



Suitability of Delegated and Participatory Leadership Models for Effective Management and Supervision in Public Secondary Schools in Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania

Prosperity M Mwila^{1*}

¹ Saint. Augustine University of Tanzania

Correspondence e-mail * : Mwila@saut.ac.tz

Abstract : Public secondary schools require suitable leadership models, yet authoritarian routines and uneven participation constrain management and supervision. This study examined delegated leadership in Kinondoni Municipality, Tanzania. Its purpose was to generate evidence on leadership arrangements; the main objective was to assess the suitability of leadership models for effective management and supervision. A mixed-methods approach and explanatory sequential design were used. The analysed sample comprised 417 participants: 400 students, eight class teachers, four academic teachers, three head teachers, and two Ward Education Officers from public secondary schools. Questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, observation checklists, and documentary-review guides collected data. Questionnaires were administered first; interviews, observations, and records explained and triangulated patterns. SPSS version 28 produced frequencies, percentages, and means, while qualitative evidence was analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six phases. Expert review, construct and face checks, pilot testing, triangulation, and a Cronbach's alpha acceptance criterion of .70 supported validity and reliability. Ethical approval and permission were obtained; adults consented, students assented with parental consent, and confidentiality was protected. Delegated leadership was preferred to authoritarian leadership (55.0%, $M = 3.47$); 49.0% reported improved management and supervision ($M = 3.33$), 45.0% reported reduced head-teacher workload ($M = 3.27$), and 40.8% endorsed participatory models for Tanzania ($M = 3.18$). Interviews explained that participation strengthened ownership and supportive supervision but could become tokenistic or slow decisions. The study concludes that a context-sensitive hybrid model is most suitable. It recommends structured delegation, consultation, role-linked authority, leadership training, and differentiated decision protocols for routine, consultative, and urgent matters.

Keyword : delegated leadership; participatory leadership; leadership models; school management; supervision; Tanzania

Article info: Submitted : 2026-08-17 | Accepted : 2026-09-13 | Published : 2026-09-14

Copyright © 2026, Authors.

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



INTRODUCTION

Globally, the complexity of contemporary secondary schools has weakened the assumption that one formal leader can manage instruction, personnel, accountability, and stakeholder relations effectively. Leithwood et al. (2020) show that successful leaders develop people and redesign organizations, while Bush and Glover (2014) argue that leadership models are context-dependent and often work best in combination. Distributed and participatory arrangements can mobilize teacher expertise, strengthen ownership, and widen supervision capacity when principals deliberately create opportunities for professional learning and influence (Galdames-Calderón, 2023). Their suitability cannot be presumed, however. Lumby (2013) warns that apparently inclusive models may preserve unequal power, and consultation can lengthen decisions or become symbolic when formal leaders retain final authority. Leadership-model suitability must therefore be judged by whether a model improves management and supervision while preserving clarity, timely decisions, and accountable authority.

Across Africa, this judgement is particularly important because many public secondary schools combine large enrolments with limited administrative capacity and strongly hierarchical traditions. Dampson et al. (2018) found that distributed leadership in Ghanaian senior high schools offered

collaborative potential but was constrained by rigid structures, weak communication, and leaders' reluctance to involve staff. In Uganda, Kanshabe et al. (2025) reported a strong association between delegation and head-teacher effectiveness, indicating that workload sharing can improve leadership performance when roles are institutionalized. Synthesized, the evidence suggests that delegated and participatory models may be more suitable than authoritarian leadership for resource-constrained schools, but their value depends on trust, staff capability, genuine consultation, and decision protocols that prevent participation from paralysing urgent action. These contextual conditions limit direct transfer of findings from one African system to another.

In Tanzania, the Education and Training Policy of 2014, 2023 Edition emphasizes participation, accountability, and stronger institutional leadership (United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2023). Research in Kigoma links effective school-head practices and communication with teacher performance (Msigwa et al., 2024), while evidence from neighbouring Ubungo Municipality associates supportive supervision and monitoring with teaching effectiveness and learning achievement (Msuya & Mwila, 2023). Yet these studies address leadership practice or supervision broadly and do not directly compare

whether delegated, participatory, and authoritarian arrangements are perceived as suitable for managing urban public secondary schools. The gap is consequential in Kinondoni Municipality, where large schools require workload sharing but fast operational decisions remain unavoidable. Accordingly, this study assessed the suitability of leadership models for effective management and supervision in Kinondoni public secondary schools and contributes mixed-methods evidence for selecting a context-sensitive balance between distributed participation and decisive formal leadership.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Review

The study was guided by Distributed Leadership Theory, which locates leadership in the interactions among formal leaders, other organizational actors, and the situations in which they work (Spillane, 2006). Rather than treating the head teacher as the sole source of influence, the theory asks how expertise, responsibility, and decision authority are stretched across the school. Hatcher (2005) adds that distribution of leadership work must be examined together with distribution of power. For the present objective, a leadership model was considered theoretically suitable when it enabled competent staff to contribute to management and supervision, gave delegated actors sufficient discretion, maintained

coordination, and kept accountability visible. This framework allowed delegated and participatory models to be evaluated against authoritarian concentration of decisions rather than praised simply because more people appeared involved.

Distributed Leadership Theory predicts that a model becomes useful when complementary expertise reduces dependence on one leader. Academic teachers can coordinate examinations, department heads can supervise instruction, class teachers can manage learner welfare, and committees can contribute to planning. Bolden (2011) describes this movement from individual leadership to collective and relational practice, while Leithwood et al. (2020) identify developing people and building collaboration as central leadership functions. The theory therefore anticipates three benefits relevant to model suitability: reduced head-teacher workload, stronger staff ownership of decisions, and supervision experienced as a shared improvement process rather than external control. These benefits require clear roles, capability, trust, feedback, and alignment between assigned responsibility and decision rights.

The theory also clarifies why no distributed or participatory model is universally suitable. Lumby (2013) cautions that inclusion can conceal unequal influence, and Hatcher (2005) shows that formal authority may continue to dominate even when tasks

are dispersed. Broad consultation may also slow urgent decisions, while poorly defined delegation can create duplication or blame shifting. This study therefore applies the theory critically and contingently: suitability is not equated with maximum participation in every matter. A context-sensitive model should distribute routine and specialist leadership, require authentic consultation for consequential decisions, and preserve a clearly identified authority for emergencies and statutory accountability. The theory thus supports a hybrid criterion—participatory where knowledge and ownership matter, delegated where roles are clear, and directive only where urgency or legal responsibility requires it.

2. Empirical Review

Global evidence supports shared leadership conditionally rather than as a universal prescription. Galdames-Calderón (2023), using interviews and documentary evidence from Chilean public schools, found that principals developed teacher leadership by building capability and creating structured opportunities for participation. Leithwood et al. (2020) similarly synthesize evidence that effective leaders develop people and redesign organizations instead of concentrating every function at the top. Bush and Glover (2014), however, show that school leadership models overlap and must be matched to organizational

context. Together, these studies suggest that distributed and participatory models are suitable when they convert expertise into coordinated action, while a hybrid arrangement may be necessary where formal accountability and rapid decisions cannot be dispersed completely.

African studies show both the practical value and the implementation risks of shared models. Dampson et al. (2018) found that Ghanaian senior high schools recognized distributed leadership, but rigid structures, weak communication, limited shared responsibility, and reluctance to involve teachers constrained its effectiveness. By contrast, Kanshabe et al. (2025) reported a strong positive relationship between delegation and head-teacher effectiveness in Ugandan government-aided secondary schools ($r = .844$, $p = .001$), linking shared responsibility with reduced workload and staff participation. These findings are compatible rather than contradictory: delegation can be suitable in large, resource-constrained schools, but its effect depends on whether leaders trust capable colleagues, staff accept responsibility, and consultation leads to genuine influence rather than ceremonial participation.

Within Tanzania, Msigwa et al. (2024) found that school-head leadership practices, motivation, and communication were important to teachers' job performance in Kigoma District Council and recommended

leadership capacity building. Msuya and Mwila (2023) connected supervisory practices in Ubungo Municipality with teaching effectiveness and learning achievement, while also identifying staffing and resource constraints. These studies explain conditions needed for effective leadership and supervision but do not directly compare perceived suitability of delegated, participatory, and authoritarian arrangements. Nor do they integrate student ratings with accounts from teachers, head teachers, and Ward Education Officers about workload, ownership, supervisory acceptance, tokenism, and decision speed. The present study addresses that gap by evaluating leadership-model suitability through complementary quantitative and qualitative evidence from Kinondoni Municipality.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach and an explanatory sequential design, in which the quantitative phase measured perceived suitability of leadership models and the qualitative phase explained the practical reasons for those ratings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design was appropriate because suitability involved both measurable judgements and context-dependent experiences of workload, participation, supervisory acceptance, authority, and decision speed. Integration occurred during interpretation, when interview,

observation, and documentary evidence were used to explain convergence and divergence in the questionnaire results.

The research was conducted in four public secondary schools in Kinondoni Municipality, Dar es Salaam. The analysed sample comprised 417 participants: 400 students, eight class teachers, four academic teachers, three head teachers, and two Ward Education Officers. Students were selected through stratified random sampling across classes and schools. From the target population of 4,200 students, 420 were selected and 400 returned usable questionnaires, a 95.2% response rate. Teachers, head teachers, and Ward Education Officers were purposively selected because their roles and experience placed them close to delegation, management, and supervision processes. The reported sample reflects the participants whose data were actually analysed rather than the larger sample initially planned in the dissertation.

Data were collected using a structured five-point Likert questionnaire, semi-structured interview guides, an observation checklist, and a documentary-review guide. The questionnaire assessed whether delegated leadership improved management and supervision, whether sharing roles reduced head-teacher workload, whether participatory models suited Tanzanian schools, and whether

delegated models were preferable to authoritarian leadership. In accordance with the sequential design, questionnaires were administered first. Interviews with the 17 education stakeholders then probed the ratings, while observations examined staff participation and supervisory practice. Documentary review covered duty-allocation documents, school policies, supervision reports, staff-meeting minutes, and institutional records. Multiple instruments enabled triangulation across perceptions, observed practice, and formal records.

Questionnaire responses were coded and analysed in SPSS version 28 using frequencies, percentages, and means. The five response categories ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree; higher means indicated stronger perceived suitability and were interpreted with the response distributions rather than in isolation. Qualitative material was analysed thematically through familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and reporting, following Braun and Clarke (2022). Quantitative and qualitative results were subsequently integrated around the suitability objective rather than presented as independent studies.

Content validity was supported through expert review by specialists in educational leadership, management, and supervision at St. Augustine University of Tanzania; construct and face validity were checked through clear operationalization and review by

teachers and school leaders. Instruments were piloted in schools outside the main sample, ambiguous items were revised, and a Cronbach's alpha threshold of .70 was used as the minimum internal-consistency criterion. Triangulation strengthened interpretive credibility. Ethical approval was sought from the university research ethics structure, and administrative permission was obtained from the Kinondoni education authority and participating schools. Adult participants provided written informed consent; students provided assent alongside parental or guardian consent. Participation was voluntary, identifiers were withheld, and confidentiality, privacy, and protection from harm were maintained throughout the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The major finding was that delegated and participatory leadership models were perceived as more suitable than authoritarian leadership, but endorsement was moderate rather than unqualified. The strongest result was the preference for delegated over authoritarian leadership: 55.0% agreed or strongly agreed ($M = 3.47$). Nearly half judged delegation beneficial for management and supervision (49.0%, $M = 3.33$), while workload reduction (45.0%, $M = 3.27$) and the suitability of participatory models for Tanzanian schools (40.8%, $M = 3.18$) received more cautious support. This pattern favours shared leadership, yet it also signals

that suitability depends on context and implementation.

Table 1. Student assessments of leadership-model suitability (n = 400)

Suitability indicator	Agreement	Mean	Interpretation
Delegated leadership is more effective than authoritarian leadership	55.0%	3.47	Strongest support
Delegated leadership improves management and supervision	49.0%	3.33	Moderate support
Sharing leadership reduces head-teacher workload	45.0%	3.27	Moderate support
Participatory models suit Tanzanian schools	40.8%	3.18	Cautious support

Source: Field data (2026). Agreement combines agree and strongly agree responses; means use a five-point scale. The first indicator was reported in the dissertation narrative accompanying Table 4.5.

The preference for delegation over authoritarian leadership indicates that students recognized advantages when leadership response and responsibility were diffused beyond the head teacher. Nevertheless, the lower ratings for management improvement and workload reduction show that these advantages were not experienced uniformly. Delegation may be conceptually suitable, but its practical value depends on whether responsibilities reach capable staff,

carry adequate authority, and are supported through communication and follow-up.

The most cautious result concerned participatory models: 40.8% endorsed their suitability for Tanzanian schools, 28.5% disagreed, and 30.7% were neutral ($M = 3.18$). The unusually large neutral group suggests uncertainty rather than outright rejection. Students may observe meetings and shared activities without being able to determine whether consultation genuinely shapes school decisions. Thus, the results distinguish formal participation from influential participation and explain why a participatory model can be attractive in principle but only moderately endorsed in practice.

“When teachers are involved in leadership, supervision becomes easier. We understand what is expected of us because we were part of the planning. It is not like someone is imposing rules on us. We feel respected and valued. This makes us more committed to our work.” – Class teacher, School D

The interviews explained why delegation and participation were viewed as suitable. Head teachers reported that department heads, academic teachers, and class teachers absorbed curriculum, examination, and discipline responsibilities, allowing the head to concentrate on planning and policy. Teachers further stated that participation produced ownership:

because they helped formulate plans, supervision felt supportive rather than imposed. Ward-level accounts similarly associated shared leadership with greater motivation, whereas top-down management generated resistance and turned supervision into confrontation. These mechanisms directly explain the quantitative pattern: shared models reduce concentration of work and increase acceptance of supervisory expectations.

Suitability was nevertheless conditional. Participants described symbolic participation in which leaders invited views but ignored them, and head teachers warned that broad consultation could delay urgent decisions. One head teacher summarized the dilemma: “Participatory leadership can be slow. Decisions take longer because you have to consult many people... It is a balance. You have to know when to consult and when to make a decision on your own.” This evidence explains the moderate, rather than overwhelming, questionnaire endorsement. Participation is most useful when consultation is authentic and time permits deliberation; a clearly accountable leader remains necessary when urgency, safety, or statutory responsibility demands immediate action.

The results agree with Dampson et al. (2018), who found that Ghanaian secondary schools valued distributed leadership but encountered rigid structures, weak communication, and

limited shared responsibility. Agreement is plausible because public-school heads in both settings remain formally accountable and may therefore hesitate to share consequential authority. The findings also complement Galdames-Calderón (2023) and Leithwood et al. (2020): teacher involvement is productive when principals intentionally develop capability and redesign organizational routines around collaboration, not when participation is an occasional invitation without influence.

The Kinondoni results are more cautious than Kanshabe et al.'s (2025) Ugandan report of a strong positive relationship between delegation and head-teacher effectiveness ($r = .844$, $p = .001$). The difference may arise from measurement and context. Kanshabe et al. examined the relationship between delegation and effectiveness among organizational actors, whereas the present ratings were supplied by students and interpreted alongside stakeholder interviews about both benefits and constraints. Yet the studies converge on the underlying mechanism: delegation can reduce head-teacher overload and mobilize staff expertise when roles, authority, trust, and accountability are aligned.

Tanzanian evidence further supports the interpretation. Msigwa et al. (2024) identify communication, motivation, and school-head practices as important to teacher performance, while Msuya and Mwila (2023) connect supportive supervision with teaching

effectiveness under staffing and resource constraints. Kinondoni participants' emphasis on ownership explains this convergence: consultation improves supervisory legitimacy and commitment, but tokenistic participation destroys those gains. The current study adds direct comparative evidence that delegated leadership was preferred to authoritarian leadership while showing that local suitability is not synonymous with unrestricted participation.

Distributed Leadership Theory accounts for the benefits because leadership work was stretched across heads, teachers, and formal roles in Spillane's (2006) leader-plus configuration. It also explains the limitations. Hatcher (2005) and Lumby (2013) caution that distributing tasks can leave power concentrated and make participation merely symbolic. The evidence therefore supports a context-sensitive hybrid: distribute routine and specialist work, consult authentically on consequential decisions, and retain directive authority for urgent or legally non-delegable matters. Such a model preserves the capacity and ownership advantages of shared leadership without obscuring final accountability.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that delegated and participatory leadership models are more suitable than authoritarian leadership for

management and supervision in Kinondoni public secondary schools, although neither model should be applied mechanically. Delegation can reduce head-teacher workload and draw on staff expertise, while authentic participation strengthens ownership and makes supervision easier to accept. Their suitability declines when consultation is symbolic, delegated roles lack authority, or lengthy deliberation obstructs urgent action. The most defensible arrangement is therefore a context-sensitive hybrid that combines distributed responsibility and genuine consultation with clear final accountability.

Schools should formalize delegated responsibilities, match each responsibility with sufficient decision authority, and establish regular forums in which staff contributions demonstrably influence decisions. Head teachers should classify matters before acting: routine and specialist work should be delegated, consequential school-wide matters should be consultative, and urgent or legally non-delegable matters should follow an explicit directive protocol followed by transparent review. Leadership training should equip heads and delegated staff in communication, facilitation, conflict management, supportive supervision, and accountability. Kinondoni education authorities should incorporate these criteria into school monitoring and help schools

distinguish authentic participation from tokenism. Future research should test the hybrid model longitudinally, compare urban and rural contexts, and examine whether improved model fit produces measurable gains in supervision, staff commitment, and student outcomes.

REFERENCES

- Bolden, R. (2011). Distributed leadership in organizations: A review of theory and research. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13(3), 251–269. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2011.00306.x>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.
- Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: What do we know? *School Leadership & Management*, 34(5), 553–571. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2014.928680>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Dampson, D. G., Havor, F. M., & Laryea, P. (2018). Distributed leadership an instrument for school improvement: The study of public senior high schools in Ghana. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 5(2), 79–85. <https://doi.org/10.20448/journal.509.2018.52.79.85>
- Galdames-Calderón, M. (2023). Distributed leadership: School principals' practices to promote teachers' professional development for school improvement. *Education Sciences*, 13(7), Article 715. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13070715>
- Hatcher, R. (2005). The distribution of leadership and power in schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 26(2), 253–267. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569042000294200>
- Kanshabe, S., Tibanyendera, B., & Tutegyeize, J. (2025). Head teachers' delegation levels and their job effectiveness in Mbarara City South Division government-aided secondary schools. *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 8(2), 651–663. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.8.2.3303>
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- Lumby, J. (2013). Distributed leadership: The uses and abuses of power. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41(5), 581–597.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213489288>

Msigwa, O. F., Amos, O., & Mushi, P. S. D. (2024). Influence of heads of schools' leadership practices on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Kigoma District Council, Tanzania. *British Journal of Education*, 12(9), 25–42. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bje.2013/vol12n92542>

Msuya, L. C., & Mwila, P. M. (2023). The effect of heads of schools' supervisory practices on learning achievement in public secondary schools in Ubungo Municipality, Tanzania. *Journal of Educational and Management Studies*, 13(1), 26–42. <https://doi.org/10.54203/jems.2023.1>

Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2023). *Education and training policy of 2014, 2023 edition*. <https://www.moe.go.tz/en/education-policy>

Visualization: All Authors.

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

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization : All Authors;

Methodology : All Authors ;

Investigation :All Authors ;

Writing original draft preparation :
All Authors ;

Writing review and editing : All
Authors ;