

## Original Research Article

### **To Investigate Instructional Leadership Practices of Heads of Schools which Enhance Students' Academic Performance in Morogoro Municipality**

#### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine instructional leadership practices of heads of schools which enhance students' academic performance. This study used a case study research design whereby a sample size of 90 respondents that include 80 ordinary teachers, 1 WEO, 1 MSEO, and 1 SQAQ from zone office were selected. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and documentary reviews. Quantitative data was analyzed by using SPSS version 25 to establish frequencies and percentages then presented by frequency tables. The qualitative data were analysed thematically to add explanatory information to the qualitative findings. Findings of the study revealed that majority of heads of schools often develop school goals which promote high standards and expectations for all students, provide data on school progress to school community, plan and budget teaching and learning resources basing on school priority and students' needs, set meetings for staffs' discussions on their professional learning and practices. The study recommended that, heads of schools as instructional leaders should effectively and collaboratively define and communicate school goals, monitoring teaching and learning process, ensure adequate teaching and learning resources along with promoting teachers professional growth in order to enhance academic performance of their students.

**Keyword:** Instructional Leadership Practices and Students' Academic Performance

#### **Introduction**

There is long-standing interest in the question of whether instructional leadership influences school effectiveness, which is usually evaluated by student academic achievement. This is because effectiveness of teaching and learning programmes are measured through learners' academic performance with expectation that school leaderships

is the vital instrument towards enhancing instructional delivery in their schools (Hou, Cui & Zhang, 2019).

The concept of instructional leadership and its practices can be comprehended from as early as the 1970's in the American Education system. During this period much of the early researches on instructional leadership were drawn from the studies of urban elementary schools serving poor children. In these schools, school leaders concentrated on matters of improving the general achievement of the subject matter; evaluating methods used by teachers, observing the general management of schools, conduct of learners and ascertain whether money spent on education was wisely expended. This arrangement made it possible for students to succeed in education despite the odds in the poor urban communities in America (Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008).

Instructional leaders were viewed as culture builders who sought to create an academic press that fostered high expectations and standards for students as well as for teachers. Instructional leaders were goal oriented who took the lead in defining clear direction for their schools and motivating others to give their effort toward achievement, hence instructional leaders were able to align the school's academic mission with strategy and actions. This described school heads who had somehow managed to turn their schools around using leadership as a drive to move the school in a more productive direction (Hallinger, 2010). Therefore, instructional leadership requires school leaders to strongly focus on instructional activities to ensure the quality of teaching and learning for their students to succeed academically. Hallinger (2010) further added that instructional leadership practices require head teachers to continuously work with teachers in implementing curriculum and instruction, while improving the school work environment, which directly affect the academic performance of students.

The development of instructional leadership gained momentum in the 1980s when the American government established School Leadership Academies throughout the country for development of principal leadership. Largely of knowledge base was drawn from emerging research on principal instructional leadership in effective schools which provided a conceptual framework for academies' leadership development curricula. Thus, the instructional leadership paradigm emerged through the standards – based accountability framework in which United States school principals were compelled to take responsibility for the academic performance of their students (Hallinger, 2010).

Globally, scholars such as Robinson, et al (2008) and Alig-Mielcarek (2003 in America, Hou, Cui and Zhang (2019) in China, Nkoroi (2017) in Kenya, Jita (2010) in South Africa, Nyangarika and Ngasa (2016) in Tanzania, Ngonyani (2017) in Tanzania found that heads of schools as instructional leaders has been linked directly or indirectly to students' achievement through the support provided to teachers.

However, Nettles and Herrington (2007) note that much is still unknown pertaining the influence of head teachers on the academic attainment of students although he concluded that there are significant direct relationships between these two variables to warrant further investigation. Such assertion is supported by the Wallace Foundation (2012) which posits that individual school factors account for very little learning effect, but real benefit of instructional leadership practices is realized when the heads of schools effectively manipulates all individual school factors to the advantage of the learners.

In Tanzania, national examination results form an important measure of school effectiveness. This implies that the effectiveness of the school is known through the performance of its students in national examinations hence this indicates the attainment of the school goals. Under achievements among secondary students in Tanzania leave a lot of doubt on the effectiveness of school leadership to ensure high standard performance. This is because the trend of the CSEE results indicates that the performance of students who scored division I to III is far less than the percentage of students scoring division IV and Zero. For example, the performance of the national examinations in the year 2017 whereby total of 317,777 candidates were examined, 30.2% got division I-III while 69.8% got division IV and Zero (BEST, 2019). It was reported that the mass failure was contributed by ineffective school leadership among school heads that led to the lack of effective instructional activities (Musumi & Mkulu, 2020).

Like other parts of Tanzania, in Morogoro Municipality the problem is prevailing and it is common in community secondary schools as revealed by the national performance trend of five consecutive years from 2017 to 2021 as follows. In 2017 total of 4,223 examined, 37% scored division I-III, 63% scored division IV and Zero. 2018 total of 2,872 examined, 23% scored division I-III, 77% scored division IV and Zero. 2019 total of 3,203 examined, 23% scored division I-III, 77% scored division IV and Zero. 2020 total of 3,470 examined, 26% scored division I-III while 74% scored division IV and Zero and in 2021 total of 3841 candidates examined, 28% scored division I-III while 72% scored division IV-Zero. The

percentages of average passes for division I to III are low compared to average passes for division IV and Zero.

This performance trend show that the academic performance of community secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality is still low, and this might be caused by the school leadership that failed to strongly focus on instructional activities to ensure that effective teaching and learning practices are utilized in the classrooms. Despite the fact that the government has made an effort to improve the external structures such as increased budgetary allocation for national education development, greater teacher employment, and student incentives in form of tuition fee, the internal structure in terms of supervision of teaching and learning have not improved. However, school leadership is not the only factor charged for students' academic performance; as Mutuku (2018) mentioned other factors such as; students and teachers commitment, maximum parents' cooperation, and availability of teaching and learning resources, but school leadership has the key role to ensure effective teaching and learning takes place in their schools.

The failure rate of community secondary students in the national examinations calls for major improvement in school leadership to ensure that heads of schools are focusing on instructional activities to improve students' academic performance. This is because the school leadership has the key role of ensuring conducive environment for effective teaching and learning which in turn improve students' academic performance.

Studies conducted in Tanzania (Rwaitama & Galabawa, 2008; Kaai, 2016; Manaseh, 2016; Nyangarika & Ngasa, 2016) found that, heads of schools are more focused in developing school missions and calendars rather than managing instructional programmes. Basing on these findings, there is still a gap in literature on how instructional leadership influence students' academic performance. Thus, this study was set to examine the influence of instructional leadership practices on students' academic performance in community secondary schools in Morogoro municipality.

## **2.0 Research Methodology**

This section presents the methodology that guided the study. This paper employed a case study research design. The targeted populations for the current study were all heads of

schools and teachers from 7 community secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. Key informants who provided resourceful information were: Municipal Secondary Education Officer (MSEO), Ward Education Officer (WEO) and a School Quality Assurance officer (SQAQO) from Zone Office. The sample size of this study were 90 respondents including 80 teachers, 7 head of schools, 1 WEO, 1 MSEO, and 1 SQAQO from zone office. Purposive sampling was used to select all respondents involved in the study. Data were collected by using questionnaires and interview methods. Quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

### **3.0 Research Finding and Discussion**

The objective of this study was set to identify instructional leadership practices of heads of schools which enhance students' academic performance. In order to study this, respondents were asked to indicate how often the instructional leadership practices are employed by their heads of schools. Such instructional leadership practices include defines and communicate school goals, monitoring and providing feedback on teaching and learning process, acquisition and allocation of teaching and learning resources, and promoting teachers' professional development. Findings of this objective are presented in sub-sections below.

#### **3.1 Define and Communicate School Goals**

Define and communicate school goals means the instructional leader works collaboratively with staffs to define, communicate and work towards data driven shared goals of the schools (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). Table 1 present results on more often instructional leadership practices under defining and communicating school goals category performed by heads of schools.

**Table 1: Defines and Communicate School Goals**

<b>Define and Communicate School Goals</b>	<b>F (%)</b>
Develop school goals which promotes high standards and high expectation for all students	37(46.3%)
Develop school goals in collaboration with teachers	7(8.8%)
Communicate academic school goals to school community	17(21.3%)
Uses school goals when making academic decisions	9(11.3%)
Uses data of students' academic achievement to guide instructions programmes	10(12.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>80(100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Research (2022)

Findings in Table 1 shows that, majority 37(46.3%) respondents point out that, head of schools more often develop school goals which promotes high standards and high expectations for all students, followed 17(21.3%) respondents who identify that heads of schools communicating academic school goals to school community, then 10(12.5%) respondents who identify that heads of schools uses data of students' academic achievement to guide instructions programmes, 9(11.3%) respondents identify that heads of schools uses school goals when making academic decisions, while 7(8.8%) respondents identify that heads of schools develop school goals in collaboration with teachers.

The results imply that, majority of head of schools (46.3%) develop school goals which promotes high standards and high expectation for all students. These results indicate that, as one of their instructional leadership role, heads of schools develop school goals in collaboration with school board and other members of School Management Team (SMT) which includes second master/mistress, academic coordinator, discipline master/mistress, project teacher, storekeeper and a school bursar.

These findings were supported by one of the head of school in an interview who said that:-

*I usually sit with my SMT members in collaboration with School board members to plan what we need to achieve. Then we communicate what we plan to teachers and parents through meetings. Also, we display our plans in the notes board for student to read although I usually communicate to them even during the students' council meetings.*

Another head of school responded that:-

*As a school leader I develop school goals and present them to my SMT members to add their inputs if possible. Then those school goals are communicated either directly or indirectly to school community. When I say directly I mean goals are communicated to teachers in staff meetings, to parents in parents meetings and through students meetings. Also, goals are communicated indirectly through daily directives.*

These results are in line with the study of Musumi and Mkulu (2020) which found that heads of schools plan and budget in collaboration with school management team for effective planning. It further argued that school mission and vision should well paned and communicated across the school for teaching and learning programs to work effectively.

Moreover, the study findings indicate that, the developed school goals are well communicated as revealed by 21.3% of respondents. This is done through staff and parent meetings where by teachers and parents discuss various issues including school goals. Similarly, school goals are communicated to students during students' council meetings and were also displayed on the notice board around the schools' compound.

These results are in agreement with the study of Kumar (2018) which found that principals communicate school goals to the school community that is discussing academic goals with teachers in staff meetings, and with parents in parents' meetings. Also, principals discuss school goals with students in assemblies and students council meetings.

However, small number of respondents 7(8.8%) responded to involvement of teachers in the development of school goals. This indicates that probably teachers were felt that they were not involving in the process of developing school goals. Thus, results show that there is a minimal involvement of teachers in the process of developing school goals since school goals are developed by few teachers who are the members of SMT and SB. This might bring difficulties in implementing them. The results support study by Saeed et al.,

(2018) who argued that, principals must not leave out the contributions of staff and parents during the development of school goals. Their experiences may serve as a necessary foundation for determining school goals. When instructional leaders include staff in defining school goals and objectives to implement and evaluate, the staff may be more committed to collaborating with the school leaders in achieving the school goals.

### 3.2 Monitoring and Providing Feedback on Teaching and Learning Process

Monitoring and providing feedback describe the activities of an instructional leader around the academic curriculum (Cayetano, 2011; Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). Table 2 below present results on more often instructional leadership practices employed by heads of schools under monitoring and providing feedback on teaching and learning process category.

**Table 2: Monitoring and Providing Feedback**

<b>Monitoring and Providing Feedback</b>	<b>F (%)</b>
Provide data on school progress to school community	35(43.8%)
Provide private feedback to teacher’s effort	9(11.3%)
Ensures instruction time is not interrupted	20(25%)
Monitor classroom instructions for alignment with curriculum	13(16.3%)
Evaluate teachers to improve instructional practices	3(3.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>80(100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Research (2022)

Findings in Table 2 shows that, 35(43.8%) respondents pointed out that, heads of schools provide data on school progress to school community as one of their instructional leadership practices, 20(25%) respondents identify that heads of schools ensures instruction time is not interrupted, 13(16.3%) respondents pointed that head of schools monitor classroom instructions for alignment with curriculum, 9(11.3%) respondents express that head of schools, provide private feedback to teacher’s effort, and the remaining 3(3.8%) respondents identify that heads of schools evaluate teachers to improve instructional practices.

The results imply that, majority of respondents (43.8%) noted that, their heads of schools more often provide data on school progress to school community as one of their instructional leadership practices. The results indicate that, head of schools prefer to provide data on school progress to school community that include teachers, students and parents through meetings and student progressive reports.

This was supported by interview results from heads of schools as one head of school in an interview responded that:

*I always communicate on school progress through meetings including in parents', staff and school board meetings. Also, I communicate with students during school assembly. We have a system of providing students' progressive reports to parents every term.*

Furthermore, documentary analysis such as school calendars and meeting minutes confirmed that various meetings including parents, staff, students and school board meetings were conducted. This indicates that heads of schools communicate with school community on school progress through meetings. This help school community be aware on school progress and challenges encountered. It enables school community to get an understanding of what was needed to be done as to achieve the desired school goals. Also, heads of schools provide students' progressive reports to parents. Such reports enable parents to get private feedback of their children progress.

In addition, 20(25%) respondents point out that, their heads of schools ensures instruction time is not interrupted. This was supported by interview results from heads of schools when they were asked how they monitor teaching and learning process.

One of them responded that:-

*I have a system of walking around classes during teaching and learning time to ensure teachers attend their periods according to the time table. If a teacher missed his/her period I want to know why? and how he/she will compensate that time.*

Another said that:-

*I always insisted class monitors/mistresses to ensure that teachers sign in class journals after teaching. If the subject not taught they have to recommend that "subject not taught". Every Friday I and academic master*

*we check out all class journals to see the attendance of teachers in classrooms. If a teacher didn't attend his/her period I need him/her to write why and when the time will be compensated.*

Another head of school responded that:-

*I supervise teaching and learning process by walking around the school to see if teachers attend their periods. I usually make sure school time table is respected and full filled.*

Furthermore, 13(16.3%) respondents point out that their heads of schools monitor classroom instructions for alignment with curriculum. This result was supported by interview conducted to heads of schools when they were asked to explain how to they monitor teaching and learning process? One of them said that:-

*I usually check lesson plans every Friday to ensure teaching and learning comply with subject syllabi.*

Another head of school said that:-

*My schedule is very tight but sometime I visit classrooms to observe teaching and learning process.*

Another head of school said that:-

*I usually emphasize teachers to prepare schemes of work and in collaboration with my assistants we check their schemes of work to ensure they align with the syllabuses.*

Another head of school responded that:-

*Every Friday, teachers collect their schemes of work, lesson plans and subject logbooks to check if topics and sub-topics are well covered. This helps me to control their teaching pace to ensure syllabuses are covered within time.*

However, small number 3(3.8%) teachers revealed that heads of schools evaluate teachers to improve instructional practices. This indicates that probably teachers felt that their heads of schools were evaluating them only for compliance and not for improving instructional practices. This can be supported by interview results above from heads of schools which revealed that they walk around classrooms to ensure teachers' classroom attendance and

the alignment of teaching with curriculum. Also, this is supported by interview results from MSEO who reported that:-

*Heads of schools very rare visits classrooms to observe teaching and learning. This is because they are burdened with a lot of activities. Recently, they were very busy with supervision of classrooms construction which was constructed by COVID-19 funds. They have to write reports and to attend meetings at Municipal office almost every week. This responsibility is left to Internal School Quality Assurance Team (ISQAT) also, they are very rarely visits classrooms due to lack of confidence, knowledge and skills..*

Also, this result was supported by School Quality Assurance Officer (SQAQO) from eastern zone who said that:-

*Heads of schools do not enter classrooms to observation teaching and learning process to help teachers to improve their teaching, they only check and sign lesson plans and schemes of work.*

This finding tend to confirm what was found by the study of Manaseh (2016) which revealed that heads of schools never enters classrooms to observe teaching and learning practices they just observes while walking outside the classrooms. Similarly, the study of Kumar (2018) found that principals did not evaluate instructional programmes due to the administrative task overlord. School principals often engaged in maintaining external structures of the schools.

### **3.3 Acquisition and Allocation of Teaching and Learning Resources**

Acquisition and allocation of teaching and learning resources refers to the ability of heads of schools as instructional leaders to acquire teaching and learning resources using various strategies to ensure their availability and allocate them according to the needs and priorities so as to enhance teaching and learning process. Table 3 below present results on more often instructional leadership practices employed by heads of schools in the acquisition and allocation of teaching and learning resources category.

**Table 3: Acquisition and Allocation of Teaching and Learning Resources**

<b>Acquisition and Allocation of Teaching and Learning Resources</b>	<b>F (%)</b>
Plan and budget teaching and learning resources basing on school priority and students' needs	40(50%)
Makes textbooks available on the time for the start of the school year	10(12.5%)
Makes classroom resources such as laboratory equipment, chalkboard, dusters and chinks available	15(18.8%)
Mentor teachers to use learning aids to enhance students learning	5(6.3%)
Ensures that resources are acquired and allocated basing on school priorities and students' needs	10(12.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>80(100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Research (2022)

Findings in Table 3 shows that, 40(50%) respondents revealed that, heads of schools plan and budget teaching and learning resources basing on school priority and students' needs as one of their instructional leadership practices, followed by 15(18.8%) respondents identify heads of schools makes classroom resources such as laboratory equipment, chalkboard, dusters and chinks available, 10(12.5%) respondents pointed that heads of schools makes textbooks available on the time for the start of the school year, 10(12.5%) respondents pointed that heads of schools ensures that resources are acquired and allocated basing on school priorities and students' needs, and the remaining 5(6.3%) respondents identify head of schools mentor teachers to use learning aids (globes, maps, charts, posters, and diagram) to enhance students learning.

The results imply that, majority of respondents (50%) pointed that heads of schools plan and budget teaching and learning resources as one of their instructional leadership practices. These results indicate that, majority of heads of schools prefer planning and budgeting teaching and learning resources since it is one of their leadership roles that they

done in accordance to government regulations. This indicates that, heads of schools do follow the available regulations. Planning and budgeting teaching and learning resources start in departments where heads of schools ask heads of departments to identify their needs, then heads of schools in collaboration with other SMT members plan and budget for the whole school. After such process, the budget is sent to MSEO who prepares the budget for the whole municipal that its implementation depends on financial resources that will be provided by PO-RALG. Planning and budgeting helps heads of schools to identify schools needs and find extra resources for meeting the available needs from other sources.

This finding was supported by interview results from heads of schools as one head responded that:-

*Before planning and budgeting resources, I asked heads of department to sit with their members and identify their departmental needs. Thereafter, I and my assistants we prepare the school budget and bring it to Municipal Secondary Education Officer (MSEO). Then when we need anything we request from the same officer.*

The results show that 15(18.8%) respondents pointed that their heads of schools makes classroom resources such as laboratory equipment, chalkboard, dusters and chalks available. This is done by using government capitation in which heads of schools were guided on how to use those funds. This was supported by the interview results as one head of school responded that:-

*I receive government capitation every month but we are required to buy laboratory equipment, chalks and other instructional materials except textbooks, pay bills etc. But the money is not enough we only get few things.*

However, very few 5(6.5%) respondents revealed that their heads of schools mentor teachers to use learning aids (globes, maps, charts, posters, and diagram) to enhance students learning. This indicates that teachers were not provided with those teaching and learning aids. This was supported with interview results from heads of schools as one among them said that:-

*I don't buy teaching and learning aids like maps, charts globes because of limited funds. Teachers are supposed to improvise teaching aids but they are very reluctant.*

### 3.4 Promoting Teachers' Professional Development

Promoting teachers' professional development refers to the behavior of an instructional leader that is consistent with life-long learning (Alig-Mielcarek, 2003). Table 4 below present results on more often instructional leadership practices employed by heads of schools under promoting teachers' professional development category.

**Table 4: Promoting Teachers' Professional Development**

<b>Promoting Teachers' Professional Development</b>	<b>F (%)</b>
Provides for in-house professional development opportunities around best instructional practices	7(8.8%)
Encourage teachers to attend professional development activities that align with school goals	9(11.3%)
Ensures teachers professional development opportunities aligning with teachers needs and wants	4(5%)
Ensures all teachers are involved in planning for staff development programmes	5(6.3%)
Provide required resources for teachers professional development programmes	3(3.8%)
Support the use of acquired knowledge and skills in classroom teaching and learning	4(5%)
Set meetings for staffs discussions on their professional learning and practices	48(60%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>80(100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Research (2022)

Findings in Table 4 shows that, 48(60%) respondents reveals that, their heads of schools set meetings for staffs discussions on their professional learning and practices as one of their instructional leadership practices, 9(11.3%) respondents identify that heads of schools encourage teachers to attend professional development activities that align with school goals, 7(8.8%) respondents pointed that heads of schools provides for in-house professional development opportunities around best instructional practices, 5(6.3%) respondents pointed that heads of schools ensures all teachers are involved in planning for staff development programmes, 4(5%) respondents identify head of schools ensures teachers professional development opportunities aligning with teachers needs and wants, 4(5%) respondents pointed that head of schools support the use of acquired knowledge and skills in classroom teaching and learning, and the remaining 3(3.8%) respondents identify head of schools provide required resources for teachers professional development programmes.

The results imply that, majority of respondents (50%) pointed that heads of schools set meetings for staffs discussions on their professional learning and practices as one of their instructional leadership practices. These results indicate that, heads of schools always have meetings with their staffs it's likely they have regular discussions on their professional practices. These discussions help teachers to discuss challenges encountered during teaching practices, and through discussions some teachers may help others to understand issues which were not familiar to them hence improve their professional practices.

This finding was supported by interview result as one head of school responded that:-

*I encourage teachers to discuss issues of teaching practices during staff meetings. This help teachers to share ideas hence some teachers get to understand issues which before were not familiar to them.*

Furthermore, interview revealed that discussion was done also at departmental meetings where teachers of the same subject discuss issues concerning their area of specialization and teaching pedagogy as revealed by one head of school that;-

*I usually emphasize departmental meetings purposely to enable teachers at their department to discuss their professional practices around their area of specialization.*

These findings are in agreement with study by Beck, et al. (2018) who found that head of schools had regular habit of reporting data in staff meetings and give chance to staff discuss about instructional priorities and programs. Similarly, the study by Mwakabenga (2018) found that discussing professional matters was a common practice among the teachers. Discussions were conducted in departmental or whole staff meetings.

In addition, the results show 9(11.3%) respondents pointed that their heads of schools encourage teachers to attend professional development activities that align with school goals. This indicates that heads of school facilitate teachers' attendance to seminars/training and workshops conducted outside the school. This is supported by interview results as one head of school responded that:-

*I usually encourage teachers to attend seminars and workshop that conducted at Municipal level and sometime we are told to facilitate them by giving transport fee and training allowance for their attendance.*

#### **4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

After the emergence of the concept of instructional leadership, considerable evidence has supported the idea that instructional leadership can have positive impacts on students' achievements. Thus, schools are under increased scrutiny to educate all students to high levels of achievement. Heads of schools and teachers are under extreme pressure to raise student achievement scores. Nonetheless, the findings of this research suggest that heads of schools can make a difference in meeting these challenges by effectively exhibiting behaviors consistent with instructional leadership by focusing on defining and communicating school goals, monitoring and providing feedback on teaching and learning process, acquisition and allocation of teaching and learning resources, and promoting teachers' professional development. Through effective practice of those instructional leadership dimensions, could enable teachers to have adequate instructional materials and classroom supplies for effective teaching to foster students learning and achievements. Furthermore, it could increase teaching competence, morale and job satisfaction to teachers and fostering the quality of teaching and learning. Thus, instructional leadership is important for enhancing students' academic performance.

The study recommends that, heads of schools as instructional leaders should effectively and collaboratively define and communicate school goals, monitoring teaching and

learning process, ensure adequate teaching and learning resources along with promoting teachers professional growth in order to enhance academic performance of their students.

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