



School Leadership Support for English Language Teaching in Tanzanian Primary Schools: Instructional and Professional Dimensions

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Abstract : English language teaching in Tanzanian primary schools occupies a strategic position because English is both a school subject and a gateway to later participation in secondary and higher education. Therefore, the quality of English language teaching in primary schools influences learners' transition, confidence, and academic achievement. This study investigated instructional and professional support that school leaders and School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) provide to primary school English teachers for effective teaching in Tanzania. It was conducted across 16 districts in 12 regions, namely Buhigwe, Kakonko, and Kasulu DC in Kigoma; Bumbuli in Tanga; Iringa Municipal and Kilolo in Iringa; Kilwa in Lindi; Meru in Arusha; Misenyi in Kagera; Mlele and Mpimbwe in Katavi; Mpwapwa in Dodoma; Nkasi in Rukwa; Singida Municipal in Singida; Songea DC in Ruvuma; and Tarime TC in Mara. It employed a mixed-methods design, combining questionnaire data from 94 heads of school, academic teachers, and SQAOs with interview data from 18 English teachers, collected between 1 May and 15 June 2026. Respondents were selected through purposive and simple random sampling procedures, and data were collected using structured questionnaires and an interview guide. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Findings indicate support through school-based professional development through MEWAKA; peer learning and coaching were evident but uneven, with low teacher attendance and irregular facilitation in some schools. Classroom observation, feedback, and guidance on schemes of work and 5Es lesson planning were inconsistent. The study recommends sustained leadership and teacher training, as well as stronger quality-assurance feedback.

Keyword : Leadership, instructional support, professional support, English, teaching, Tanzania

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INTRODUCTION

English language teaching in primary education has become a strategic concern for education systems seeking to connect foundational learning with later academic participation, employment pathways, and social mobility. In multilingual contexts, the subject is not merely another area of the timetable; it is a gateway through which pupils learn to read unfamiliar texts, express ideas across language boundaries, and prepare for subsequent levels where English carries increasing academic weight. International scholarship, therefore, links effective English teaching with leadership practices that make classrooms pedagogically rich, materially supported, and professionally supervised. Yet the daily work of enabling such teaching often rests less on national policy statements than on what heads of schools, academic teachers and SQAOs do in ordinary schools. When these actors provide materials, observe lessons, organize peer learning, solve instructional problems and recognize teacher effort, English teachers are more likely to enact learner-centered instruction with confidence (World Bank, 2018; UNESCO, 2021).

Globally, the recent literature on school improvement has shifted attention from leadership as administration to leadership as a set of practices that directly or indirectly strengthen teaching. Instructional leadership emphasizes clarity of

instructional goals, coordination of curriculum, monitoring of teaching, protection of learning time, and professional support for teachers. Transformational and distributed leadership perspectives add that school leaders also motivate, inspire, and create shared ownership of improvement. Together, these perspectives suggest that effective support is both technical and relational. Teachers need a scheme of work, lesson-planning guidance, and classroom feedback; they also need trust, encouragement, and recognition that sustain morale in demanding contexts (Hallinger, 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020).

In African education systems, the importance of school-level leadership is intensified by resource constraints, rapid curriculum reforms, and uneven access to continuing professional development. Many primary schools operate with limited teaching aids, crowded classrooms, limited digital resources, and teachers who must adapt national curricula to local conditions. English language teaching is particularly demanding because it requires opportunities for listening, speaking, reading and writing, all of which depend on interaction, visual support and timely feedback. Studies in the region have associated teacher collaboration, classroom observation and locally improvised materials with more active language learning, but they also show

that these supports vary widely across schools and districts.

Tanzania offers a significant setting for examining these issues because primary education is conducted in a language ecology where Kiswahili is central to national identity and schooling, while English remains highly valued for further education and global communication. The 2023 revised curriculum requires English teachers to employ teaching and learning methods to help pupils develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, as well as vocabulary and grammar for communication in different settings (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2023). Teachers therefore must translate curriculum intentions into meaningful classroom activities, often with pupils who encounter English mainly in school. The emphasis on 5Es-centered learning in implementing the 2023 revised curriculum has increased the need for professional guidance in lesson planning, teaching strategies, and assessing pupils' participation.

Teachers' continuous professional development in the workplace in Tanzania, commonly known as MEWAKA, encourages teachers to learn from one another, discuss classroom problems, and share ideas without waiting for externally funded seminars. In principle, this approach fits the realities of primary schools because it uses school-based time, existing staff expertise and local problems as resources for learning.

However, Mewaka becomes meaningful only when leaders schedule it, motivate teachers to attend, ensure that sessions address actual curriculum needs and follow up ideas in classroom practice. (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2017a) directs that at the beginning or end of each school year, heads of schools should schedule time for communities of learning (CoL) meetings in the school timetable. During the initial meetings of the CoL, teachers must collaborate to establish norms, set goals, and define ground rules and expectations. Teachers should also explore their needs and the knowledge, experience, and expertise of group members and define their roles and responsibilities. They should also begin fostering an atmosphere of trust and respect. To provide a clear purpose and structure to the meetings, teachers may choose to develop formal or informal agendas. Heads of schools are encouraged to support and participate in these initial CoL meetings.

School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) are also central to the support ecology. A developmental approach to quality assurance does not treat inspection as fault-finding; rather, it uses evidence from classrooms, teachers' records and learners' work to guide improvement. Constructive feedback from SQAOs can strengthen teachers' capacity to prepare lesson plans and teaching aids, use participatory strategies, and leverage

local resources. Through evaluation with support, guidance, and mentoring, SQAOs can also strengthen school leaders' capacity to support teachers in the following areas: lesson planning, scheme of work preparation, preparation of teaching aids, use of participatory strategies, and use of local resources. They help schools trace a trajectory towards excellence and improved quality through rigorous evaluation, with support, guidance, and mentoring, whilst ensuring compliance with the laid-down policies, laws, and regulations stipulated in the Education Act and National Basic Education Standards (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2017b).

The approach is especially important because some heads of schools and academic teachers may require support in interpreting the revised curriculum documents and the 5Es framework. Despite this policy and theoretical recognition, a gap persists between what support is expected and what teachers experience (Lethwood et al., 2020; Hallinger, 2018; Fullan et al., 2018). Much literature addresses leadership, teacher professional development, or English teaching separately, while fewer studies examine the combined support provided by school leaders and SQAOs to primary school English teachers across varied Tanzanian localities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Glickman et al., 2018; Opfer & Pedder, 2016; Sergiovanni et al., 2014). Even

when studies address school support, they often emphasize general teacher performance rather than specific conditions of English teaching, such as availability of flashcards, storybooks, lesson plan templates, language-rich classrooms, digital resources, and coaching. This study addresses that gap by focusing on support as experienced and reported by those closest to English teaching within selected district councils.

The justification of the study lies in its practical and scholarly contribution. In practice, the findings can inform heads of schools, academic teachers, SQAOs, and district officials about support practices that teachers value and areas where inconsistencies weaken implementation (Adams & Mensah, 2022). They also provide insights to teachers' professional development providers about areas that teachers and school leaders need additional training for effective curriculum implementation. Scholarly, the study contributes to the literature on instructional leadership in low-resource multilingual contexts by showing how pedagogical and professional supports interact in the daily work of English teaching (Mulkeem & Chen, 2021; OECS, 2019; UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2018). It further demonstrates that support should not be judged only by whether a school has a policy timetable, but by whether teachers receive usable guidance, timely resources, and

recognition that sustains classroom effort.

Literature Review

Effective teaching and learning is a collaborative, oriented activity. It requires a range of aspects, including teacher professional development, resource provision, motivation, and constructive feedback. Effective professional development is sustained, collaborative, curriculum-related, and connected to classroom practice. One-off seminars may introduce new ideas, but teachers often need repeated opportunities to test strategies, ask questions, and receive feedback. MEWAKA in Tanzania embodies this logic by positioning schools as sites of continuing professional development. In the context of the 2023 revised curriculum, MEWAKA can support English teachers in practicing 5Es lesson planning, designing language activities, improvising teaching aids, and analyzing learner difficulties. However, the literature warns that school-based professional learning can become symbolic if leaders fail to allocate time, teachers are passive, or sessions are facilitated by people with inadequate pedagogical knowledge (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Opfer & Pedder, 2016).

International evidence values coherent systems, but school-level practices determine whether policies are translated into classroom action. In the Tanzanian primary English context, this means asking whether teachers

receive concrete help to plan lessons, use English teaching aids, manage learner participation, and respond to curriculum changes. The empirical part of this study, therefore, treats support as observable practice: what leaders provide, what teachers actually experience, and what gaps remain between expectation and implementation.

Classroom observation is a key support practice when conducted as professional dialogue rather than as surveillance. Observation allows leaders to assess whether pupils participate through interactive strategies, whether teachers use English meaningfully, whether teaching aids are integrated into learning, and whether lesson activities are realistic. Feedback after observation is most helpful when it is specific, timely, and linked to improvement. The literature distinguishes developmental supervision from bureaucratic checking; the former builds teacher capacity while the latter may produce compliance without improvement. For English teachers, feedback may address pronunciation support, language practice opportunities, questioning, grouping, the use of visual materials, and the assessment of pupils' responses (Glickman et al., 2018; Sergiovanni et al., 2014).

Kilag & Sasan (2023) emphasize the importance of leaders modeling effective teaching practices, providing feedback, and facilitating collaboration and learning opportunities. Teacher

professional development is a continuous and ongoing process that requires sustained support from school leaders. Teachers need opportunities for workshops, mentoring, and coaching. Therefore, school leaders should promote a school culture that supports teacher professional development to enhance teaching and learning and, in turn, improve learner outcomes.

Resource provision is another important dimension for effective English teaching. Hanushek (2011) argues that while physical resources alone do not determine pupil achievement, targeted provision of teaching and learning materials, particularly in low-income contexts, can substantially improve instructional quality. The role of ICT in language teaching has attracted considerable attention globally. Warschauer (2003) identified access to technology as a key equity issue, with schools in low-income settings disproportionately affected by digital poverty, and Kafyulilo (2014) recommends a professional development program for in-service teachers to help them develop a positive attitude towards the use of mobile phones in teaching and learning.

Modern school quality assurance plays a great role in strengthening instructional improvement through evidence, dialogue and follow-up. SQAOs occupy a distinctive position because they can observe patterns across

schools, identify common weaknesses, and advise teachers and school leaders on how to improve. Their feedback may indicate a need for MEWAKA, lesson-planning training, teaching-strategies training, and improved use of locally available materials. However, contradictory advice from different officers may confuse teachers and weaken confidence in the system. Quality assurance should therefore balance accountability with coherence, ensuring that recommendations are clear, pedagogically sound and followed up over time.

School Leadership and Language Teaching in Africa

Harman et al. (2009) contend that classroom practice in primary schools in Kenya and Tanzania is partly attributable to the absence of sustained pedagogical guidance from school leaders. In the specific domain of English language teaching, the literature highlights that teachers in multilingual African contexts face the dual challenge of teaching English as a second or foreign language while serving as models of English proficiency. School leaders who lack confidence in English or in learner-centered pedagogical frameworks cannot guide teachers effectively. Sinabubaraga & Oniye (2025) confirm that head teachers in private schools in Rwanda's Karongi District spend more time on English lessons and provide more frequent feedback to English teachers. In Rwandan private primary

schools, head teachers support English teachers' professional development by creating informal mentoring relationships and using non-punitive post-observation conversations.

When evaluating Language Supportive Pedagogy (LSP) approaches to primary-secondary transition in Tanzania and Ethiopia, Barrett et al. (2025) identify leadership support as a key mediating factor in sustaining LSP achievement. Schools whose heads actively championed LSP, participated in CoL meetings, and aligned observation frameworks with LSP principles showed stronger retention of pedagogical change after the intervention period than schools where LSP was treated as a teacher-led, bottom-up initiative without leadership endorsement. This is critical evidence linking heads of school instructional support to English-language teaching-specific outcomes in Tanzanian primary schools.

The shift towards competence-based and 5Es-centered learning in Tanzania has increased the importance of lesson planning support. The IDDR framework and 5Es Instructional Model require teachers to engage pupils, provide opportunities for them to explore ideas, explain concepts, elaborate on their understanding, and evaluate learning. In English lessons, this structure can help move teaching away from copying words towards active language use. Yet curriculum reform often creates confusion when teachers receive inconsistent guidance

or when leaders check only the presence of documents (Fullan et al., 2018). The literature on curriculum implementation shows that teachers need modeling, exemplars, shared planning, and feedback on the quality of the scheme of work and lesson plans. Without such support, curricula risk being implemented through old routines.

Meanwhile, Nkuku et al. (2026), in their study on the role of teachers' in-service training programs in enhancing students' competence-based learning outcomes in public secondary schools, conducted in Geita District, revealed several challenges such as infrequent training, lack of practical alignment with classroom needs, limited assessment skills, and insufficient follow-up support. They argued that in-service training significantly contributes to the implementation of competence-based learning, but its impact is constrained without continuous support, relevance, and practical application. Therefore, training should be contextually relevant, practically oriented, and equitably accessible to ensure effective implementation of competence-based learning across schools.

ICT can enrich English teaching through audio, images, games, digital stories, projected texts, and interactive practice. Nevertheless, ICT integration in Tanzanian schools remains uneven due to inadequate ICT facilities, insufficient ICT knowledge and skills among teachers, inadequate ICT

training programs, a scarcity of ICT support services for teachers, electricity constraints, and a lack of motivation. It requires more effort to ensure ICT integration in teaching and learning (Simbeye, 2020; Kiwonde, 2020). It should be noted that digital tools are more valuable when embedded in pedagogy rather than treated as a separate innovation. A single laptop, tablet, or projector can support learning when teachers plan purposeful activities, rotate groups, and align technology with lesson objectives.

English language teaching in Tanzanian primary schools is shaped by various factors, including, but not limited to, learner exposure, teacher proficiency, and resource availability. Therefore, teachers need strategies that make English meaningful, including songs, pictures, real objects, dialogue, stories, and repeated practice because pupils' everyday linguistic environments vary. To achieve this, leadership support is crucial, as even committed teachers may struggle without materials, guidance, and classroom feedback. Conversely, teachers can transform modest resources into active learning when school leaders provide encouragement, collaborative time, and practical assistance.

Taken together, the reviewed literature supports that effective English teaching is influenced by interrelated categories of support, including instructional support and professional development support.

Instructional support includes classroom observation, feedback, preparation of schemes of work and guidance on lesson planning, sharing of curriculum updates, and review of professional records. Professional development support includes MEWAKA, peer learning, coaching, and monitoring. The present study focuses on these two categories of support using empirical data from the selected Tanzanian districts.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods design, combining a descriptive survey with qualitative interviews. This design was appropriate because the purpose was not only to estimate the prevalence of different support practices but also to understand how English teachers experienced those practices in their schools. Quantitative questionnaire data provided a broad picture of support reported by heads of schools, academic teachers and SQAOs, while qualitative interview data supplied deeper explanations, examples and teachers' voices. The combination strengthened interpretation by allowing numerical patterns to be discussed alongside concrete classroom experiences. It also enabled the researcher to elaborate on or clarify the findings of one strand with those of the other, and to expand the breadth and range of the study (McLeod, 2024).

Study Area

The study was conducted in 16 district councils drawn from 12 regions. The councils include Buhigwe, Kakonko, and Kasulu DC in Kigoma; Bumbuli in Tanga; Iringa Municipal and Kilolo in Iringa; Kilwa in Lindi; Meru in Arusha; Misenyi in Kagera; Mlele and Mpimbwe in Katavi; Mpwapwa in Dodoma; Nkasi in Rukwa; Singida Municipal in Singida; Songea District Council in Ruvuma; and Tarime Town Council in Mara. The study area was selected randomly to represent geographical diversity. The data collection period was from 01 May to 15 June 2026. The study deliberately restricted findings and quotations to respondents from these areas, in line with the scope of the investigation.

Study Population

The target population comprised school leaders and personnel directly involved in supporting primary school English teaching. These included heads of schools, academic teachers, SQAOs and English teachers. Heads of schools were included because they manage school resources, motivate teachers and organize school-based professional development. Academic teachers were involved because they commonly review schemes of work, lesson plans and records of work. SQAOs were involved because they provide external quality assurance and pedagogical feedback. English teachers were included because they are the

recipients of the support under investigation.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The questionnaire sample comprised 94 respondents: 83 heads of schools, 8 academic teachers, and 3 SQAOs. The interview sample consisted of 18 primary school English teachers. Purposive sampling was used to include respondents who held roles relevant to teacher support, thereby allowing the researcher to focus on respondents with direct knowledge and experience relevant to the study (Patton, 2014). Simple random procedures were used where more than one eligible respondent could be selected within a locality. This helped ensure the process was fair, giving everyone an equal opportunity to be selected without bias (Ahmed, 2024). This combination helped ensure that the sample represented key support roles while remaining manageable for detailed analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

The main instruments were: a questionnaire for heads of schools, academic teachers and SQAOs, and an interview guide for English teachers. The questionnaire captured practices such as MEWAKA facilitation, team-teaching facilitation, classroom observation and constructive feedback, review of schemes of work and lesson plans, preparation of schemes of work and lesson plans, and mentoring and

coaching. It offered the researcher cost-effectiveness, accessibility, and the ability to reach a broad and diverse population, enabling efficient collection of comprehensive insights (Kuphanga, 2024). The interview guide explored teachers' experiences of peer learning through MEWAKA, classroom observations, scheme of work preparation and lesson-planning support, and the review of professional documents. It offered participants greater freedom to express their experiences and provided the researcher with an opportunity to clarify the meaning of questions for respondents (Aldhaen, 2020).

Validity and Reliability of the Study

Validity was addressed by ensuring content alignment between the instruments and the study's purpose. Items and interview prompts were organized around the main dimensions of support identified in leadership and teacher development literature: instructional support and professional development support. Expert review was a part of instrument preparation, and ambiguous items were refined to ensure that respondents could answer them in relation to actual school practices. Instruments were piloted with respondents outside the study sample, and necessary revisions were made before data collection commenced. Triangulation of data sources: questionnaires, interviews and analysis of relevant frameworks or models further strengthened the

credibility of the findings (Denzin, 2012).

Reliability was considered through consistency in administration and item clarity. For questionnaire responses, similar support strategies were grouped under the two study's focus categories, such as instructional support and professional development support. Reliability was strengthened by maintaining the original meaning of respondents' statements. For interviews, reliability was enhanced by applying a common thematic framework across all 18 transcripts. This helped produce the same trustworthy results from respondents, thereby enhancing the overall quality of the study (Andersson et al., 2024).

Data Analysis Procedures

Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to show how often each support strategy was mentioned among the 94 respondents to the questionnaire. Because many questionnaire responses were open-ended, categories were derived from repeated themes rather than treated as mutually exclusive in every instance. The percentages therefore indicate the approximate prominence of each theme in the questionnaire findings. Descriptive analysis, therefore, enabled the researcher to compile and analyze data from many respondents (Alabi & Bukola, 2023). Tables in the Findings section present the data using support

strategy, frequency, and percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Interview responses were read across the 18 English teachers. Repeated patterns, contrasts, and illustrative quotations were identified. Quotations were retained only from the interview respondents and are cited as required using the format (Interviewee, English teacher, June, 2026). Generally, thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify and interpret themes in collected data (Ahmed et al., 2025).

Ethical considerations

As Kushwaha and Dube (2023) argue, researchers should adhere to ethical principles in order to protect the dignity, rights, and welfare of the respondents; ethical considerations in this study included respect for anonymity, confidentiality, and responsible reporting. The study does not identify individual schools or teachers by name. Respondents are described by role and month of data collection. The findings are presented in aggregate form except for selected quotations that illustrate themes without revealing personal identity. The analysis also avoids making claims beyond the 16 district councils and 12 regions included in the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented and discussed according to key themes regarding the support English teachers receive from school leaders, as revealed

by the study through both the questionnaire and interview instruments, and are supported by relevant literature. The findings are mainly on instructional and professional development support, as presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Instructional Support

Table 1.
School Leaders and SQAOs'
Responses on Instructional Support
They Provide to Primary School
English Teachers (N = 94)

Support Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Sharing teaching strategies, information and curriculum updates	70	74.4%
Reviewing schemes of work and lesson plans, and providing constructive feedback	55	58.51%
Conducting classroom observation and providing constructive feedback	47	50%
Guidance on scheme of work preparation and lesson planning, including 5Es support	38	40.43%

Support Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Facilitating team teaching, discussion of difficult content and experience sharing	24	25.53%
Constructive SQAOs feedback and participatory methods advice	3	100%

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 2.
English Teachers' Responses on Instructional Support They Receive from School Leaders and SQAOs (N = 18)

Indicator	Yes/Regular	Rarely/Partially	No/Never
Classroom observations	5 (27.8%)	7 (38.9%)	6 (33.3%)
Constructive feedback provided after classroom observations	4 (22.2%)	5 (27.8%)	9 (50.0%)
Guidance on scheme of work preparation and 5Es lesson planning	4 (22.2%)	5 (27.8%)	9 (50.0%)

Indicator	Yes/Regular	Rarely/Partially	No/Never
Review schemes of work and lesson plans and provide constructive feedback	7 (38.9%)	5 (27.8%)	6 (33.3%)

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings in Tables 1 and 2 above indicate that school leaders provide instructional support to English teachers through different strategies, to varying degrees. Many school leaders (74.4%) reported sharing teaching strategies, professional information, and curriculum updates. This was frequently done through meetings and WhatsApp groups, suggesting that mobile communication has become part of the instructional support infrastructure. One teacher confirmed this pattern during the interview as follows:

"Yes, he normally shares any information he gets, including those related to teaching and learning. During weekends, he shares information through the staff's WhatsApp group. But during the weekdays, he shares information during the meeting". (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

Such sharing is important because curriculum updates need to

reach teachers early enough for action. However, one teacher reported delayed communication about teachers' teaching skills competition coordinated by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), noting that teachers in other schools received the information earlier. The teacher elaborated that:

"Yes, he shares information, but he delays a lot. For instance, he had information about the teachers' teaching skills competition organized by TIE, but he informed us about it on the deadline day, whereas our counterparts in other schools were informed earlier. I think he contributed a lot to my poor participation in the competition because I recorded my lesson under pressure. I was afraid of missing the submission deadline because I did not have enough time to prepare the lesson and my pupils" (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

This contrast shows that the presence of a communication channel does not guarantee timely instructional support. Some school leaders provide information in a timely manner, while others delay it, thereby affecting teachers participating in certain curriculum implementation events. Classroom observation practices were highly inconsistent across the study schools. While half of school leaders (50%) reported conducting classroom observations and providing feedback to teachers, a minority of teachers (27.8%) reported that their school

leaders regularly conduct classroom observations, and 4 teachers (22.2%) reported receiving constructive feedback regularly after classroom observations. The majority of teachers reported either sporadic visits or a complete absence of classroom observations by their school leaders. One teacher who had an experienced, effective observation described it positively:

"Yes, the head of school conducts classroom observation and provides constructive comments for improvement. She sometimes sits at a desk at the back of the class when you teach, and then you meet in her office at the end of the lesson. She tells the strengths of the lesson and areas for improvement. If she identifies any challenge, we discuss it together. We can even discuss as a school and find a solution together." (Interviewee, English Teacher, June, 2026)

This type of collegial, feedback-rich observation aligns with Marzano et al. (2011) and Darling-Hammond (2010), who emphasize that structured observation linked to dialogue is one of the most effective forms of instructional support. This example also aligns with developmental supervision, in which feedback is linked to teacher growth rather than punishment (Glickman et al., 2018). Likewise, instructional leadership, comprising classroom observation, feedback, resource provision, and facilitation of professional development, is positively

correlated with teacher effectiveness across diverse educational contexts (Bush & Glover, 2014; Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008).

However, such practice was an exception rather than the rule. Several teachers reported that classroom observation is conducted rarely or partially, or entirely absent: one teacher elaborated that:

"No, they do not conduct classroom observations, but they just ask us to tell them any challenges we face at our school. It seems that the information is needed somewhere. But even if you tell them the challenges, the rate of solving them is very low. They just respond orally, but the implementation is delayed. It is like you ask for fertilizer for your crops' healthy growth, but you get it when you harvest."
(Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

This metaphor (the last sentence from the quotation) captures a major weakness in instructional leadership: support after the pedagogical moment has passed cannot improve the lesson in question. The finding aligns with the literature indicating that supervision must be timely, specific, and dialogic to affect classroom practice. It is also consistent with a broader Sub-Saharan African pattern in which instructional leadership is formally expected, but implementation often remains compliance-oriented and constrained by leaders' competing responsibilities (Bush et al., 2022).

Besides, Chaula et al. (2024), who investigated clinical supervision practices in Tanzanian public secondary schools, found that the quality of post-observation feedback is the strongest predictor of teacher professional growth. Teachers who receive specific, subject-related, forward-looking feedback reported significantly stronger professional learning outcomes than those who receive general or evaluative commentary. Evidence of Tanzanian intervention indicates that focused professional development can strengthen heads' classroom observation and feedback capabilities (Anania & Bush, 2023). The implication is not simply to require more visits. For English lessons, observation should be brief, scheduled, and formative, with a pre-observation focus and post-observation conversation. Feedback should refer to observable features such as teacher and pupil talk time, opportunities for meaningful oral English, comprehension checks, treatment of learner errors, reading scaffolds, vocabulary support, participation of quieter pupils, and alignment between the intended competence, activities and assessment. A signed observation form without a professional conversation reproduces the same compliance problem found in document review. Heads of schools and school quality assurance officers also need subject-sensitive observation tools and, where their own English-teaching expertise is limited, should

involve an experienced English teacher to ensure effective observation and constructive feedback.

The review of schemes of work and lesson plans also varied substantially. 55 school leaders (58.51%) reported reviewing schemes of work, lesson plans, and providing feedback, while 7 teachers (38.9%) reported that school heads and/or academic teachers regularly review the documents and provide feedback, 5 teachers (27.8%) and 6 teachers (33.3%), respectively, reported that rarely/partially and never these school leaders provide feedback about the quality of these documents. On the one hand, this finding indicates that heads of schools and academic teachers review the documents, comment on language and content, and call teachers for discussion when their comments on the documents are unclear to them. On the other hand, leaders merely sign, stamp, and write "Seen" on the documents without critically engaging with their content and providing constructive feedback to teachers. One teacher pointed it out:

"They just sign and stamp the documents. I have never seen them reviewing the schemes of work and lesson plans, and providing feedback on how to improve the documents. It is the same with the school where I was working before I was transferred to this school. Even if you just write the words 'Scheme of work or lesson plan,' it is enough for them. They do not assess the content of the documents. For

instance, one teacher intentionally copied a syllabus as it is and wrote 'Scheme of work on the cover page. The head of school signed it, stamped it, and wrote a date on it. When SQAOs came, they noticed it and asked the teacher to prepare a scheme of work and submit to them for assessing its quality.' (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

Another teacher provided the same response:

"Here is different from Moshi where academic teacher or head of school were regularly reviewing schemes of work and lesson plans, and providing feedback for improvement. But since I came here after the transfer, both the head of school and academic teacher just write 'Seen' on the scheme of work and the lesson plan. Here it is just "Seen Seen Seen", no comments. No constructive feedback is provided regarding the quality of the schemes of work or lesson plans. And here we write manually, but in Moshi we were using tablets" (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

The finding aligns with Bush et al. (2022), who contend that instructional leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa is policy-mandated but poorly enacted. Principals in their sample predominantly view their role in terms of compliance documentation rather than pedagogical engagement. Moreover, in their study on the role of heads of schools' supervision to

improve the quality of teaching and learning in public secondary schools in Ilmela District, Tanzania, Ngole and Mkulu (2021, as cited in Chaula et al. 2024) found that heads of schools were ineffective in supervising teachers' schemes of work, and other professional documents and classroom teaching and learning activities. On the contrary, Mwesiga & Okendo (2018, as cited in Chaula et al., 2024) contend that heads of schools effectively undertook supervisory activities such as reviewing teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans, and observing actual teaching and learning activities.

In addition, an undesirable finding is that some respondents reported misleading or inconsistent comments. The contrast reflects the regional concern that school leaders may satisfy supervisory expectations through documents without engaging with the instructional reasoning behind them (Bush et al., 2022). For English teachers, comments should name the issue, explain why it matters, propose or elicit an alternative, and set a follow-up point. School quality assurance officers can reinforce this norm by sampling the quality of school leaders' comments, not merely the existence of signed documents.

Moreover, guidance on preparing schemes of work and lesson plans is one of the most problematic forms of instructional support. Teachers repeatedly reported confusion about specific learning activities when preparing schemes of work and about

the 5Es Instructional Model when preparing lesson plans. Only 38 school leaders (40.43%) reported providing guidance to teachers on preparing schemes of work and lesson plans. Similarly, only 4 teachers (22.2%) reported that their heads of schools regularly provide guidance on how to prepare such documents, while 5 teachers (27.8%) reported that they rarely or partially provide the guidance, and 9 teachers (50.0%) reported that they receive no guidance from heads of schools or academic teachers on how to prepare such important instructional documents. In this aspect, the majority of teachers reported that their school leaders lack sufficient knowledge of specific learning activities, the IDDR framework and 5Es Instructional Model to guide them effectively. One teacher elaborated:

"The head of school lacks knowledge about specific learning activities, IDDR and the 5Es for lesson planning. He does not know about them. But when the SQAOs came, they identified weaknesses in our schemes of work and lesson plans, and they recommended that we arrange special training. Then the head of school took an initiative, and an expert came. However, the expert also had insufficient knowledge required for the training. We were at the same level of understanding. So at the end of the training, our problem was not solved. And interestingly, the head of school participated in the training on the

revised curriculum conducted by TIE, but when he came back from the training, he did not organise any training for us; instead, he shared the documents from the training through staff's WhatsApp group and told us to read them" (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

Another teacher pointed out:

"No, that's why there is no uniformity at this school in the preparation of schemes of work and lesson plans because we do not have enough knowledge of specific learning activities, the IDDR framework and the 5Es. Preparing lesson plans based on the revised curriculum is a challenge for us. Every teacher writes according to his or her understanding. And the school leaders do not help us. We depend on education officers from the Municipal who come once or twice per year to help us. One officer from the Municipal recommended that school leaders should get training on preparing these documents for continuous assistance to teachers rather than waiting for officers from the Municipal who may come just once per year" (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

These two quotations imply that some school leaders check whether schemes of work and lesson plans exist but do not assess their quality. This finding suggests that school leaders also need professional development on curriculum interpretation. Wyse et al. (2024) note that whole-school professional development in Tanzania

at the primary level has historically been hampered by high teacher-to-heads-of-school ratios in large rural schools, weak facilitation skills among heads of school, and limited English proficiency among some heads of school. However, regarding the implementation of the 2023 revised curriculum, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, through the Tanzania Institute of Education, conducted training for all heads of schools from both government and non-government schools, with the aim of equipping them with the required knowledge of the curriculum reform and its implementation so that they capacitate all teachers at their respective schools. But the following part of the quotation from one of the quotations above: "And interestingly, the head of school participated in the training on the revised curriculum conducted by TIE, but when he came back from the training, he did not organise any training for us; instead, he shared the documents from the training through staff's WhatsApp group and told us to read them" indicates that the head of school did not fulfill the government's expectations, that after the training, all heads of school should conduct training for all teachers at their schools for effective curriculum implementation.

In the Tanzanian context, guidance on preparing schemes of work and lesson plans should be aligned with learner-centered pedagogical models or frameworks,

such as the adapted IDDR framework (Introduction, Competence Development, Design, and Realization) and the 5Es Instructional Model. This pedagogical shift demands that school leaders support teachers not merely in completing schemes of work and lesson plan templates, but in conceptually understanding and applying learner-centered strategies.

The official English syllabus for Standards III – VI is competence-based and specifies language competences that require purposeful connections among learning activities and assessment. The competences require pupils to demonstrate mastery of basic English Language skills; comprehend oral and written information, and communicate effectively in different contexts (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2023). The syllabus supports learner-centered and competence-oriented planning, and thus the 5Es should be treated as a useful planning scaffold: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate, placing teaching and learning around the learners rather than being teacher-centered. School leaders should therefore help teachers decide when the sequence supports a language objective and how to adapt it to lesson length, class size, learner proficiency, and available resources. In English teaching, good guidance must move beyond filling boxes. A scheme of work should involve listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. A lesson plan should

state what learners will do with English, not what the teacher will cover. Under the 5Es-interactive approach, engagement can activate pupils' prior language; elaboration can provide pair or group use; explanation can clarify meaning; elaboration can transfer the language to a new context; and evaluation can elicit evidence of individual learning. Leadership coaching should model one lesson, co-plan another, observe enactment, and revisit learner work. Such cycles connect planning to practice more effectively than a one-off seminar.

Additionally, the questionnaire data indicate that SQAOs contribute by providing constructive feedback and encouraging participatory teaching methods. Although SQAOs represented a small part of the sample, their role was pedagogically significant because they could identify weaknesses in schemes of work and lesson plans, and recommend improvement. However, the interviews show that inconsistent advice from different SQAOs on lesson planning, based on the IDDR framework and the 5Es instructional model, confuses teachers. One respondent elaborated that:

"Yes, they help us. But we need more help in designing specific learning activities and preparing lesson plans using these 5Es. We need an expert, please. When SQAOs come, they provide contradictory comments. You can do something correctly according to their comments, but when another SQAo comes, he

or she can say, 'No, this is not the way you are supposed to do it'. So we are confused. That's why we are not uniform. For example, in writing specific learning activities, some of us may write that, 'within 40 minutes each pupil should be able to write five sentences using the pronouns he and she.' But other teachers can say this is incorrect; just write that, 'pupils to write five sentences using the pronouns he and she.' So we don't have appropriate guidance, and sometimes we opt for the traditional way even if we are implementing the revised curriculum" (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

The quotation above implies inconsistency in understanding of how to prepare schemes of work and lesson plans among SAQOs, who are very important for effective implementation of the curriculum. This calls for regular peer learning among them to discuss these issues and reach a common understanding that may not confuse teachers.

Team teaching and discussion on difficult content were less common but important where they occurred. 24 heads of schools and academic teachers (25.53%) reported facilitating teachers' team teaching and discussion on difficult content from the revised curriculum and learning from another through mini-MEWAKA sessions. In English teaching, team teaching and discussion can help teachers design language activities, select examples,

and correct misunderstandings about learner-centered methods. In an ELT context, effective instructional support includes observing English lessons, giving subject-specific feedback, and reviewing English lesson plans beyond mere compliance checks (Anania & Bush, 2023).

Overall, instructional support is present but inconsistent. Schools with active heads of schools and academic teachers provide observation, feedback, and document review that teachers experience as helpful. Other schools reduce support to checking records, forwarding information, or waiting for external visitors. The implication is that, when schools can model lesson planning, observe classrooms professionally, and review records for quality, English teachers are more likely to implement the 2023 revised curriculum effectively.

Professional Development Support

Teachers' professional development is an essential aspect for effective curriculum implementation. The study's findings from the questionnaire show that MEWAKA, or school-based peer learning, was reported by 42 respondents (44.68%). Mentoring and coaching, seminars or internally organized training, peer discussion and WhatsApp groups for professional information also appeared as forms of professional development. These findings indicate that many schools practice professional learning in the workplace. However, interviews

reveal considerable variation in implementation. Tables 3 and 4 present findings from the questionnaire and interview guide, respectively.

Table 3.
School Leaders and SQAOs'
Responses on Professional
Development Support They Provide
to Primary School English Teachers
(N = 94)

Support Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Facilitating MEWAKA or school-based peer learning	42	44.68%
Mentoring and coaching by heads of schools and/or academic teachers	35	37.23%
Seminars or internally organized training	26	27.66%
Peer discussion on difficult contents	24	25.53
WhatsApp groups for professional information	21	22.34

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 4.
English Teachers' Responses on
Professional Development Support
They Receive from School Leaders
and SQAOs, and MEWAKA Sessions
Status (N = 18)

Support Strategy and MEWAKA Status	Frequency	Percentage
Mentoring and coaching	16	88.9%
Regular and functional MEWAKA sessions	6	33.3%
MEWAKA scheduled but rarely conducted	8	44.4%
MEWAKA is not conducted despite scheduling	4	22.2%
No MEWAKA facilitation at all	3	16.7%

Source: Field Data (2026)

As indicated in Tables 3 and 4, teachers' professional development support varies across schools. The study's findings reveal that school leaders provide professional development support to teachers through different strategies. However, in terms of mentoring and coaching, the data shows a massive perception gap between school leaders and the English teachers on the ground: only 35 heads of schools and academic teachers (37.23%) reported providing mentoring

and coaching, yet a striking 88.9% of English teachers (16 teachers) reported receiving it. The discrepancy suggests that what school leaders categorize as 'mentoring and coaching' differs fundamentally from what teachers experience as support. Leaders may only count formal, structured, or officially documented professional development programs. Conversely, teachers likely interpret informal check-ins, peer collaboration, or routine instructional feedback as coaching. This aligns with Desimone (2009), who argues that the type of activity, whether formal or informal, strongly influences how professional development is perceived. When a school lacks formal structures, teachers often rely on and highly value informal mentoring, which helps explain why their reported numbers are so much higher than the formal initiatives recognized by leadership. Besides, school leaders are likely to underestimate the reach and impact of their supportive behaviors. While only about a third of heads of schools and academic teachers who participated in the study feel they are actively delivering this support, their actions are deeply felt by the vast majority of English teachers. This indicates that even minor or decentralized support mechanisms from leadership are highly visible to staff. Besides, Leithwood et al. (2024) note that learner-centered leadership operates through both direct and indirect pathways. Leaders influence classroom instruction not just through

official coaching sessions but also by shaping school culture and fostering a supportive environment. The high percentage of teachers reporting support suggests that leaders are successfully stimulating intellectually and providing individual support, even if they do not explicitly label it as a formal mentoring and coaching regime.

The findings also indicate that 42 heads of schools and academic teachers (44.68%) reported providing professional development support to teachers through facilitating MEWAKA or school-based peer learning. However, only 6 teachers (33.3%) reported that their school heads facilitate MEWAKA sessions and they are regular and functional for their professional development; 8 teachers (44.4%) claimed that their school leaders schedule MEWAKA sessions but rarely conducted; 4 teachers (22.2%) claimed that MEWAKA is not conducted at their schools despite scheduling, and 3 teachers (16.7%) claimed that there is no MEWAKA facilitation at all at their schools. Schools where MEWAKA functions well are characterized by consistent scheduling, active facilitation by school leaders, and a culture of teacher accountability. One English teacher described a vibrant MEWAKA practice:

"No doubt, the head of school and academic teacher facilitate peer learning among teachers through MEWAKA day for 100 percent. We share ideas and even take

photos during the sessions and share them through our WhatsApp group." (Interviewee, English Teacher, June 2026).

Another teacher highlighted:

"YES, they facilitate peer learning through MEWAKA. We meet once per week on Thursday; we help each other on understanding difficult concepts and how to teach them." (Interviewee, English Teacher, June 2026).

However, the study identified a recurring challenge: low teacher attendance and engagement in some schools, even when school leaders make deliberate efforts to schedule peer-learning sessions through MEWAKA. One respondent expressed:

"The head of school and academic teacher facilitate and encourage teachers for peer learning through MEWAKA, but we let them down because we are not active. When they arrange time for us to meet, many teachers claim to be very busy doing other activities. Other teachers claim to have so many excuses. We wait for each other during the sessions, but sometimes we leave without doing anything. The head of school and academic teacher want us to share knowledge, but we let them down, so they are demoralized" (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

This finding is very important because it prevents a simplistic interpretation that all weaknesses are

caused by leaders. Professional development is a shared responsibility, though leaders must create conditions that make participation meaningful, relevant, and motivating. Several teachers reported that peer learning sessions occur only when there is something new. Such irregularity undermines the promise of continuing professional development, as teachers need sustained opportunities rather than occasional events. Other teachers reported that MEWAKA exists at their schools only in name, with no sessions actually conducted despite official scheduling. One teacher elaborated:

"Yes, the head of school, academic teacher, and the teacher appointed as a MEWAKA leader at our school insist on MEWAKA sessions for peer learning. But I have never seen any session conducted. We just hear that Thursday is MEWAKA day, but we do not meet. In Mbeya, where I started working before I was transferred to this school, the head of school was even leading MEWAKA sessions, teaching us different issues related to teaching English because he is also an English teacher. But here we do not do it at all." (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

These findings highlight that the effectiveness of MEWAKA depends not only on leadership scheduling but also on cultivating a school culture of professional learning. Spillane (2006) and Dufour (2004) argue that sustaining professional learning

communities requires structural commitment, relational trust, and shared accountability – elements that cannot be mandated by scheduling alone. For English teaching, MEWAKA or other peer-learning sessions should be organized around concrete language-teaching tasks, including designing activities to develop and assess the language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), vocabulary, and grammar, and planning how Kiswahili can be used strategically as a bridge to learning English without displacing English practice.

Likewise, professional development on lesson planning and 5Es pedagogy is particularly needed. Many teachers reported confusion about modern pedagogical frameworks. Some leaders help, especially academic teachers who guide lesson planning several times or organize discussions. One teacher elaborated that:

“School leaders check only whether the documents are prepared, while one Standard One teacher helps us because she knows the revised curriculum” (Interviewee, English Teacher, May 2026).

This quotation illustrates distributed expertise but also exposes the need for formal capacity building. The literature suggests that effective professional development must be content-focused, collaborative,

sustained and linked to classroom practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; OECD, 2019). The study’s findings confirm that school-based arrangements are promising when they focus on difficult concepts, revised curriculum interpretation, and lesson planning. However, sessions can lose value when they lack facilitation expertise or when teachers attend passively.

WhatsApp groups plays a professional learning role by spreading information, curriculum updates and teaching strategies. Teachers appreciated quick sharing, although some lack internet data and therefore receive information late. One respondent highlighted:

“Yes, through WhatsApp group, though others get the information late if they do not have internet data” (Interviewee, English Teacher, June 2026).

This implies that digital communication can extend professional development beyond formal meetings, but it can also reproduce inequalities when teachers cannot afford data. Small support, such as bundles, as mentioned in questionnaire responses by some heads of schools, may therefore have both professional and motivational value. The finding on the use of digital communication aligns with Mitchell et al. (2024), who argue that in recent years in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), there has been greater access to

smartphones, connectivity, and social media, and that efforts have sought to capitalize on this for teachers' professional development.

Many teachers report that in-service training, workshops, and seminars are ineffective because they are not situated within the school context and not integrated into daily teaching practices. This undermines the quality of professional development programs (Alonzo et al., 2024; Darling-Hammond, 2013; De Jong, 2022, as cited in Wijarwadi et al, 2025). Weddle (2022) and De Jong et al. (2022), as cited in Wijarwadi et al. 2025), argue that to improve teaching practices, school-based professional development in the form of teacher collaboration has been found to be more effective. However, Wijarwadi et al. (2025) contend that this concept varies in different contexts and requires further guidance on enhancing the quality of collaboration practice

Overall, professional development support is present but not sufficiently institutionalized. MEWAKA, mentoring and coaching, seminars, and WhatsApp communication offer useful opportunities, yet low attendance, irregular scheduling, and limited expertise reduce impact. The findings imply that school leaders should prepare annual MEWAKA plans, assign facilitation responsibilities, document sessions, link activities to classroom observation findings, and ensure that professional learning directly addresses teaching needs. The

role of heads of schools is to draw up a training program roster and indicate the number of teachers who could participate in each program. Heads of schools should assist teachers through supervision to diagnose and remedy challenges that hinder teachers' growth and to provide effective guidance in promoting teachers' professional abilities for effective curriculum implementation (Okumbe, 2007, as cited in Ngole and Mkulu, 2021, p. 67).

Professional development activities play a crucial role in promoting continuous teacher learning and school improvement. Teachers require the necessary competences to provide quality teaching and learning experiences that support pupils in achieving better outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Dogan & Adams, 2020; OECD, 2020, as cited in Wijarwadi et al., 2025). Similarly, Lyamtane & Mosha (2024) emphasize the importance of balanced professional development programs that enhance subject knowledge, integrate modern pedagogical skills, leverage technology, promote inclusive education, foster collaboration and professional learning communities, and adhere to ethical and professional standards.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that instructional support is available in many schools but varies widely in depth and quality. Sharing information and reviewing records are common,

but classroom observation, constructive feedback, and guidance on 5Es lesson planning were inconsistent. Classroom observation and constructive feedback are consistently practiced by a minority of heads of schools. The majority of school leaders engage in symbolic supervision, signing and stamping schemes of work and lesson plans without substantive review. Guidance on the IDDR model and the 5Es learner-centered lesson planning model in the 2023 revised curriculum is largely absent, partly because some school leaders lack the requisite pedagogical knowledge. In some schools, heads of schools and academic teachers provide developmental feedback and discuss difficult concepts; in others, they merely sign documents or wait for external visitors. This means that instructional leadership in teaching remains uneven across the districts studied. Professional development support through MEWAKA, mentoring, and peer learning is visible but not fully institutionalized. Some heads of schools hold regular sessions, while others have inactive or irregular arrangements; low teacher attendance and limited leaders' expertise weaken the effectiveness of MEWAKA. Lesson planning under the revised curriculum is a major area requiring sustained support. Where MEWAKA functions effectively, it contributes meaningfully to teacher knowledge-sharing and problem solving.

Areas For Further Studies

The study was limited to selected councils in 12 regions. Further study may compare urban and rural schools, examine pupils' outcomes linked to specific support practices, or study how MEWAKA sessions are facilitated over time. Nonetheless, the evidence provides a useful basis for improving support for English teachers in particular, or for all teachers in general, in Tanzanian primary schools, and for strengthening leadership practices that make competence-based English teaching more effective.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Schools should establish regular observation schedules followed by professional dialogue, and document review should focus on quality rather than on signatures and stamps alone.
2. Refresher programs should be provided to school leaders, SQAOs, and classroom teachers, specifically on designing specific learning activities and using the IDDR framework and 5Es instructional model for lesson planning. This could help to address inconsistencies in SQAOs' advice in the preparation of schemes of work and lesson plans, as revealed by the study.

3. Each school should strengthen MEWAKA by developing an annual MEWAKA plan that includes dates, subjects, content/competences, facilitators, and follow-up actions. MEWAKA sessions should focus on teaching challenges, including, but not limited to, designing specific activities for preparing the scheme of work, 5Es lesson planning, and conducting formative assessment. Schools should establish clear attendance accountability mechanisms during MEWAKA sessions, and experienced teachers should be mentored to facilitate sessions. SQAOs should use school visits to strengthen MEWAKA.

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