learning (CoLs) guide through which schools are guided to form teacher groups where they regularly meet, share experiences, and discuss best practices.
		Heavy work loads	Some teachers fail to attend teachers' learning forum due to heavy teaching load
		Low priority	Some teachers still give CPD low priority

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

".....the majority of teachers show good collaboration in this ward. They attend continuous professional development sessions in the teachers resource centres where they share teaching experience and teachers who are more knowledgeable on some hard to teach topics especially in mathematics, help their fellow teachers on how to teach them. the other thing is that they learn a lot from their fellow teachers. However, very few teachers do not attend these sessions quite often. Some say that they have a lot of periods to teach while others absent themselves without known reasons....." (Interview: WEO-1, June 2025).

The quote suggests that teachers' collaboration practices in the ward are generally strong and beneficial, particularly through participation in continuous professional development sessions at Teacher Resource Centres. Most teachers actively collaborate by sharing teaching experiences and supporting one another, especially in challenging subjects like mathematics, which enhances professional learning and improves instructional practices. It also highlights peer learning and knowledge exchange as key strengths of collaboration. However, the quote also reveals some limitations, as a few teachers do not regularly attend these sessions due to heavy workloads or unexplained absences, indicating that collaboration is not fully consistent among all teachers. Arguing in the similar context, another respondent commented that:

".....Nowadays, teachers are trying their best to demonstrate good collaboration among themselves. They are eager to learn from each other. My visit to two of the resources centres in this district, I found teachers helping each other in planning their lessons and preparing teaching aids. Another interesting event was to find one mathematics teacher demonstrating to her fellow mathematics teachers the easiest way to teach algebra." (Interview: DPPEO-2, June 2025).

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

".....Our school visits have revealed that a good number of teachers are not working in isolation. We have witnessed team teaching taking place in many schools. In some other cases teachers observe their fellow teachers teaching after which they give feedback on how the lesson was taught. To a large extent, head teachers have plaid their role in providing the necessary support to teachers through Communities of Learning (CoL) and Continuous Professional Development (CDP) guides which encourage learning together.... however, few teachers with excessive teaching loads consider attending CPD sessions as another burden and to them CPD is not a priority" (Interview: DSQAO-1, June 2025).

The quote suggests that teachers' collaboration practices are largely positive and well-supported in schools, as many teachers engage in team teaching, peer observation, and feedback, rather than working in isolation. It indicates that school leadership, especially head teachers, plays an important role in promoting collaboration through Communities of Learning (CoL) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives, which encourage teachers to learn together and improve their teaching practices. However, the quote also highlights a challenge, where

some teachers with heavy workloads perceive CPD activities as an added burden, suggesting that collaboration, although present, is not equally embraced by all teachers due to time and workload constraints.

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 the schools: have CPD and CoL guides; and have time tables guiding teachers attending the CPD periods. It was further revealed that teachers assist their fellows in teachings their periods in situations of one having an emergency and it was openly communicated to the school's academic teachers. It was also noted that, through school management, each time the standard four and seven sit for external examinations, that is: the regional MOCK and National Examinations and results are out for the said examinations, teachers hold meetings to discuss the results collectively and come out with the resolutions, aiming at improving areas where the weaknesses were observed. While stressing the issue of evaluation of external examination results, another respondent added that:

"..... of course, there has been improvement since the Council introduced the idea of making evaluation of external examinations results at school and council levels. At school level, teachers discuss the strengths, weakness and challenges that might have caused the observed weaknesses and propose ways to rectify them. The head teachers from all schools come with the observations and anticipated solutions to the Council where all matters are discussed and make resolutions and the way forward. The best performing teachers are rewarded and those who did not do well are encouraged to add more efforts to improve their performance....." (Interview: DPPEO-1, June 2025).

In view of this quote, it suggests that teachers engage in a structured and collaborative practice aimed at improving student performance through continuous reflection and shared responsibility. At the school level, teachers work together to analyze examination results, identify strengths and weaknesses, and propose solutions to address challenges, demonstrating a culture of collective problem-solving. This collaboration extends beyond individual schools, as head teachers bring their findings to council-level meetings where experiences are shared, common challenges are discussed, and joint resolutions are made, reflecting inter-school cooperation. The process is data-driven, relying on external examination results to guide discussions and decisions, while also promoting accountability and motivation through rewarding high-performing teachers and encouraging others to improve, ultimately fostering a coordinated and improvement-oriented professional environment.

4.2 Discussion

This study examined the level teachers' collaboration practices in Tanzanian Public Primary Schools in Mwanza region, yielding insights that address the research question and enrich educational literature. The results show that teachers demonstrate a high level of collaboration practices in public primary schools in Tanzania. This is because the overall computed mean, ($M=4.38$, equivalent to 87.6%) 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 levels of teachers' collaboration practices by teachers assisting their fellow teachers to teach their periods in case they have emergency, analyzing pupils' examination results and collectively resolve the weaknesses observed, and have a structured program where they meet in the teachers' resources centres where competent teachers help others on how to teach challenging topics in subjects like mathematics. This finding is in line with the study findings of Mugisha *et al.* (2023) in Tanzanian secondary schools, in Ilala Municipal Council, which revealed that teachers embraced coaching, teaming, and mentoring as collaborative practices to address educational challenges and enhance their teaching knowledge and skills. This study finding matches with that of Lubega and Sendagi (2025) who found that teachers' collaboration was recognized for providing support, sharing successful teaching strategies, and fostering camaraderie among Ugandan educators in Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools.

Although the overall results revealed a high level of collaboration practices by the teachers ($M = 4.38$), further examination of the data indicated notable extreme cases that enrich deeper insights on the teachers' collaboration practices. For example, teachers recording higher mean score ($M= 4.43$); ($M= 4.42$); ($M=4.41$); and ($M=4.41$) than the aggregate mean ($M=4.38$) on teachers' collaboration in sharing their knowledge and skills; teachers engaging in discussions about the learning development of their pupils; teachers supporting each other in developing their skills; and teachers working together in determining common evaluation and assessment standards of their pupils respectively imply that teachers are particularly active and effective in sharing knowledge and skills, discussing pupils' learning progress, supporting each other's professional development, and jointly setting assessment standards. This suggests that these areas are key strengths within teachers' collaborative practices, reflecting a positive and well-established culture of teamwork that likely contributes to improved teaching quality and pupil learning outcomes. The findings align with qualitative insights that underscored the collaborative nature of teachers in sharing knowledge and skills in their resources centres and discussing pupils' examination results, identifying strengths, weaknesses and propose solutions to address challenges observed. These findings align with Ostovar-Nameghi and Sheikahmadi

(2016) whose study established that proper ways that maximize collaborative discussions like sharing knowledge and skills, data-driven decision making are key drivers of teachers' collaboration.

Furthermore, teachers scoring a mean as lower as ($M=4.29$), than the aggregate mean ($M= 4.38$) on their role in attending subject teachers' conferences suggest that, teachers attend such conferences less frequently than they engage in other collaborative activities. This implies that, possible barriers such as limited opportunities, time constraints, or low emphasis on conference participation still undermine teachers' full collaboration in instructional practices.

The qualitative findings highlighted that structural-related issues impeding some teachers' full collaboration is associated with teachers shouldering heavy teaching loads. This extra load often diverts teachers' attention away from collaborative activities taking place away from actual classroom teaching (Nyambo, 2017; Ostovar-Nameghi, S& Sheikahmadi, 2016). This finding aligns with the study findings of Kimaro (2025) in Tanzanian primary schools, in Hai district who established that some teachers often find it a burden to get involved in the continuous professional development programs besides their existing heavy teaching loads. Recent studies have demonstrated that promotion of teachers' collaboration was found to be insufficient among teachers with heavy workload as each time they find themselves compelled to teach periods assigned to them (Msonge & Lekule, 2024; Blair et al., 2024). Both, quantitative and qualitative findings revealed that teachers have shown to demonstrate good collaboration practices. Notably, excessive workload has shown to be a threat towards teachers' full engagement in collaboration practices. It is therefore advised that, the policy makers and educational practitioners to balance workforce tasks as a means to give room to the all teachers to fully assume collaborative instructional practices efficiently. Furthermore, capacity building to teachers on continuous professional development is required to bridge instructional practice gaps and maintain their focus on improving teaching and learning outcomes.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

With regard to the study objective, the study findings revealed that, respondents rated their extent of their agreement teachers' collaboration practices by ($M=4.38$). It was therefore concluded that, teachers demonstrate high level of collaboration in enhancing instructional practices which in turn contribute enormously to effective teaching and learning. Moreover, it was also concluded that, heavy teaching load shouldering teachers inhibit their full involvement with collaborative instructional practices.

5.2 Recommendations

In response to the study findings, the study recommends the government to review and re-balance the work force as a strategic mechanism to offload teachers shouldering more teaching load than the recommended workload. This would enable teachers have sufficient time to participate in collaborative professional practices such as Continuous Development Programs (CDP). The policy makers should make a deliberate effort in designing a capacity building training to teachers to enhance their instructional skills so that they fully realize effective teaching and learning practices.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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