



Extent of Mentorship Strategy Employed by Head Teachers to Promote Teaching in Overcrowded Classes in Public Primary Schools in Mpanda Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract : The study aimed to investigate the Extent to which mentorship strategy employed by Head Teachers promotes teaching in overcrowded classes in Public Primary Schools in Mpanda Municipality, Tanzania. The study was guided by Classroom Management Theory (CMT) by Fred Jones (1980s) and Emmer and Evertson (1980s–1990s); it adopted the pragmatist research philosophy and employed a mixed-methods approach and a convergent design. The study targeted 46 public primary schools and 624 individuals, comprising 611 teachers, 12 head teachers, and one District Primary Education Officer (DPEO). A sample of 130 teachers was selected using proportional stratified sampling, about 12 head teachers were selected through purposive sampling and one District Primary Educational Officer was selected through total population sampling. Instruments of Data collection used were teachers' questionnaires, interview guides for head teachers and DPEO and a document analysis guide. The instruments were validated by three experts in educational planning and administration at MWECAU and subsequently piloted in one public primary school in Mpanda Municipality. The reliability of the Likert-scale items was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.75, while the trustworthiness of qualitative data was ensured through triangulation. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and were expressed in frequencies, percentages and means, with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring the confidentiality of the collected data. The study found that the mentorship strategy employed by head teachers promotes teaching in overcrowded classes to a moderate extent, although challenges related to workload, limited time and inadequate resources affect its implementation. The study concluded that mentorship is an important way through which head teachers support teachers in dealing with the demands of teaching overcrowded classes, despite challenges related to workload, time and inadequate resources. Head teachers should establish structured mentorship arrangements that provide teachers with regular opportunities for coaching, peer learning and professional exchange within the school.

Keyword : Mentorship strategy, Overcrowded Classes, Classroom management, Public Primary schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher mentorship is widely recognized as a fundamental strategy for enhancing teachers' professional competence, instructional effectiveness, and continuous professional development. Through mentorship strategy, head teachers provide guidance, coaching, constructive feedback and professional support to enable teachers to improve classroom practices and respond effectively to diverse teaching challenges (UNESCO, 2024). Globally, education reforms emphasize strengthening school leadership and mentorship as essential mechanisms for improving teaching and promoting teacher effectiveness. This commitment is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, particularly Target 4.c, which advocates for increasing the supply of qualified teachers through strengthened teacher preparation, professional development, and support systems (UNESCO, 2015).

Recent international evidence further indicates that structured mentoring programs improve teachers' confidence, instructional competence, job satisfaction and retention, particularly when supported by effective school leadership (OECD, 2025). These mentorship practices become even more critical in primary schools with overcrowded classrooms, where teachers face challenges such as large class sizes, limited opportunities for individualized instruction, increased workload and classroom

management difficulties (UNESCO, 2024). Despite these efforts, overcrowded classes remain a persistent challenge worldwide. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2021) reports that over 10,000 elementary schools worldwide have teachers struggling with teaching overcrowded classes. An extensive number of schools operate with a pupil-teacher ratio of over 1:62, which exceeds the recommended ratio of 1:45, contributing to a large proportion of the world's overcrowded classes. These alarming statistics raise serious concerns about teachers' ability to manage overcrowded classes effectively, justifying the need for this study.

In the United States of America, the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds Programme introduced in 2021 supported teacher training, instructional support and school leadership development to enhance effective classroom management and learning conditions (ESSER, 2021). Similarly, India implemented the Samagra Shiksha, emphasizing communities of learning, school leadership training and improved instructional practices to address classroom challenges, including large class sizes. The initiatives aimed to equip teachers with the competencies required to manage complex and overcrowded classrooms effectively. Despite these initiatives, evidence

indicates that class sizes still exceed 70 pupils per teacher, far above the recommended maximum of 45 pupils per teacher. This raises a concern about how well the programme's implementation supports teaching in the conditions of overcrowding.

In African countries, initiatives have given priority to enhancing teaching, where countries like Ghana expanded the In-Service Education and Training (INSET) program to train more than 70% of basic school teachers in large class management. Rwanda's school-based mentoring reached over 30,000 teachers by 2021, focusing on collaborative planning and classroom organization (IICBA, 2025). In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), large class sizes in urban schools limit teachers' ability to implement effective instructional strategies and manage learning activities efficiently. In Mozambique, overcrowded classes have affected more than 45% of government schools, constraining teachers' ability to monitor students' learning progress and deliver quality education (USAID, 2023). Despite the formalization of in-service (school-based) training, it has yet to realize its full potential in addressing the challenges associated with teaching in overcrowded classes.

In Tanzania, the Government has introduced policy and professional development initiatives aimed at improving teaching and learning. The revised policy operationally defines an overcrowded classroom as one in

which the pupil-teacher ratio exceeds the national benchmark of 1:45, which means that for every teacher, there should be no more than 45 pupils (URT, 2023). The Education and Training Policy (ETP) 2014 (2023 Edition) provides a policy direction for strengthening the quality of education through competent teachers and effective education management. In line with this policy direction, the National Framework for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for Teachers was established to guide continuous teacher learning, professional support and improvement of teachers' competencies (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MoEST], 2023). Through mentoring, head teachers provide instructional guidance, promote collaborative learning among teachers, encourage reflective practice, and facilitate continuous professional growth. Such a mentorship strategy is expected to strengthen teachers' capacity to address the pedagogical and classroom management challenges associated with overcrowded classes (Lukuwi & Seni, 2025). Despite these policy initiatives, overcrowded classrooms remain a major challenge in many public primary schools. This situation raises an issue regarding the extent head teachers' mentorship strategy in supporting teachers to improve instructional practices within overcrowded classrooms, particularly in public primary schools in Mpanda Municipality.

According to the Basic Education Statistics Trends (2020–2025) show that pupil-teacher ratios increased markedly in several regions, with Katavi recording the highest increase, from 1:53 in 2020 to 1:120 in 2025, followed by Geita, from 1:65 to 1:79; Simiyu, from 1:53 to 1:76; Shinyanga, from 1:65 to 1:72; and Mwanza, from 1:58 to 1:68 (URT, 2025). These trends raise substantive concerns regarding teachers’ ability to adequately reach and support all pupils during learning sessions, with potential implications for the quality and timeliness of teaching and learning processes. Detailed pupil-teacher ratio trends for the selected regions are presented in Appendix A. Katavi is among the regions in Tanzania that benefited from programs that empower teachers to improve teaching and learning. Despite the efforts, teaching overcrowded classes has emerged as a major concern, with pupil teacher ratios in the region exceeding the national benchmark, as observed trends from 2020 to 2025 reveal persistent challenges faced by districts in Katavi Region in teaching large class sizes.

Table 1.
The Pupil-Teacher Ratio Trends of Katavi Districts from 2020 To 2025

DISTRICTS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Mlele	1:69	1:111	1:97	1:83	1:82	1:98
Mpanda MC	1:97	1:88	1:99	1:98	1:101	
					1:120	
Mpimbwe	1:68	1:95	1:91	1:84	1:74	1:87
Nsimbo	1:72	1:77	1:80	1:78	1:72	1:92
Tanganyika	1:59	1:67	1:10	1:84	1:74	1:88

Source: Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (2025)

Table 1 shows that pupil-teacher ratios in Mpanda Municipal Council remained high from 2020 to 2025, ranging from 1:97 to 1:120, far exceeding the national benchmark of 1:45 (BEST, 2025). These ratios indicate that teachers handle more than twice the recommended number of pupils per class, creating sustained pressure on teaching capacity. Despite government initiatives for teacher empowerment, increasing pupil enrolment continues to outpace teacher deployment, raising concerns about effective classroom management, individual learner support and implementation of learner-centered practices in Mpanda MC (BEST, 2025). Therefore, the persistently high pupil-teacher ratios in Mpanda Municipal Council justify the need to examine the extent to which head teachers employ mentorship strategies to support teachers in managing the instructional challenges associated with overcrowded classes.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching overcrowded classes has become a critical challenge for teachers in public primary schools in Mpanda Municipal Council, undermining efforts to achieve national educational standards and equitable learning outcomes for all pupils. Teachers working in overcrowded classrooms may experience increased

workload and stress, difficulties in managing classroom activities, limited opportunities to provide individual attention to pupils and challenges in implementing teaching strategies. Consequently, pupils may receive inadequate individual support and limited opportunities for active participation, which may affect the quality of teaching and learning (UNESCO, 2024). Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (2025) indicated that public primary schools in Mpanda Municipal Council have experienced persistently high pupil-teacher ratios, ranging from 1:97 to 1:120 between 2020 and 2025, far exceeding the national benchmark of 1:45. Such ratios place considerable demands on teachers and may constrain their ability to effectively manage classroom activities and address the diverse learning needs of pupils. Previous studies have established that overcrowded classrooms can undermine important dimensions of educational quality, including instructional effectiveness, classroom management, and pupils' mastery of literacy and numeracy skills (Dauden, 2023; Mwachande, 2025; Sigalla & Kimario, 2025). However, limited attention has been given to the extent to which head teachers use mentorship as a leadership strategy to support teachers in addressing the challenges of teaching in overcrowded classrooms. This gap is particularly relevant in Mpanda Municipality, where persistently high pupil-teacher ratios

continue to present challenges to teaching and learning in public primary schools.

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question to what extent does the mentorship strategy employed by head teachers promote teaching in overcrowded classes in primary schools in Mpanda Municipality, Tanzania?

Significance of the Study

The study will be significant to theory by extending the application of classroom Management Theory in explaining how head teachers' mentoring practices are promoting teachers' instructional in overcrowded classes. The findings will contribute to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the contribution of head teachers' mentoring practices to promoting teaching in overcrowded public primary school classrooms, particularly in the context of Mpanda Municipality. In terms of policy, the findings will provide evidence to support the implementation of the Education and Training Policy (2014, 2023 Edition) and other teacher professional development initiatives by emphasizing the importance of mentoring in improving teaching quality in schools with large class enrolments. The study will also be significant to head teachers, teachers, Primary School Education Officers and policymakers by providing practical

evidence for strengthening mentorship practices, teacher professional development, instructional supervision and support mechanisms for improving teaching in overcrowded classes.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Classroom Management Theory (CMT) which focuses on the techniques, strategies and processes that teachers use to create a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. Key founders involved Fred Jones in the 1980s and Emmer & Evertson from the 1980s to the 1990s, who extensively researched effective classroom management techniques. The theory addresses how class dynamics, including discipline, engagement and lesson flow, impact teaching and learning, especially in challenging contexts such as overcrowded classes where maintaining order and participation can be difficult. It assumes that effective learning depends on well-managed classrooms where disruptions are minimized and student engagement is maximized (Agustina et al., 2025; Sokoto & Abubakar, 2024).

Classroom Management Theory offers a rich set of practical and actionable strategies that are directly applicable to improving both teaching and student behavior management. Its focus on structuring the classroom environment, establishing routines and promoting positive teacher-pupil

interactions is especially valuable in contexts where overcrowding presents significant challenges. By providing teachers with tools to manage large groups effectively, the theory enhances their confidence and efficacy in maintaining order and engagement. This is critical because overcrowded classes often lead to disruptions that negatively affect learning outcomes (Pangestika, 2025). The theory also emphasizes the importance of time management, enabling teachers to optimize instructional time even when faced with large student numbers.

Despite Classroom Management Theory providing valuable insights into managing classroom dynamics, it primarily concentrates on micro-level factors within the classroom and tends to overlook broader systemic issues that promote teaching. It does not adequately address the role of school leadership, resource availability, or educational policies, all of which are crucial in shaping the environment in which classrooms operate. Since my study focuses on head teachers' strategy, this broader factor is essential to consider alongside classroom management practices (Javed et al., 2025). Another limitation is that classroom management strategy derived from the theory often require contextual adaptation, as cultural and institutional differences can affect their effectiveness.

Classroom Management Theory is highly relevant to this study, which investigates the Extent head teachers'

strategy in promoting teaching within overcrowded public primary school classrooms in Mpanda Municipality, Tanzania. The theory offers a crucial pedagogical lens by explaining how effective classroom organization, behavior management and time allocation can directly enhance teaching despite challenges posed by large student numbers. Given that overcrowded classes often lead to disruptions and reduced individual attention, the theory supports examining how strategy such as mentorship help teachers maintain order, engage pupils effectively and optimize instructional time (Rahma & Prasetyo, 2022).

Review of Empirical Studies

This section reviews empirical studies related to the current study. The reviewed studies are organized according to themes derived from the research questions, with a focus on mentorship strategies employed by head teachers in promoting teaching in overcrowded classrooms. The review also identifies gaps in existing empirical evidence that justify the current study.

The Extent to which Mentorship Strategy Employed by Head Teachers Promote Teaching in Overcrowded Classes in Primary Schools

Mentorship is an important strategy for improving teachers' professional competence, instructional practices and classroom management, particularly in overcrowded classes.

Through mentorship, head teachers provide professional guidance, support and feedback that promote teachers in addressing the challenges associated with overcrowded classes. The studies reviewed in this section examine the mentorship strategies employed by head teachers in promoting teaching in public primary schools.

Vazir and Meher (2021) investigated mentoring as a strategy for improving pedagogical skills and performance of rural primary school teachers in Sindh, Pakistan. The study adopted an empirical qualitative case study design and involved two purposively selected teachers. Data were collected through participant observation, structured and unstructured interviews, classroom observations and reflective journals and were analyzed thematically. The findings showed that mentoring enhanced teacher reflective practice, pedagogical content knowledge, and professional confidence, enabling a shift from traditional to progressive teaching approaches and fostering supportive teaching communities. The previous study provided an in-depth qualitative understanding of teachers' mentoring experiences; its qualitative design limited quantitative evidence on the contribution of mentoring to pedagogical performance. The current study addresses this methodological gap by adopting a mixed methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how

mentorship strategies support teaching in overcrowded primary school classrooms. Furthermore, the previous study was conducted in a rural context in Pakistan and involved only two teachers, limiting the transferability of its findings. The current study addressed contextual and sample gap by generating empirical evidence from a larger sample of teachers and head teachers in municipal primary schools in Tanzania, with a specific focus on how head teachers employ mentorship strategy to support teaching in overcrowded classes.

Awini et al. (2025) examined the mentoring role of head teachers in managing basic schools in Pru West District using a cross-sectional quantitative design. From a population of 244 head teachers and teachers, a sample of 126 participants was selected, though the sampling technique was not specified. Data were collected using structured closed-ended questionnaires and analyzed using means and standard deviations. The findings revealed that head teachers engaged in mentoring through instructional checks and professional support, but formal professional development remained underutilized, with a positive school climate significantly influencing teacher and student performance. Although the previous study employed a quantitative research approach that enabled objective measurement and statistical analysis, the sampling technique used to select participant but

it provided limited detail on the sampling procedure used to select the participants, making it difficult to assess how the sample was drawn from the target population. This methodological limitation indicates a need for a more clearly defined sampling procedure to enhance the representativeness and contextual relevance of the findings. Therefore, the current study employed stratified random sampling and purposive sampling to ensure that relevant participants are systematically selected and adequately represented. Furthermore, the previous study focused on the general management of basic schools and provides limited understanding of how mentorship strategies are specifically used to address teaching challenges arising from overcrowded classrooms. The current study linked mentorship directly to a specific context in overcrowded classroom conditions.

Antoniadis (2024) explored departmental heads' mentorship experiences in supporting novice teachers' professional development in low socio-economic primary schools in South Africa. The study employed a qualitative research design and involved a purposively selected sample of 12 participants (six departmental heads and six novice teachers). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis and were analyzed thematically. The findings indicated that mentoring practices were constrained by limited

time and resources and were inadequately contextualized, resulting in a mismatch between novice teachers' expectations and classroom realities in resource-constrained school environments. The previous study examined departmental heads' experiences in providing mentoring support to novice teachers only. Therefore, the present study included both novice and experienced teachers in the mentoring process to identify their professional development needs and provide evidence on how mentoring supports teachers with different levels of teaching experience.

Muraya and Wairimu (2022) examined the effects of teacher mentoring on classroom practices of lower-grade primary school teachers in Kwale County, Kenya. Using a one-group repeated-measures quasi-experimental design, the study involved 40 teachers from 22 public schools selected purposively. Data were collected using a reliable classroom observation tool and analyzed using Repeated Measures ANOVA. The findings demonstrated statistically significant improvements in classroom practices over time, concluding that sustained mentoring positively enhances instructional quality. The previous study focused on teachers as a sole respondent, which limited the study's ability to capture leadership-level perspectives on the coordination, supervision, and institutional support of mentorship practices. The current study broadened

this perspective by incorporating the views of head teachers and the District Education Officer, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of mentorship strategies employed to promote teaching in overcrowded classes. Collin (2021) examined the mentoring strategies used by mentor teachers to support the implementation of learner-centred education in Tanzania using an instrumental case study design. The study involved six mentor teachers, and data were collected to identify the strategies they used to support teachers in implementing pedagogical change. The findings revealed five major mentoring strategies: supporting the development of teacher identity, modelling flatter power relationships, developing reflective practice, modelling a learner-centred environment, and engaging teachers in continuing professional development. The study also found that mentors experienced challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate resources and incongruent assessment and inspectorate policies. The findings suggested that an ongoing continuing professional development programme based on a mentoring model could provide an effective strategy for promoting the successful implementation of learner-centred education in Tanzania. The previous study identified mentoring strategy and challenges affecting the implementation of learner-centred education in Tanzania, but limited attention was given to the mentorship

strategy employed by head teachers in promoting teaching in overcrowded classes. The current study addressed this knowledge gap by examining the extent to which head teachers employed mentorship strategy in promoting teaching in overcrowded classes. Furthermore, the previous study adopted a qualitative case study approach, which limited the generalizability of the findings; the current study employed a mixed-methods approach which provides explanations and contextual understanding of the findings.

Demonstration of Research Gaps

Numerous empirical studies such as Walsh (2022), Steve-Beke (2021), Windsor et al. (2022), and Koni and Krull (2022) employed quantitative or descriptive designs; most relied heavily on questionnaires and statistical analyses. These approaches provided useful numerical data but failed to capture teachers' lived experiences and contextual realities, particularly in overcrowded classrooms. To address this methodological gap. The current study adopted a mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches. On the other hand, previous studies such as Vazir and Meher (2021), Kalyalya (2023), and Mulatya et al. (2021) examined supervision and collaborative practices, most focused on general effectiveness and academic outcomes. Limited attention was given to how

mentorship practices are built in overcrowded classrooms to promote learning. The present study addressed this knowledge gap by focusing on mentorship strategies employed by head teachers' leadership in promoting learning in large classes. Furthermore, most studies such as Obineme et al. (2021) and Antoniadis (2024), were conducted in contexts that differ from the current study setting. These differences limit the applicability of their findings to overcrowded public primary school classrooms. The current study therefore provided context-specific evidence relevant to the local educational environment in Tanzania.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the pragmatist research philosophy and employed a mixed-methods approach and a convergent design. The study targeted 46 public primary schools and 624 individuals, comprising 611 teachers, 12 head teachers, and one District Primary Education Officer (DPEO). A sample of 130 teachers was selected using proportional stratified sampling, about 12 head teachers were selected through purposive sampling and one District Primary Education Officer was selected through total population sampling. Data collection instruments used was teachers' questionnaires, interview guides for head teachers and DPEO and a document analysis guide. The instruments were validated by three experts in educational planning and

administration at MWECAU and subsequently piloted in one public primary school in Mpanda Municipality. The reliability of the Likert-scale items was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.75, while the trustworthiness of qualitative data was ensured through triangulation. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and were expressed in frequencies, percentages and means, with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring the confidentiality of the collected data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study examined the Extent to which mentorship strategy employed by head teachers promote teaching in overcrowded classes in primary schools. Data were collected from teachers using a structured questionnaire containing statements on different aspects of mentorship support provided by head teachers. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Very Small Extent (VSE) to Very Large Extent (VLE). For interpretation, VSE and SE were categorized as Small Extent, ME as Moderate Extent, and LE and VLE as Large Extent. Mean scores were interpreted as follows: 1.00–1.79 = Very

Low Extent, 1.80–2.59 = Low Extent, 2.60–3.39 = Moderate Extent, 3.40–4.19 = High Extent and 4.20–5.00 = Very High Extent, following Boone and Boone (2012). The following percentage interpretation criteria, modified based on Taherdoost (2019), were used to interpret the findings: 0–20% = Extremely Minority, 21–40% = Minority, 41–60% = Moderate, 61–80% = Majority and 81–100% = Very High Majority. The results are presented in the following table 2.

Table 2.

Teachers' (TRs) Responses on the Extent to which Head Teachers Employ Mentorship Strategy to Promotes Teaching in Overcrowded Classes in Primary Schools (n = 128)

S/N	Statement	V	SE	ME	LE	VLE	M	
Resp		F	F	F	F	f	%	
i.	Head teachers provide regular guidance on lesson planning for managing overcrowded classrooms.	5	3. 9	2 5	1 9	4 9	3 8	3 2
ii.	Head teachers offer one-on-one coaching to improve teachers' classroom management in large classes.	7	5. 5	2 5	1 9	5 2	4 0	2 1
iii.	Head teachers share innovative teaching methods to enhance pupil engagement in overcrowded classrooms.	4	3. 1	3 0	2 3	4 6	3 5	3 1
iv.	Head teachers facilitate peer mentoring among teachers to strengthen	4	3. 1	2 8	2 2	5 4	2 5	2 4

teaching in large classes.												
v. Head teachers provide emotional and professional support to teachers facing challenges in overcrowded classrooms.	5	4	3	2	5	4	2	1	1	9	3	3
		0	1	4	3	2	5	9	2	5	0	6
				6		5		8				
vi. Head teachers mentor teachers on integrating learner-centred teaching approaches in overcrowded classrooms.												
	3	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	2	1	3	3
		4	6	0	2	3	2	5	4	8	3	8
				5		1		2		9		
vii. Head teachers coach teachers to improve classroom management in large classes.												
	5	3	3	2	4	3	2	2	2	1	3	3
		9	0	3	2	3	7	1	3	8	2	6
				6		1		3		1		
viii. Head teachers promote the sharing of innovative teaching strategies for overcrowded classrooms.												
	2	1	3	2	4	3	2	1	3	2	3	3
		6	4	6	0	1	2	7	0	3	3	4
				6		3		2		4		
ix. Head teachers encourage peer mentoring among teachers in handling large classes.												
	2	1	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	3	3
		6	1	4	8	9	5	7	2	7	3	4
				6		7		3		2		
x. Head teachers provide adequate mentorship support to address learners' diverse needs in overcrowded classrooms.												
	1	1	3	2	3	2	3	2	1	9	3	3
	5	2	0	4	1	5	6	9	2	7		
		1		2		0		0				
Grand Mean for TRs												3.2

Sources: Field Data (2026)

Data in Table 2 show that 40.6% of minority teachers reveal that head teachers promote the sharing of innovative teaching strategies for overcrowded classes to a large extent, (31.2%) minority of teachers rated the practice at a moderate extent, while 28.2%) minority rated it at a small

extent. The mean score of 3.34 falls within the moderate extent category on this item. The data suggest that head teachers promote the sharing of innovative teaching strategies among teachers to a moderate extent. This implies that opportunities for teachers to exchange professional knowledge, experiences, and instructional approaches are available, but are not implemented consistently enough to fully address the teaching challenges associated with overcrowded classrooms. During a face-to-face interview, Head Teacher of school E shared the following:

"We regularly organize professional meetings where teachers discuss instructional challenges and share effective teaching strategies for overcrowded classrooms. However, heavy teaching responsibilities limit the time available for regular mentoring sessions and professional collaboration" ((Interviews with HT of school E, 25th, May, 2026).

Similarly, the Head Teacher of School B confirmed that,

"Every Wednesday we conduct MEWAKA sessions where teachers exchange teaching experiences and innovative instructional strategies. Nevertheless, inadequate teaching and learning materials make it difficult for teachers to implement some of the strategies discussed during these sessions"

(Interviews with HT of school B, 18th, May, 2026).

This was further supported by mentorship document of school B, which support teaching methods, stating that:

"Teachers received professional guidance on appropriate teaching methods for classroom instruction" (Document analysis in school B, 12nd, May, 2026).

The information from the Head Teachers and document analysis suggests that head teachers support teachers through professional collaboration, mentorship, and teacher Continuous professional development (TCPD) sessions, which create opportunities for teachers to share experiences and improve their teaching practices in overcrowded classrooms. This support helps teachers gain professional knowledge and identify appropriate strategies for managing large classes. However, the information shows that heavy teaching responsibilities and inadequate teaching and learning materials limit the consistent implementation of the strategy shared during these professional development activities. This finding is consistent with that of Vazir and Meher (2021), who found that mentoring enhanced teachers' reflective practice, pedagogical content knowledge, and professional confidence. It also relates to Classroom Management Theory (CMT) of Fred Jones in the 1980s and Emmer and Evertson from the 1980s

to 1990s, which emphasizes the use of appropriate classroom management techniques and strategies to support effective teaching and learning. Sharing innovative strategies enables teachers to learn alternative ways of organizing and managing overcrowded classes.

Data in Table 2 indicate that (44.5%) of teachers were of the view that head teachers encourage peer mentoring among teachers in handling large classes to a large extent, (29.4%) minority of teachers rated the practice at a moderate extent, while (26.2%) minority rated it at a small extent. The mean score of 3.34 falls within the moderate extent category on this item. This suggests that head teachers encourage peer mentoring among teachers in handling large classes to a moderate extent. Through peer mentoring, teachers are provided with opportunities to share professional experiences, exchange teaching approaches, and support one another in addressing instructional demands associated with large classes. In connection with that, the Head Teacher of School H had these to say,

"Teachers are encouraged to work together and support one another through peer mentoring. Experienced teachers assist their colleagues by sharing teaching experiences, lesson preparation techniques, classroom management approaches, and effective methods for handling large classes" (Interviews with HT of School H, 11st, May, 2026).

Furthermore, the interview with the head teacher of School I confirmed that,

"Peer mentoring helps teachers to learn from one another because they share ideas on lesson delivery, classroom organization, and strategies for improving teaching in large classes. It creates a culture of cooperation among teachers within the school" (Interviews with HT of school I 14th, May, 2026).

The teaching reports further supported these responses by showing that:

"Teachers used shared instructional approaches, lesson preparation techniques, and classroom management strategies to improve teaching practices in large classes."

The teaching reports indicated that teachers applied instructional practices developed through peer support and professional sharing among colleagues, which enhanced their ability to manage teaching in overcrowded classrooms (Document analysis in school D 13th, May, 2026).

The responses indicate that peer mentoring encourages teachers to work collaboratively by sharing teaching experiences, lesson preparation techniques and classroom management approaches for handling large classes. Teachers support one another by exchanging practical ideas on lesson delivery, classroom organization and ways of improving teaching in

overcrowded classrooms. These findings suggest that peer mentoring facilitates the exchange of practical knowledge and instructional skills among teachers, thereby strengthening their professional competence and ability to respond to challenges associated with overcrowded classrooms. This finding is consistent with the study of Muraya and Wairimu (2022), who found that teacher mentoring improved classroom practices. It is also supported by Classroom Management Theory (CMT), associated with Fred Jones in the 1980s and Emmer and Evertson from the 1980s to the 1990s, which emphasizes practical classroom management strategies and procedures that support effective teaching and learning. Peer mentoring enables teachers to share practical strategies for organizing learners and managing large classes.

Data in Table 2 indicate that moderate (45.7%) moderate of teachers were of the view that head teachers mentor teachers on integrating learner-centred teaching approaches in overcrowded classrooms to a large extent; a minority (33.1%) rated the practice at a moderate extent another (21.2%) minority rated it at a small extent. The mean score of 3.38 falls within the moderate extent category on this item. This suggests that head teachers mentor teachers on integrating learner-centred teaching approaches in overcrowded classrooms to a moderate extent. This also implies that head

teachers support teachers in adopting learner-centered instructional approaches that promote active learner participation, collaboration, and meaningful classroom engagement despite the challenges associated with overcrowded classes.

In support of this, the Municipal Primary Education Officer (MPEO) stated:

"Professional development programmes conducted at municipal and school levels emphasize learner-centered teaching approaches. Through these programmes, head teachers guide teachers on how to adopt participatory teaching methods that enhance pupils' engagement and improve learning outcomes in overcrowded classrooms" (MPEO, on 28th, May, 2026).

Similarly, the Head Teacher of School I explained,

"During our weekly professional meetings, teachers are guided on how to apply learner-centered teaching approaches such as group discussions, question-and-answer techniques, and collaborative learning to improve classroom participation, even where classes are overcrowded" (Interviews with HT of School I, on, 14th, May, 2026).

This was further supported by participation reports views that:

"Teachers participated in professional development activities on learner-centred approaches, including strategies that promote active learner participation and engagement during classroom instruction."

The documented participation supported that professional guidance and mentorship help teachers adopt learner-centred instructional methods that enhance pupils' participation and learning in overcrowded classrooms (Document analysis in school D, 13, May, 2026)

The study indicates that head teachers use professional development programmes and school-based professional meetings to guide teachers in applying learner-centred teaching approaches. The guidance focuses on practical strategies such as group discussions, question-and-answer techniques and collaborative learning, which enable teachers to promote active learner participation during classroom instruction. The participation reports further demonstrate that teachers were engaged in professional development activities focusing on learner-centred approaches and strategies for enhancing learner engagement. Taken together, the evidence suggests that mentorship provides teachers with practical knowledge and support for adapting learner-centred approaches to the realities of overcrowded classrooms. This is important because learner-centred instruction in large

classes requires teachers to use approaches that encourage participation while maintaining classroom organization. However, the moderate extent of mentorship suggests that opportunities for such professional guidance may not be sufficiently intensive to enable all teachers to consistently integrate learner-centred approaches in overcrowded classrooms. The finding corresponds with Awini et al. (2025), who reported that head teachers used mentoring through instructional checks and professional support. It is also supported by Classroom Management Theory (CMT), associated with Fred Jones in the 1980s and Emmer and Evertson from the 1980s to 1990s, which emphasizes strategies that maintain learner participation and create an orderly environment conducive to learning. Learner-centred approaches can therefore help teachers maintain learner engagement in overcrowded classes

Data in Table 2 indicate that a minority (39.4%) of teachers were of the view that head teachers coach teachers to improve classroom management in large classes to a large extent. A (33.1%) minority of teachers rated the practice at a moderate extent, while (27.2%) minority rated it at a small extent. The mean score of 3.26 falls within the moderate extent category on this item. This suggests that head teachers coach teachers to improve classroom management in large classes to a moderate extent. This suggests that

coaching is employed as a mentorship strategy to strengthen teachers' classroom management skills, instructional competence, and ability to organize teaching and learning activities effectively in overcrowded classrooms. Through continuous professional guidance, teachers acquire practical knowledge and skills for managing learner behavior, maintaining classroom order, and improving instructional delivery. During a face-to-face interview, Head Teacher of School H explained,

"Experienced teachers provide continuous coaching by demonstrating effective teaching practices, assisting with lesson preparation, and offering professional advice on classroom management and instructional delivery. They also guide teachers during classroom observations and professional discussions to improve teaching practices" (Interviews with HT of school H on 11st May 2026)

To gather additional information, the researcher interviewed the head, Head Teacher of School D stated:

"Coaching has helped teachers improve classroom management skills through lesson guidance, classroom observation, and constructive feedback. Teachers become more confident in organizing learning activities and managing large classes after receiving professional support from experienced colleagues."

However, heavy teaching responsibilities reduce the time available for regular coaching sessions, while administrative duties make it difficult to observe every teacher's classroom practice and provide individualized feedback consistently ". (Interviews with HT of school D on, 23rd May, 2026).

This was further supported by the analysis of mentorship reports, which provided evidence of coaching practices aimed at strengthening teachers' classroom management skills. The records indicated that:

"Guidance on classroom management, support on teaching methods, and follow-up activities were provided to improve teachers' instructional practices" (Document analysis in school D, 23rd, May, 2026)

The responses demonstrate that coaching provides a structured form of professional learning through modeling, lesson preparation, classroom observation and constructive feedback. Experienced teachers facilitate the transfer of practical knowledge, particularly in classroom organization and the management of large classes. The evidence further suggests that coaching enhances teachers' confidence in handling instructional demands, while mentorship reports confirm the provision of follow-up activities on classroom management and teaching methods. However, heavy teaching

workloads and administrative responsibilities constrain the regularity of coaching and individualized feedback. This suggests that although coaching contributes to teachers' classroom management competence, its depends on sustained opportunities for professional engagement. The finding is consistent with Kalyalya (2023), who found that inadequate leadership and supervisory skills constrained effective instructional mentorship among head teachers in Tanzania. It is also supported by Classroom Management Theory (CMT), associated with Fred Jones in the 1980s and Emmer and Evertson from the 1980s to 1990s, which focuses on strategies for managing learner behavior, organizing classroom activities and maintaining a conducive learning environment. Thus, coaching provides an important means of strengthening teachers' classroom management skills and addressing the instructional challenges associated with overcrowded classes.

Data in Table 2 indicate that (38.3%) minority of teachers were of the view that head teachers provide regular guidance on lesson planning for managing overcrowded classrooms to a large extent, (38.3%) minority of teachers rated the practice at a moderate extent and (23.4%) a minority rated it at a small extent. The mean score of 3.24 falls within the moderate extent category on this item. This implies that regular professional guidance supports teachers in

improving lesson preparation, selecting appropriate instructional strategies, and organizing learning activities that respond to the instructional demands of overcrowded classrooms.

During the interview, the Municipal Primary Education Officer had the following remarks:

Professional development opportunities are provided regularly for both head teachers and teachers through school-based in-service training programmes. These programmes enable teachers to discuss instructional challenges, share professional experiences, and improve lesson planning. However, the increasing administrative responsibilities of school leaders sometimes limit the frequency of follow-up support provided to teachers (MPEO, 28th, May, 2026).

Furthermore, an interview with the head teacher of School A affirmed that,

"Regular guidance helps teachers improve lesson planning and classroom instruction through classroom supervision and professional discussions. However, because of administrative duties and the large number of teachers requiring support, it is difficult to provide continuous follow-up and individualized guidance to every teacher" (Interviews with HT of school A on 19th, May, 2026).

It further supported by mentorship records, which provided

evidence of coaching activities aimed at improving teachers' classroom management skills. The reports indicated that:

"Teachers received guidance on classroom management, teaching methods, and follow-up support to improve instructional practices"(Document analysis information in school E, 15th, May, 2026)

The information indicates that regular guidance from head teachers supports teachers in refining lesson planning to respond to the instructional demands of overcrowded classrooms. Professional discussions, classroom supervision, and follow-up activities provide opportunities for teachers to address instructional challenges and strengthen the organization of lessons for large classes. However, administrative responsibilities and the large number of teachers requiring support may limit the consistency of individualized guidance. This suggests that the effectiveness of lesson-planning mentorship depends on sustained instructional supervision and follow-up by head teachers. The finding is consistent with Classroom Management Theory (CMT), introduced by Fred Jones in the 1980s and Emmer and Evertson from the 1980s to the 1990s, which focuses on appropriate classroom management techniques for maintaining order, managing learner behavior and supporting effective teaching and

learning. The guidance on lesson planning helps teachers organize instruction and manage overcrowded classes effectively. It also aligns with the study of Vazir and Meher (2021), who found those mentoring strengthened teachers' pedagogical knowledge and professional confidence. Thus, regular mentoring can enhance teachers' capacity to plan and organize instruction that is responsive to the demands of overcrowded classes.

Data in Table 2 indicate that (38.7%) minority of teachers were of the view that head teachers provide adequate mentorship support to address learners' diverse needs in overcrowded classrooms to a large extent, (25.0%) minority rated the practice at a moderate extent, furthermore (36.3%) minority rated it at a small extent. The mean score of 3.00 falls within the moderate extent category. This suggests that head teachers provide mentorship support to address learners' diverse needs in overcrowded classrooms to a moderate extent. This implies that head teachers support teachers in identifying and responding to learners' different academic abilities, learning styles and educational needs through professional guidance and mentorship. Such support enables teachers to adopt appropriate instructional approaches that promote inclusive participation and improve learning outcomes in overcrowded classrooms.

During a face-to-face interview, the Head Teacher of School F had the following comments:

"We encourage teachers to consider learners' different abilities, learning needs, and individual differences when learning and conducting lessons. We also guide teachers to use appropriate instructional approaches that support learner participation, improve understanding, and ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to benefit from classroom instruction" (Interviews with HT of school F, on May 20th, 2026).

Similarly, the Municipal Primary Education Officer stated:

"We encourage teachers on inclusive instructional practices so that all learners benefit from classroom instruction. Through regular guidance, professional support, and follow-up, we help teachers to improve their teaching approaches and consider the different abilities, learning needs, and participation of learners during classroom instruction. This mentorship enables teachers to develop strategies that promote equal learning opportunities for all pupils and strengthen the implementation of inclusive education practices in primary schools" (Interviews with MPEO, on 28th, May, 2026).

It was further supported by a document in school F which explains that "Teachers received professional guidance on inclusive instructional

practices, identifying learners' diverse abilities, adapting teaching approaches, and promoting equal participation during classroom instruction" (Document analysis in School F, 20th May, 2026).

The responses demonstrate that mentorship support enables teachers to respond more deliberately to learners' diverse abilities, learning needs, and individual differences within overcrowded classrooms. The guidance provided encourages the adoption of inclusive instructional approaches that promote learner participation and equitable access to learning opportunities. This suggests that mentorship extends beyond improving teachers' pedagogical practices to strengthening their capacity to differentiate instruction in response to learner diversity. However, the adequacy of such support is critical in overcrowded settings, where variations in learners' abilities and needs can be difficult to address through uniform instructional approaches. The finding is consistent with Awini et al. (2025), who reported that instructional mentoring strengthens teachers' ability to improve classroom practices and respond to learners' educational needs. This convergence indicates that sustained and adequately structured mentorship can enhance teachers' responsiveness to learner diversity and support more inclusive instructional practices in overcrowded classes. It also relates to Classroom Management Theory

(CMT), by Fred Jones in the 1980s and Emmer and Evertson from the 1980s to 1990s, which emphasizes classroom management strategies that create a conducive environment for effective teaching and learning. Addressing learners' diverse needs can help teachers maintain participation and create an inclusive classroom environment

General findings of the study found that head teachers employ mentorship strategies in promoting teaching in overcrowded classes in primary schools to a moderate extent. The findings indicate that mentorship is implemented through regular guidance on lesson planning, coaching, peer mentoring, the promotion of learner-centred teaching approaches, the sharing of innovative teaching strategy and professional support for addressing learners' diverse needs. This mentorship strategy aims to enhance teachers' instructional competence, classroom management, professional collaboration and the quality of teaching in overcrowded classrooms. However, the implementation this strategy was constrained by heavy teaching workloads, administrative responsibilities, inadequate teaching and learning resources and limited time for continuous professional collaboration. Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening mentorship support and providing adequate resources would further promote

teaching in overcrowded primary school classes.

CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings, the study concluded that mentorship is an important way through which head teachers support teachers in dealing with the demands of teaching overcrowded classes. Through guidance, coaching, peer support and sharing of teaching practices, mentorship helps teachers improve their instructional skills, manage classrooms and respond to the different learning needs of pupils. Although mentorship is used to a moderate extent, its implementation is affected by heavy teaching workloads, administrative responsibilities and limited time for professional collaboration and inadequate teaching and learning resources. Overall, mentorship provides useful support to teachers in overcrowded classes, but its contribution to improving teaching remains moderate under the existing school conditions.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion Head teachers should establish structured mentorship arrangements that provide teachers with regular opportunities for coaching, peer learning and professional exchange within the school. Head teachers should integrate mentorship activities into existing school programmes and allocate appropriate time for their

implementation alongside teachers' teaching and administrative responsibilities. Furthermore Head teachers should provide continuous professional support to strengthen teachers' instructional skills, classroom management, and ability to respond to diverse learner needs in overcrowded classes. School education authorities should facilitate these arrangements by providing relevant professional materials and supporting school-based mentorship activities.

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