



The Leadership Style and Teacher Professionalism in Primary Schools in Temeke District, Dar es Salaam

Shaban Sagin^{1*}, Daniel Onyango², Prosperity Mwilli³

^{1,2,3} St. Augustine University of Tanzania

Correspondence e-mail * : shabansagin0@gmail.com

Abstract : This study aimed to identify the leadership styles used by heads of public primary schools and their effects on teacher professionalism in Temeke District, Tanzania. Guided by the Behavioral Theory of Leadership (Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939), the research explored how autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership styles influence teacher behavior, motivation, and professional commitment. A qualitative research design, specifically a multiple case study, was adopted to allow for in-depth exploration of leadership practices across five selected schools. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document review, and analyzed using content analysis techniques. The findings revealed that democratic leadership is the most prevalent, fostering collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility among teachers. However, autocratic leadership remains common in disciplinary and financial matters, often leading to reduced teacher morale and participation. A growing but inconsistent use of transformational leadership was also observed, showing potential for enhancing teacher motivation and professional growth. The study concludes that while head teachers exhibit adaptive leadership behaviors, inconsistencies in application undermine teacher confidence and professional development. It recommends that educational authorities strengthen leadership training programs focusing on democratic and transformational practices to ensure consistent, inclusive, and motivational leadership that supports teacher professionalism and school improvement.

Keyword : Leadership styles; Teachers' professionalism; Democratic leadership; Autocratic leadership; Transformational leadership

Article info: Submitted : 2025-09-17 | Accepted : 2025-10-20 | Published : 2025-12-17

Copyright © 2025, Authors.

This is an open-access article under the [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



INTRODUCTION

Effective leadership is a crucial driver of teacher development and the advancement of society. In the 21st century, characterized by rapid technological progress, education systems face diverse global challenges that demand capable and visionary leadership (Rameez et al., 2022). Across Europe, North America, and Australia, the role of school leaders has evolved considerably in response to the growing recognition of leadership's impact on educational performance (Earley, 2016). Globally, education institutions are increasingly focusing on improving their systems to become more effective, meaningful, and competitive (Aquino et al., 2021). Successful schools are often products of competent governance and effective school leadership that fosters collaboration with stakeholders, including teachers (Cherry et al., 2021). Leadership styles are instrumental in providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating followers (Phuc et al., 2021). For instance, in countries such as the United States, Britain, and Singapore, educational leadership is perceived as a means to address performance-related challenges (Wang et al., 2016). In Malaysia and Greece, transformational leadership is prevalent and has been associated with stronger relationships between school heads and teachers, greater job satisfaction, and enhanced organizational commitment (Noraazian & Khalip, 2016; Tran, 2023).

Transformational leadership has been widely linked to increased teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and professional commitment. In Greece, teachers tend to align with school goals when principals exhibit transformational leadership traits (Zacharo et al., 2018).

Similarly, such leaders empower teachers to understand their significant roles within the school context, resulting in higher morale and improved performance (Loan, 2020). In Vietnam, leadership styles are often situational, with autocratic approaches deemed more effective in some contexts, whereas democratic and laissez-faire styles employed where staff are self-motivated (Tran, 2023). Educational research in Vietnam highlights a particular focus on transformational and transactional leadership styles among school principals (Truong et al., 2017).

In sub-Saharan Africa, leadership styles among school heads found to influence teacher performance and professional behavior. For instance, in Uganda, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire styles are the most common, although they applied in varying degrees depending on school contexts (Masaaba et al., 2021; Specchia, 2021; Sarwar et al., 2022). In Tanzania, heads of schools also utilize diverse leadership styles such as autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire, and transformational (Ndauka, 2021). Studies reveal that the effective combination of these styles particularly transformational and democratic leadership motivates teachers to remain committed to their schools, fostering positive relationships, and reducing teacher attrition (Chikoyo, 2020; Nadarasa, 2015). Moreover, the relationship between leadership and teacher commitment found to be significant, emphasizing the importance of instructional leadership in shaping teaching commitment and school success (Kashamba et al., 2023; Urio, 2023).

Despite these insights, challenges remain within the Tanzanian education system. Although the government and school management have made efforts to

apply various leadership styles, teachers continue to face either managerial challenges that influence their professional behavior positively or negatively (Mosha, 2021). Persistent issues such as absenteeism, tardiness, disengagement from professional activities, and teachers pursuing side businesses during working hours continue to undermine school performance (Bibi et al., 2019; Mosha, 2021). These problems largely attributed to inadequate leadership, limited technical competence, and insufficient interpersonal skills among school heads (Msonge & Lekule, 2024). Therefore, this study seeks to address the knowledge gap in existing literature regarding the relationship between leadership styles and teacher professionalism in primary schools, particularly within Temeke Municipality, Tanzania.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the effort made by the government of Tanzania to enhance the leadership skills of school leaders, its impact on teacher's behavior is still a serious challenge (Chikoyo, 2020). Apart from that, teachers are the bedrock of any education system for fostering quality education, but teachers' commitment and behavior within their school seem to be a big challenge (Bibi, Khalid, & Hussain, 2019). In Tanzania, primary school teacher's behavior had noted to be a big problem in various literature. Teachers misunderstandings between the heads of the schools are seriously noted problems, as there is lack of teacher commitment, poor attendance of teachers, attending late and leaving early at work, truancy without genuine reasons, and teachers spending too much time on their personal issues in the workplace (Mosha, 2021).

More importantly, Mosha (2018) adds that bad school leadership leads to poor attendance of teachers, a lack of creativity, lateness, low interest in meetings, and teachers starting to engage in commercial activities during working hours while some leave the job. The situation caused by the head of the school using bad leadership styles, especially when there is inadequate leadership technical and poor interpersonal skills among school heads and teachers, as noted by Msonge & Lekule (2024). Therefore, concerning the situation of the literature estates, the call for this study on the influence of school leadership styles on teachers behavior change in primary schools, Temeke Municipal

Study Objective

To identify the leadership styles used by the head of the schools and their effect on Teachers' Professionalism in public primary schools in Temeke District

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by the Behavioral Theory of Leadership, developed by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939), which focuses on identifying specific leader behaviors that distinguish effective leaders. The theory highlights three main leadership styles – autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire (Saltik, 2023). In an autocratic style, leaders make decisions unilaterally, dictate work processes, and minimize employee participation, while democratic leaders encourage participation, delegate authority, and use feedback to support and guide employees. Laissez-faire leaders, on the other hand, allow subordinates to make decisions and execute tasks autonomously

(Saltik, 2023). In the context of this study, the behavioral theory provides a lens for examining how the leadership behaviors of school heads in Temeke District influence teacher professionalism and conduct within public primary schools.

The application of democratic leadership has been associated with positive professional behaviors among teachers, such as improved attendance, stronger commitment, and greater participation in school activities (Sarwar, Tariq & Yong, 2022). By involving teachers in decision-making and fostering open communication, democratic leadership enhances collaboration and builds mutual respect, thereby reducing teacher turnover and promoting retention (Chikoyo, 2020). In contrast, the autocratic style may negatively affect teachers' morale and professionalism, as it limits participation and autonomy. When school heads rely heavily on command-based approaches, this can result in poor attendance, low motivation, strained relationships, and disengagement among teachers (Moshia, 2021). Similarly, laissez-faire leadership can yield mixed results; while it may encourage creativity, responsibility, and open communication, excessive use can lead to teacher indiscipline, absenteeism, and lack of accountability (Ndauka, 2021).

Empirical studies across Tanzania and other contexts further affirm the relevance of behavioral leadership approaches in shaping teacher professionalism. Research in Ilala District demonstrated that transformational behaviors such as articulating a clear vision and recognizing teacher efforts significantly enhance teacher commitment and performance (Kashamba et al., 2023). Likewise, a 2023 study in Kilimanjaro and Manyara regions found that autocratic and

laissez-faire behaviors correlated with higher teacher attrition, while democratic and transformational behaviors promoted commitment and professionalism. Meshack's (2020) study in Kasulu Town Council revealed that autocratic leadership was the most prevalent but had a negative impact on teacher motivation, whereas democratic styles fostered professional growth. Collectively, these findings underscore the value of behavioral leadership theory as a framework for understanding how leadership styles influence teacher professionalism, validating its applicability to the Temeke District context.

Empirical Literature Review

A 2022 study by Oco investigated the correlation between the leadership styles of school heads and institutional performance in Nigeria. Employing a descriptive research design, the study utilized scenario-based surveys depicting realistic leadership situations. Data were collected from 161 teachers and 5 school heads to assess prevailing leadership approaches. The findings identified delegated, democratic, and transformational leadership as the most common styles among school administrators. Furthermore, the study found that the current professional position and civil status of the school heads were statistically significant factors in the adoption of autocratic, democratic, and transformational styles. In contrast, gender demonstrated no significant relationship with either delegated or servant leadership styles.

The study conducted by Mensah, Minadzi, & Nyame (2016) in Ghana on effects of leadership styles on the teachers classroom performance reported that

teachers preferred democratic, transformational, and inspirational and distributed leadership styles. In all, head teachers advised to practice a mixture of leadership styles since no single leadership style is appropriate for all situations (Mensah et al, 2016). This study utilized a descriptive survey design. The sample selected through a proportional stratified random sampling procedure, resulting in a cohort of 269 participants, comprising 179 males and 90 females. The study used reliability coefficient of 85 percent, which considered as strong. Among other things, the study revealed that basic public school teachers largely agreed that the leadership styles of their head teachers have effects on their classroom performance

The study conducted by Nsubuga (2018), on analysis of leadership styles and school performance of secondary schools in Uganda. The study was a mixed that used both the qualitative and quantitative methods. It adopted a correlation-survey research design that helped in establishing the relationship of leadership styles and school performance. In this regard, data for this study was collected on the independent variable, which was leadership styles and that of the dependent variable, which was school performance was indicated that effective school performance requires visionary leadership, amongst others and that there is a strong relationship between visionary leadership and transformational leadership, which is recommended for education leaders

In Tanzania specifically at Kigoma region, the study conducted by Mathias (2020) basing on the influence of head teachers' leadership styles on the effectiveness of teachers in the provision of quality education. This study adopted a mixed-methods survey research design.

The sample consisted of 186 participants from 20 primary schools in Kigoma, comprising 161 teachers, 20 head teachers, 4 ward coordinators, and 1 District Education Officer (DEO). Head teachers, ward coordinators, and the DEO selected via purposive sampling, whereas teachers chosen through random sampling. Data collection utilized a triangulated approach, incorporating questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary review. The findings identified democratic and autocratic leadership styles as the most prevalent among the schools. Furthermore, the data indicated that teachers in Kigoma hold ambivalent perceptions towards these leadership styles, reporting both positive and negative evaluations.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore leadership styles and their effect on teacher professionalism in public primary schools in Temeke District. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings related to leadership practices (Creswell, 2014; Rahman, 2020). This approach allowed the researcher to explore the complexity of human behavior within educational settings and to collect rich data that reflected teachers and administrators' lived realities (Enosh, Tzafirir & Stolovy, 2014). A multiple case study design was used to investigate leadership behaviors across five primary schools in Temeke, allowing for cross-case comparisons and context-specific analysis (Khanday, 2019; Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2021). This design provided comprehensive insights into how different leadership styles

influence teacher professionalism within varied school environments.

Temeke Municipality was selected purposefully as the study area due to the limited research on leadership styles and teacher professionalism within its primary schools, despite growing concerns about teacher behavior and performance in the district. The target population included head teachers, primary school teachers, and education officers at both ward and district levels (Willie, 2023). From this population, 32 participants were selected using purposive, simple random, and snowball sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select education officers and head teachers who hold managerial roles and possess relevant insights (Kelly, 2010; Robinson, 2014), while snowball sampling facilitated access to teachers, allowing the researcher to gather sensitive and candid information about leadership behaviors (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaie, 2017). This diverse selection ensured that the study captured multiple perspectives relevant to the objective of identifying leadership styles and their influence on teacher professionalism.

Data collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentary review to ensure triangulation and enhance data credibility (Taherdoost, 2021; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, while non-participant observation enabled the researcher to witness directly leadership behaviors and teacher interactions in real school settings (Seim, 2021). Documentary review provided additional context through analysis of official records and reports (Morgan, 2022).

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to leadership styles and teacher professionalism (Taherdoost, 2020). To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study adhered to the four qualitative criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024; Haq et al., 2023). Triangulation of data sources, detailed documentation of procedures, participant validation, and peer feedback employed to ensure that the results accurately reflected participants' experiences and could be transferred to similar educational contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This objective focused on understanding the leadership styles used by the head of the schools in public primary schools. The first question asked to WEO as how he would describe the general leadership styles used by head teachers in his ward. The response presented in quote and supported with discussion and implication.

The visited WEO said that:

"In most of the schools I supervise, the dominant leadership style is democratic. Head teachers often involve teachers in decision-making through regular staff meetings and open discussions. This approach has helped to build trust and promote teamwork among the teachers, which I believe is essential for improving academic performance. However, I have also noticed that in some cases, head of schools opt other leadership styles like autocratic depending on nature of staff and the specific issue that is on the table. Despite this, democratic leadership has generally created a positive working

environment and reduced conflicts in most schools in this ward."

The WEO's statement clearly suggests that democratic leadership is the prevailing style among head teachers in Temeke District. This style is characterized by inclusiveness and shared decision-making, where teachers' opinions are actively sought through meetings and discussions. It indicates that head teachers value collaboration as a means to strengthen trust and encourage a sense of ownership among teachers. Furthermore, the mention of occasional use of autocratic leadership highlights that leadership style is not rigid but adaptive, depending on the urgency or complexity of the situation. This flexibility suggests that head teachers in the district are aware of situational demands and adjust their leadership approach accordingly. Overall, the interpretation points to a predominantly democratic leadership culture with situational variations to address practical challenges in school management.

The findings from this quotation align strongly with participatory leadership theories such as Lewin's leadership framework and Hersey & Blanchard's situational leadership model. Democratic leadership, as noted in this case, is often associated with improved teacher morale, teamwork, and job satisfaction (Northouse, 2019). It supports research by Bush (2011), who argues that involving teachers in decision-making enhances commitment and reduces resistance to change. However, the occasional shift to autocratic style underscores the importance of flexibility, as pure democratic leadership may be time-consuming during urgent matters like student discipline or crisis management.

This duality reflects the dynamic nature of leadership in educational settings, particularly in diverse environments like Temeke, where staff attitudes and institutional challenges differ from school to school. Thus, while democratic leadership is ideal for promoting a positive school climate, the ability to adopt other styles is essential for effective school governance.

The implication for policy and practice is that head teachers should continue fostering democratic practices while strengthening adaptive leadership skills. Training programs organized by the Ministry of Education or local education offices should emphasize the importance of inclusive leadership combined with situational awareness. Encouraging democratic decision-making can build stronger professional relationships between school leaders and teachers, which is vital for achieving academic improvement. However, head teachers should also be trained on how and when to apply more directive styles without harming teacher morale, ensuring balance between inclusivity and authority. For educational planners, these findings suggest the need to institutionalize participatory mechanisms such as school management committees and regular consultative meetings. Doing so will make democratic leadership sustainable and prevent a relapse into overly autocratic tendencies.

He added that;

"From my observation, some head teachers prefer an autocratic style as I said earlier, especially when dealing with critical issues like discipline and punctuality. They tend to make decisions on their own and expect teachers to follow instructions

without much discussion. This approach is effective when quick action needed, but it sometimes creates tension and resistance among teachers who feel excluded from the process. I have received complaints from teachers that they feel less motivated when their views are not considered. Therefore, while autocratic leadership can maintain order, it may also affect teacher morale in the long run."

This quotation reveals that autocratic leadership is still prevalent in certain contexts within Temeke public primary schools, especially when addressing urgent or sensitive issues. Head teachers who adopt this style prefer unilateral decision-making, which eliminates consultation and speeds up the process of implementing rules and policies. The WEO acknowledges that this approach can be beneficial in maintaining discipline and ensuring punctuality, which are critical aspects of school management. However, the negative side is evident: teachers feel demotivated when their input disregarded, it create tension, and resistance in the workplace. This interpretation highlights a trade-off between operational efficiency and teacher morale, suggesting that while autocratic leadership solves immediate problems, it risks undermining long-term collaboration and trust. In short, this finding points to a functional but unsustainable leadership approach if used excessively.

The study established that, in Temeke, the necessity for quick decisions reflects contextual challenges such as high student enrollment, teacher absenteeism, and frequent disciplinary issues. These realities might force head teachers to resort to a command-and-control style for immediate results. However, as the WEO notes, this approach alienates teachers,

resulting in lower job satisfaction, and diminished morale, consistent with findings from organizational psychology. Therefore, while autocratic leadership may appear effective in the short term, its overuse could compromise school improvement efforts in the long run. Balancing authority with inclusiveness becomes a critical issue for educational leadership in such environments.

The implications of these findings are significant for leadership development and school governance policies. First, head teachers need training in conflict resolution and participatory problem-solving techniques so that even in urgent situations, teachers feel consulted rather than dictated. Second, educational authorities should create policy guidelines that discourage excessive authoritarian practices, while still allowing for decisive leadership in emergencies. In addition, school inspection frameworks should include indicators on teacher participation and leadership inclusiveness, ensuring accountability for leadership styles that support teacher morale. Ultimately, these findings suggest that while some degree of authority is necessary to maintain order, school leaders should invest in communication and transparency to avoid alienating their teaching staff.

He concluded that:

"Not only that, but also I observed a growing trend of transformational leadership among few head teachers in this district. These leaders focus on motivating teachers through encouragement, setting clear visions, and providing opportunities for professional growth. They often recognize good performance publicly, which makes teachers feel valued and appreciated. This style has improved teacher commitment and innovation in

some schools, leading to better teaching outcomes. However, not all head teachers have the training or personal skills to apply transformational leadership effectively, so its impact varies from school to school."

The WEO's observation points to an emerging but limited presence of transformational leadership in Temeke public primary schools. This style emphasizes inspiration, motivation, and professional development, which are essential elements for improving teacher performance and student learning outcomes. By setting clear visions and recognizing individual contributions, transformational leaders create a sense of purpose and belonging among teachers. However, its application is inconsistent due to a lack of adequate leadership training and variation in head teachers' personal capabilities. This indicates that while the potential for transformational leadership exists, systemic barriers such as skill gaps and workload constraints hinder its widespread adoption. In summary, transformational leadership seen as a positive force, but its sustainability requires structural and professional support.

This observation resonates with transformational leadership theory, which is widely regarded as one of the most effective approaches in educational leadership. Transformational leaders do more than manage they inspire change and foster innovation among staff. In the context of Temeke, its limited adoption attributed to challenges such as lack of professional development programs, inadequate mentorship for head teachers, and insufficient institutional resources. Similar patterns documented in developing countries, where

transformational leadership is constrained by structural and policy limitations. The variation in impact across schools suggests that leadership effectiveness is partly dependent on individual traits and contextual support. Therefore, while transformational leadership offers the promise of improving teacher professionalism and student achievement, its full benefits remain unrealized due to systemic and personal limitations.

The implication of these findings is that policy makers and education managers should prioritize leadership-training programs focusing on transformational practices. Such programs should include modules on vision-setting, motivational strategies, teacher empowerment, and recognition systems. Additionally, mentorship initiatives could be established where experienced transformational leaders support those who are still developing these skills. Furthermore, government and district education offices should provide resources that allow head teachers to create professional development opportunities for teachers, ensuring that the leadership style reinforced by institutional support. If successfully scaled, transformational leadership could significantly enhance teacher morale, innovation, and school performance across Temeke and similar districts. This calls for a strategic leadership development framework integrated into the education sector plans.

The findings from the three quotations reveal that head teachers in Temeke District employ a combination of leadership styles, with democratic leadership emerging as the most dominant, promoting collaboration and trust among teachers. However, the use of autocratic leadership remains necessary in situations

that demand quick decisions, such as enforcing discipline and punctuality, though it risks lowering teacher morale if applied excessively. Additionally, a growing trend of transformational leadership was noted, which inspires teacher motivation and professional growth, but its impact is limited due to insufficient training and inconsistent application. These patterns suggest that leadership in Temeke public primary schools are largely situational and adaptive, balancing inclusiveness, authority, and vision-driven strategies. To optimize outcomes, there is a need for structured leadership development programs that strengthen democratic practices while building capacity for transformational leadership, ensuring that head teachers can effectively respond to different school management challenges without compromising teacher professionalism.

The study further involved the teachers and they asked the same question. Their response presented in quote followed by discussion and implication to specific objective one.

The first visited teacher said that:

"From my experience, the head teacher mostly applies a democratic style when it comes to general school issues like planning meetings or discussing academic matters. She usually allows teachers to give their opinions, and this makes us feel involved in decision-making. However, when it comes to sensitive issues like the use of school funds, the approach completely changes. In such cases, she becomes very autocratic and does not allow any discussion or suggestions from teachers. We simply informed about decisions after they have already made. This makes us feel excluded and less valued as professionals."

This quotation indicates that the head teacher employs a mixed leadership approach, primarily democratic in routine matters but autocratic in financial or sensitive decisions. Teachers perceive that they have a voice in planning and academic discussions, which fosters collaboration and trust. However, the switch to autocratic leadership in handling school funds suggests that the head teacher perceives certain issues as too critical for collective input. The selective application of leadership styles reflects a situational approach, where context dictates the level of teacher involvement. This reveals that leadership in Temeke schools is flexible but also constrained by perceived stakes or risks associated with specific tasks. It highlights that teacher involvement is not uniform across all school matters, affecting their sense of professional autonomy.

This finding aligns with situational and contingency leadership theories, which propose that effective leaders adapt their style to the demands of the situation (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Democratic leadership in routine matters likely strengthens teacher motivation and teamwork, on participative school management. The autocratic approach in sensitive financial matters mirrors the notion that leaders may exercise control when they perceive high risks or accountability pressures. However, selective use of autocracy can undermine trust if teachers feel excluded from decision-making in important areas. This mixed approach indicates that head teachers in Temeke attempt to balance participation and control, but the uneven application may create inconsistencies in teacher perceptions of fairness and inclusion. It also reflects a common trend in

public schools, where leadership often tightly controls resource management.

The implication is that, head teachers need guidance on applying consistent, transparent decision-making processes, even for sensitive matters like school funds. Leadership training should emphasize how to maintain teacher inclusion while ensuring accountability. Educational authorities might consider developing clear policies or frameworks for decision-making that balance democratic consultation and administrative control. This would reduce teacher feelings of exclusion and foster trust in school governance. Furthermore, promoting transparent financial management practices could allow teachers to participate meaningfully without compromising oversight. Overall, this mixed-style approach should be formalized and communicated to staff to prevent misunderstandings and improve professionalism.

The second teacher added that:

"In my view, our head teacher is mostly autocratic because she prefers to make decisions alone without consulting us first. We usually receive instructions on what to do, and our role is simply to implement them. However, when things go wrong or there is a problem that she calls for a meeting and seeks our opinions. It feels like we are only important when there is a crisis, not when everything is going well. This makes it hard for teachers to feel like real partners in managing the school. Sometimes I wish there was more consistency and inclusiveness in leadership."

This quotation suggests that the head teacher primarily employs an autocratic style, with decision-making centralized and teacher input limited.

Teachers feel that their professional opinions are largely ignored unless there is a problem, indicating that consultation is reactive rather than routine. The intermittent use of democratic practices during crises reflects a conditional or situational adaptation of leadership style. The overall perception is that teachers have limited influence on daily operations, which could reduce motivation and a sense of ownership. It reinforces the idea that autocratic leadership dominates in these schools, but democratic elements are applied only in specific contexts. This selective consultation may affect teacher engagement and professional identity.

This observation is consistent with studies on directive leadership, where compliance is prioritized over participation (Northouse, 2019). In the Temeke context, the predominance of autocratic leadership may be influenced by systemic pressures, such as accountability to higher authorities, student performance expectations, and resource management. While seeking teacher input during crises is seen as problem-solving participatory leadership, it does not provide the continuous engagement required for strong teacher commitment. The reactive nature of consultation may also generate perceptions of inequity, as teachers feel valued only when mistakes occur. This pattern demonstrates the tension between control-oriented leadership and the need for collaboration, highlighting challenges faced by head teachers in balancing efficiency and inclusivity.

The implication is that head teachers should be encouraged to integrate participatory practices consistently, rather than only in crises. Training programs could focus on developing inclusive leadership skills that maintain authority

while fostering teacher involvement. School policies should promote regular consultation and feedback mechanisms, even for routine decisions, to build trust and teacher ownership. Educational authorities might implement monitoring systems to ensure balanced leadership approaches, reducing reliance on reactive decision-making. Consistent engagement would likely improve teacher morale, motivation, and professional accountability. Overall, moving from predominantly autocratic to a more balanced approach could enhance school performance and staff cohesion.

The third teacher had the following to say:

"What I have observed is that the head teacher tries to balance between autocratic and democratic leadership styles depending on the situation. For normal issues like academic planning or organizing school events, he gives us room to share ideas and contribute to decisions. However, when there are urgent matters or when he receives direct orders from his superiors like the WEO or DEO, everything changes. In those cases, he becomes completely autocratic and just passes on the instructions without discussion. This shift makes us feel like our opinions do not matter whenever higher authorities are involved. It creates a sense that our input is only valued under certain circumstances, not all the time."

This quotation highlights a dynamic or situational leadership style, where the head teacher adjusts between democratic and autocratic approaches depending on context. Teachers experience democratic leadership during routine school operations but feel excluded during high-priority or externally directed

matters. The autocratic response to directives from superiors suggests that external accountability pressures strongly influence leadership behavior. This indicates that leadership style is not fixed but responsive to both internal and external factors, including institutional hierarchy. Teachers perceive that their involvement is conditional, which may affect their motivation and professional engagement. Overall, it shows that head teachers in Temeke employ context-dependent leadership styles, balancing consultation with authority, as circumstances require.

The findings correspond with contingency and situational leadership theories, which emphasize adapting style based on task, staff readiness, and external demands (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Democratic participation in normal operations enhances teacher engagement, while autocratic enforcement in response to external orders ensures compliance and alignment with district directives. However, the conditional nature of involvement may create uncertainty and reduce perceived fairness among teachers. Previous studies suggested that, leaders who balance multiple styles effectively can improve school outcomes, but inconsistent application can undermine teacher trust. In Temeke, leadership appears influenced not only by school needs but also by hierarchical pressures from WEOs and DEOs, demonstrating the complex environment of public school management.

The implication is that head teachers need training to maintain teacher inclusion even when responding to higher-level directives. Policies could encourage transparent communication about why certain decisions implemented without

discussion, reducing the perception of exclusion. Leadership development programs should focus on adaptive strategies that allow for compliance with authorities while retaining teacher engagement. Creating a clear distinction between consultative and directive decisions could help teachers understand when input expected versus when authority must followed. This approach would improve professional relationships, trust, and morale, even under externally mandated changes. Ultimately, enhancing the ability to balance leadership styles can strengthen both school governance and teacher professionalism.

To complement the information obtained from interview, a review of key school documents undertaken to gain deeper insights into the leadership practices of head teachers in public primary schools in Temeke District. The documents reviewed included staff meeting minutes, teacher performance appraisals, school development plans, teacher disciplinary records, head teacher supervisory reports, district education officer (DEO) inspection reports, and continuous professional development (CPD) plans. These documents provided valuable evidence on how leadership styles applied in practice, particularly in relation to decision-making, teacher management, professional development, and compliance with external directives. By analyzing these records, patterns of democratic, autocratic, transformational, and situational leadership identified, offering a more objective basis for assessing the leadership approaches used in the schools under study.

The findings from the documentary review indicate that head teachers in public primary schools in Temeke District adopt a

combination of leadership styles rather than relying on a single, fixed approach. Evidence from staff meeting minutes, school development plans, teacher appraisals, disciplinary records, and supervisory reports all point to a varied leadership landscape shaped by context and circumstance. Democratic leadership is the most prominent, as meeting records consistently show open discussions on curriculum, event organization, and academic performance, where teacher voices are sought and documented. This suggests that head teachers value collaboration and shared responsibility in many aspects of school management.

Autocratic leadership, however, is also strongly evident, particularly in sensitive or high-stakes areas such as finances, teacher punctuality, and disciplinary matters. In such cases, head teachers make unilateral decisions without consulting teachers, who often only informed after the fact. This reflects a “command-and-control” style that prioritizes compliance over collaboration. Teacher appraisals and school development plans reveal elements of transformational leadership, where recognition of good performance and emphasis on professional development opportunities show that head teachers attempt to inspire and motivate staff. However, the use of this style appears inconsistent, with some appraisals focusing more on faultfinding than inspiration.

Finally, supervisory and inspection reports highlight the use of situational leadership. Head teachers seen to adapt their style depending on the circumstances, shifting from democratic to an autocratic approach when they faced urgent external directives or crises, and reverting to

democratic or transformational approaches during routine management. While this adaptability considered a strength, reports also highlight that it sometimes results in inconsistency, which undermines teacher morale and confidence in leadership.

The findings from documentary review suggested that, leadership within Temeke District's public primary schools characterized by diversity and flexibility, yet also by inconsistency. Democratic leadership practices appear to dominate, showing that head teachers recognize the importance of inclusivity and shared decision-making in school management. This is significant because collaborative leadership is often associated with increased teacher motivation, improved teamwork, and better overall school performance. However, the persistence of autocratic tendencies in decision-making around finances and discipline reflects a tension between inclusivity and authority. While this approach may ensure swift decision-making and compliance, it risks discouraging teacher input and creating dissatisfaction. Teacher complaints about being undervalued reinforce the notion that autocracy, while effective in enforcing rules, can negatively affect staff morale.

The presence of transformational leadership, especially in the recognition of performance and promotion of professional growth, reflects an awareness of the need to inspire and empower teachers. However, the inconsistent application of this style raises questions about sustainability and commitment. While some teachers receive motivation and support, others experience more rigid, authoritarian supervision, which creates uneven professional experiences. Situational leadership further adds to this

complexity. On one hand, it reflects a level of adaptability, enabling head teachers to switch approaches based on the demands of external authorities or emergencies. On the other hand, frequent shifts in style can cause uncertainty, leaving teachers unclear about expectations, or feeling excluded when head teachers abandon participatory practices in response to external pressure.

These findings suggest that while democratic and transformational leadership acknowledged as desirable and partially practiced, autocratic tendencies remain entrenched in critical areas. This duality highlights a gap between leadership ideals and everyday practices in Temeke public primary schools. The findings carry several implications for school leadership, teachers, education authorities, and overall school performance. For leadership practice, head teachers need to develop a more deliberate balance between democratic and autocratic approaches. While authority is necessary for discipline and financial accountability, inclusivity and consultation should not be abandoned in these areas. Teachers are more likely to comply with rules and accept decisions when they feel their perspectives are considered.

In addition, strengthening transformational leadership practices is essential. Consistent recognition of teacher achievements and the provision of professional growth opportunities would not only inspire staff but also build long-term commitment and job satisfaction. Situational leadership remains valuable, but head teachers must ensure that flexibility does not translate into inconsistency. Even in times of crisis or when the head teachers implementing directives from higher authorities, they had to put strategies in place to keep

teachers informed and included in decision-making. For teachers, the current mix of leadership approaches has both positive and negative implications. Democratic and transformational practices encourage participation, professional growth, and innovation, which can enhance teaching quality and school outcomes. However, the recurring use of autocratic methods, especially in disciplinary contexts, creates feelings of being undervalued and undermines morale. This tension could affect teacher retention and motivation in the long run.

At the policy and training level, the results suggest a need for education authorities such as District and Ward Education Officers to strengthen leadership development programs for head teachers. These programs should focus on practical strategies for inclusive leadership, motivation, and conflict resolution. Furthermore, policies that encourage inclusive practices should be monitored more closely to ensure that the goals stated in school development plans are implemented consistently in everyday school management. Lastly, for school performance, the coexistence of multiple leadership styles presents both opportunities and risks. Democratic and transformational approaches create an environment conducive to innovation and collaboration, which supports school improvement. However, the overuse of autocratic practices could suppress teacher initiative and weaken professional relationships. For Temeke District to achieve sustainable improvement in its public primary schools there is a need for a more integrated and consistent leadership model that emphasizes inclusivity, motivation, accountability, and adaptability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The study concluded that leadership styles in Temeke District's public primary schools are diverse and context-driven, with democratic leadership emerging as the most dominant. This approach fosters collaboration, trust, and shared responsibility between head teachers and their staff, contributing positively to teacher professionalism and school performance. However, the persistent use of autocratic leadership particularly in handling financial matters, discipline, and urgent administrative decisions reveals a tendency toward centralized control, which risks lowering teacher morale and professional autonomy. A growing but uneven application of transformational leadership demonstrates potential for inspiring and motivating teachers, yet its effectiveness remains limited due to inconsistent implementation and inadequate leadership training. Overall, the findings indicate that while head teachers demonstrate adaptability by shifting between styles based on context, inconsistency in their approach undermines teacher confidence and long-term school improvement.

Recommendations

The study recommended that educational authorities and policymakers strengthen leadership development initiatives focusing on democratic and transformational practices; ensuring head teachers are equipped with the skills to balance inclusivity, accountability, and adaptability. Training programs should emphasize participatory decision-making, transparent communication, and strategies for maintaining teacher engagement even

in high-stakes or directive situations. Additionally, mentorship and continuous professional development programs should be institutionalized to help head teachers integrate transformational elements such as motivation, recognition, and vision setting into their leadership. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with district education offices, should establish clear guidelines promoting inclusive leadership practices and regular feedback mechanisms to evaluate their implementation. By fostering consistent, participatory, and inspirational leadership, Temeke's public primary schools can strengthen teacher professionalism, morale, and overall educational outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 2, 100051.
- Ajjad, S. M. (2018). *Methods of Data collection*. Curtin University: takbrlyd press.
- Baloch, N. A., Baloch, M. N., & Baloch, H. N. (2023). Teachers' Perception of Different Leadership Styles of Head Teachers in Public Girls' Secondary School District Kech. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 58-67.
- Bibi, A., Khalid, M. A., & Hussain, A. (2019). Perceived organizational support and organizational commitment among special education teachers in Pakistan. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33(5), 848-859.
- Brink, R. (2018). A Multiple Case Design for the Investigation of Information Management Processes for Work-Integrated Learning. *International journal of work-integrated learning*, 19(3), 223-235
- Bwalya, A. (2023). Leadership style. *Education Journal of leadership*, 1..15.
- Cherry . Aquino, Bonimar & Afalla. (2021). Managing educational institutions: School heads' leadership. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 1325~1333.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *The Educational Research ,Planing And Evaluating Qualintative And Quantintaiove Research 4 edition* . New york: Sage.
- Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(1), 64-77.
- Dampier, S., & Banks, J. (2019). The relationship between teachers' perception of the head teacher's leadership style and teachers' job satisfaction at an international school in Bangkok. *Scholar: Human Sciences*, 11(1), 199-199.
- Haq, Z. U., Rasheed, R., Rashid, A., & Akhter, S. (2023). Criteria for Assessing and Ensuring the Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Business Reflections*, 4(2).
- Harriss, D. J., MacSween, A., & Atkinson, G. (2017). Standards for ethics in sport and exercise science research:. *International Journal of Sports*, 38(14), 1126-1131.
- Hunziker, S., Blankenagel, M. (2021). Multiple Case Research Design. In: *Research Design in Business and Management*. Springer Gabler, Wiesbaden.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-34357-6_9

- Issak, A. I. (2014). *Influence of head teachers' leadership styles on teachers' levels of job satisfaction in secondary schools, Mandera County, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Kabir. (2016). *Methods Of Data Collection Basic Guidelines for Research: An Introductory Approach for All Disciplines*.
- Kaur, S. (2017). Sample size determination (for descriptive studies). *International Journal of Current Research*, 9, (03), 48365-48367.
- Khanday, S. A. (2019). The research Design. *Journal of critical reviews*, ISSN-2394-5125 VOL 06, ISSUE 03,.
- Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of higher education*, 6(5), 26-41.
- Leavy, P. (2017). *Research Design, Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Art Based and COMMUNITY BASED PARTICIPATION, research APPROACH*. London: Guilford
- Logation, L. Mabagala, L. D, Malingumu. D.(2021). Perceptions and Practices of Heads of Schools' Instructional Leadership in Public Secondary Schools in Biharamulo District, Tanzania. *Huria Journal*, 28(1), March 2021: 155-175
- Logation, L., Mabagala, D. L., & Malingumu, W. (2021). Perceptions and Practices of Heads of Schools' Instructional Leadership in Public Secondary Schools in Biharamulo District, Tanzania. *Huria: Journal of the Open University of Tanzania*, 28(1).
- Machumu, H. J., & Kaitila, M. M. (2014). Influence of Leadership Styles on Teachers' Job Satisfaction: A Case of Selected Primary Schools in Songea and Morogoro Districts, Tanzania. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 6(4), 53-61.
- Mathias, S. (2020). *The Influence of Head Teachers' Leadership Styles on the Effectiveness of Teachers in the Provision of Quality Education in Kigoma Municipality Primary Schools in Tanzania* (Doctoral dissertation, The Open University of Tanzania).
- McMillan & Schumacher. (2006). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction (4th ed.)*. New York: Longman.
- Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European journal of general practice*, 24(1), 9-18.
- Msonge, E., & Lekule, C. S. (2024). Fostering Teacher Teamwork: Strategies and Challenges for School Heads a Study of Community Secondary Schools in Nyamagana-Mwanza, Tanzania. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 50(4), 212-226.
- Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, F. (2017). Snowball sampling: A purposeful method of sampling in qualitative research. *Strides in development of medical education*, 14(3).
- Ndauka, S. S. (2021). The role of heads of schools' leadership styles towards teachers' work commitment intanzania public secondary schools. *Gsj: volume 9, issue 11*,

- november 2021, online: issn 2320-9186, 1..15
- Nsubuga, Y. K. K. (2008). *Analysis of leadership styles and school performance of secondary schools in Uganda* (Doctoral dissertation, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University)
- Rahman, M. S. (2020). The advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods in language “testing and assessment” research: A literature review.
- ran, V. D. (2023). Effects of principals’ leadership styles on teachers’ commitment in Vietnam. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, : 2252-8822, DOI: 10.11591/ijere.v12i3.25225.
- Saltik, Z. (2023). Behavioral Approaches to Leadership. In *Leadership Approaches in Global Hospitality and Tourism* (pp. 40-60). IGI Global
- Saunders, M. N. (2012). Choosing research participants. *Qualitative organizational Core methods and current challenges*, 35-52.
- Seim, J. (2021). Participant observation, observant participation, and hybrid ethnography. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 0049124120986209.
- Shikalepo. (2020). Defining a Conceptual Framework in Educational Research. *international journal of Education*, Retrieved from: (insert website) Accessed on: (insert date accessed).
- Silva ,& de Almeida. (2010). esquisa documental: pistas teóricas e metodológicas. *BHCS*.
- Smith, T. (2018). Reliability and Validity of the reserch methods. *International Journal Of Teaching and Learning in Hiher Education*, 50...90.
- Specchia. (2021). Leadership styles and nurses’ job satisfactionResults of a systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*,, 18 (1552); pp. 1-15.
- Wang, L. H., Gurr, D., and Drysdale, L. (2016). Successful school leadership: case studies of four Singapore primary schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, , 54(3), 270-28.
- Willie, M. M. (2023). Distinguishing Between Population and Target. *Surgery Research Journal*, ISSN: 2768-0428.
- Earley, P. (2016). Global trends and challenges for school leaders: Keeping the focus on learning. *ECPS-Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies*, (14), 21-33.
- Kashamba, A., Ngirwa, C. C., & Maulid, M. (2023). The Influence of School Heads on Teachers’ Commitment in Public Secondary Schools in Kagera Region, Tanzania. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, 21(3), 107-118.
- Urio, P. J. (2023). Educational Leadership Practices that Sustains School Improvement in selected Secondary Schools in Tanzania. *Educational Leadership*, 14(15).
- Msonge, E., & Lekule, C. S. (2024). Fostering Teacher Teamwork: Strategies and Challenges for School Heads a Study of Community Secondary Schools in Nyamagana-Mwanza,

Tanzania. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 50(4), 212-226.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: All authors ;

Methodology: All authors ;

Investigation: All authors ;

Writing – original draft preparation: All authors ;

Writing – review and editing: All authors ;

Visualization: All authors ;

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.