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# Instructional Leadership Styles on Students' Academic Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Tarime Urban District, Mara-Tanzania

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Abstract— This study explores the instructional leadership styles on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Tarime Urban District, Mara-Tanzania. The study identifies the contribution of instructional leadership styles on students' academic performance, find out the challenges encountered by heads of school on the practice of instructional leadership styles towards students' academic performance and to establish measures to be taken to enhance the instructional leadership styles to promote students' academic performance. The study adopted a mixed research approach and a convergent parallel design where qualitative and quantitative were used in a single study. The questionnaires and interview guide tools were used to collect data. A sample size of 90 respondents out of 151 populations was used. Qualitative data were categorized to get themes while quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21. Instruments such as questionnaires were validated and reliability was checked and gives the correlation coefficient of 0.725 indicating that the instruments were valid and reliable to go to the field for data collection. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and the findings indicated that the use of instructional leadership style by well-defining school vision and goal to teachers, providing adequate instructional resources, supervising and monitoring them effectively can improve their job performance which enhances student academic performance. However, this study unveiled that instructional leadership style is hindered by several challenges including shortage of funds, poor school infrastructures, shortage of teaching and learning resources and students and teachers truancy. The study concluded that the government should provide in-service training to school heads to improve their leadership skills especially on instructional leadership style, also ensure a conducive working environment including infrastructures and teaching and learning materials.

Keywords—Instructional leadership styles, students' academic performance, Public secondary schools.

### I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The concept of instructional leadership emerged during the 2nd half of the 20th century as an important leadership and management approach to improve school efficiency in terms of teaching and learning; and it continues to become the dominant model for school leaders after researchers noticed that effective schools usually had leaders who maintained a

high focus on curriculum and instruction (Bogale 2019). The effective head of school is sensitive to some traits including; defining the school mission, manage the instructional program and promote a positive school learning climate, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility and providing teaching and learning incentives (Seong (2015).



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students' achievements always Moreover, good connected with good instructions provided by their teachers. Teachers need support from school heads and the whole management system of the school. Orewa (2019) recommends that a school head needs support from the followers such as to listen, work as a team, involved in decision making and problem-solving processes. Therefore, school leaders are encouraged to take the central roles toward staff interaction and influencing the behaviors of member staff towards good job performance. From the above justification, one can easily conclude that students taught in schools where the instructional leadership approach

of school management is exercised are more likely to perform better in their academic work.

#### II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leadership in public secondary schools in Tanzania has become a critical issue to be discussed. School heads play multiple roles to ensure students are performing better academically. The same efforts have been applied by heads of schools in Tarime Urban District secondary schools for several years; however poor performance in Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE) is still prevailing as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Trend of examination performance of Tarime urban district in Mara region, 2016-2019

Types of exam	Year	% of average pass	Tarime urban district position out of 192 district national wise
Certificate for	2016	68.6	NA
Secondary Education Examination	2017	67.19	152
	2018	76.06	113
	2019	79.1	115

**KEY** NA: Not Available

SOURCE: results from NECTA, 2016; NECTA, 2017; NECTA, 2018; NECTA, 2019.

By referring to table 1, the performance rank of Tarime Urban District out of the whole Tanzania districts for four years consecutively from 2016-2019 is still poor. This performance trend leaves the question to the researcher on whether instructional leadership in secondary schools plays any role or not in improving the performance of public schools. Based on these doubts; therefore, this study aimed to find out the contribution of instructional leadership styles on students' academic performance in public secondary schools in Tarime Urban District.

### Purpose of the study

- (i) To identify the contribution of instructional leadership styles on students' academic performance
- (ii) To find out the challenges encountered by heads of school on the practice of instructional leadership styles

(iii) To establish measures to be taken to enhance the instructional leadership styles

Significance of the study

This study may help to educate policymakers, managers and administrators to identify and deal with challenges encountered by the heads of school and academic staff in practicing instructional leadership in public secondary schools and remedying strategies. Also may bring the real picture of the contribution of school head-on students' good performance in their examinations. Moreover, it might be useful to school heads in making self-evaluation about the leadership style relevant to their schools and commit time and effort to improve their leadership strategies to achieve high.



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### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the researcher discusses the findings from other scholars related to the objectives of the current study. From these findings, the researcher noted research gaps that have been worked on in the current study.

### Contribution of Instructional Leadership Styles on Students' Academic Performance

A good head of school focuses on instruction because he or she knows that doing so, directly affects student academic performance in a positive way (Yasser, Hendawy and Amal, 2015). Brym (2016) asserted that instructional leadership cultivates the culture in which teachers walk within, school heads listen and care for subordinates, establish a friendly working environment and he or she must be role models to subordinates toward work commitment. Moreover, Mutuku (2018) in his study importance of instructional leadership practice in enhancing quality education in Kenya illustrates that; positive teaching and learning climate at school has a strong and highly significant association with students' academic performance although this is contrary to Tarime Urban District secondary schools which most of them the working environments are not friendly for effective implementation of instructional leadership.

The instructional leaders have the responsibility of ensuring teaching resources are available at school to facilitate effective teaching and learning process. Al Hosani (2015) accorded that school heads ensure teachers always carry their responsibilities of instructional program actively; give teachers an opportunity for education, monitor and evaluate classroom study and provide learning incentives despite heads of schools in Tarime Urban District secondary schools lament on the government which provides very small teaching and learning resource allowance compare to the needs of the schools.

Okode (2013) conducted a study on the influence of secondary schools' strategic planning on students' academic performance in Rachuonyo North District Kenya. The study approved that mission and vision of the school should be well planned and communicated across the school for teaching and learning program work within the schedule. Also, the school mobilizes the financial resource to engage fully in ensuring the school routine is well implemented.

## Challenges encountered by heads of school on the practice of instructional leadership styles

Despite the roles they have in instructional leadership, school heads are facing some challenges as narrated by various scholars; Dinie, Tirfe and Ayenew (2017) conducted a study on factors affecting instructional leadership's role in improving students' academic achievement in secondary schools of Ilu Ababor zone, Ethiopia. The findings reveal that the major factors affecting instructional leadership include; shortage of instructional materials, inappropriate communication between teachers and school heads, inadequate cooperation among heads of schools and teachers and stakeholders of the school and time limit for school heads. Tarime Urban District secondary schools face the same challenge although some cases such as teaching and learning materials can be solved through using the environment surrounded either by using improvisation to reduce the cost.

Mason (2013) conducted a study on the challenges of instructional leadership: superintended and principals' experience. The findings reveal that some school heads fail to define the mission, at the same time some of the staffs' commitment to the mission is low and some of them try to disrupt the mission. Besides, school heads lack the time to engage with teachers, shortage of financial resources for buying teaching and learning materials and some teachers did not see the need to develop their professional careers. In the same line, Ali (2017) found that school heads were appointed without given any orientation about the instructional leadership approach hence they failed to define effectively the school mission, managing the instructional program, and create the school learning climate. In the same way, in Tanzania heads of schools are appointed and given responsibilities of leading the school without any workshop on how to lead besides, the appointments are base on the experience in teaching professionals and level of education. Therefore, the current study will cover the gap by investigating the instructional leadership style on students' academic performance.

Feye (2019) in his study instructional leadership practice and challenges of school principals explained how the physical environment does affect the teaching and learning process. In his explanation, he pointed out that poor physical environments like buildings, visible and inviting classrooms, library, laboratory and poor social environments such as communication, affluence and multiculturalism to mention a few; all of them promise the poor students academic performance.



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### Measures to be taken to enhance the instructional leadership style

Various scholars came out with some measures to be taken to enhance instructional leadership.

The study conducted by Kaptich, Kiplangat and Munyua (2019) reveals that positive relationship between parents, teachers and students through the regular meeting, parents checking their children's academic progress, collaboration in solving students discipline matters, all these plays the big role on enhancing students academic performance. In another way, the study conducted by Tsai and Liu (2017) accords that teachers engaging in collaborative teaching and learning seem to advance their professional growth by improving their teaching. However, Lee, Walker and Chui (2012) in contrast, pointed out that if the school head focuses too much on classroom observation on teaching associated with quality assurance, it may lead teachers developing negative pressure which enhances poor curriculum implementation

Donkor and Asante (2016) looked at the instructional leadership of basic schools in Ghana. This study revealed that the schools which practicing instructional leadership, the output of teachers and the academic performance of pupils are most likely to improve. Teachers are role models for students, they have to be competent in mastering the subject matter and this is built on the base of in-service training although the provision of in-service training to our secondary school teachers is like a nightmare.

Moreover, Kaparou and bush (2015) in their study instructional leadership in centralized systems: evidence from Greek high-performing secondary schools revealed that for high students' performance, school heads play a significant role to ensure good academic performance through planning and exercising control on the available resource. The same to our secondary school; heads of schools have to present good plans to effectively utilize the little resources available in their schools.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed research approach with convergent research design whereby a researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time analyzes them separately and later integrates the results and uses the results to understand a research problem (Creswell 2012). The study used questionnaires to gather information from the field. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) a questionnaire is a useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured often numerical data being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher and cooperatively straightforward to analysis. Moreover, the study used an interview in data collection. Creswell (2012) asserts that an interview is a method of gathering fresh data from the field in which the researcher verbally asks questions to respondents who orally respond. The target population was secondary school teachers and heads of schools in Tarime Urban District whereby 4 secondary schools were selected. The researcher used Yamane formula to calculate the sample size. The total sample size of 86 teachers was randomly selected from a population of 147 teachers and 4 heads of schools were purposefully selected. The researchers used face validity to test instruments whereby he prepared tools and then distributed them to the supervisor, research experts, and peer mates for reviewing and gave recommendations where necessary for improvement. The notebook was used to record data because the majorities were not willing to be recorded by a tape recorder. Lastly, research ethics were considered including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation and anonymity.

#### V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of the findings and discussion was done basing on the objectives as shown below;

### Roles of school heads as instructional leaders on enhancing students' academic performance

The findings from secondary school teachers explained various roles played by school heads in enhancing students' academic performance as presented in figure 1.

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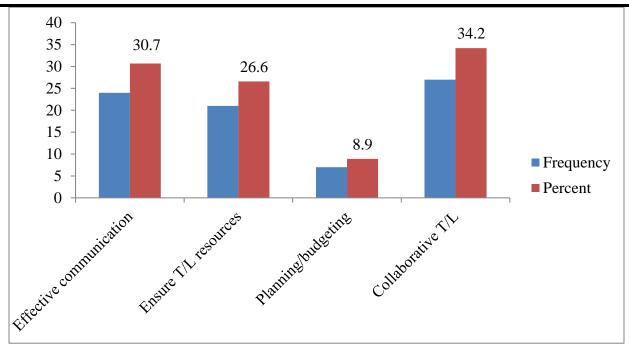


Fig.1: Roles of school head as an instructional leader in enhancing students' academic performance.

Source: Field data 2020

### **Ensure effective communication**

Table 1 demonstrates the results of findings whereby 30.7 percent of secondary school teachers pointed out that school heads practice effective communication. This event was also identified during the interview with the heads of schools. The head of school C notified that in his school there is effective communication between him, his subordinate and students. In the conversation, he revealed this;

In ensuring that there is always a good link of sharing information in the school, we have school baraza which sits once per each term where we get the whole day to share information with students, teachers and head of school, we have also school morning parades thrice in a week, staff meetings during break time and personal consultation. (Interviewee number four, 17.09.2020)

The findings are similar to the finding of Brym (2016) which reveals that instructional leadership should cultivate the culture in which teachers walk within, school heads listen and care for subordinates, establish a friendly working

environment and must be role models to subordinates toward work commitment.

### Ensure teaching and learning resources

Ensure teaching and learning resources was another role of heads of the school described by teachers. The findings illustrate that 26.6 percent of respondents pinpointed this responsibility. In the interview conducted with heads of schools, the head of school A unveils that he has been ensuring teaching and learning materials to teachers although those teaching and learning materials were not enough to meet the high demand of a big number of students. He explained that;

The government has been providing us with the fund for buying teaching and learning resources although it is not enough to meet the requirement especially laboratory equipment and reagents which teachers on their own they are not able to improvise them. (Interviewee number one, 14.09.2020)

The findings are similar to the research finding of Al Hosani (2015) who accorded that one among the elements of a



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school head who practice the instructional approach is the provision of teaching and learning incentives.

### Effective planning and budgeting

The findings from figure 1 show that 8.9 percent of teachers agree that effective planning and budgeting is one of the roles of the school head-on enhancing instructional leadership approach. In the interview, the head of school B revealed that he has the responsibilities of planning and budgeting but for effective planning, he cannot do it individually then he involves the school management team. Also, other small committees have been formed to ensure there is the growth of school welfare; including sports and games committee, discipline committee, food and nutrition and community welfare. The findings tend to confirm what was found out by Okode (2013) argued that the mission and vision of the school should be well planned and communicated across the school for teaching and learning program work within the program and time. Also, the school mobilizes the financial resource to engage fully in ensuring the school routine is well implemented.

### Collaborative teaching and learning

In collaborative teaching and learning the findings show that 34.2 percent of teachers described the role. This role was also described in the interview with the head of school D

whereby the respondent informed that he has been engaged in conducting a follow-up on teaching and learning. During the conversation the respondent had this to say.

> We conduct collaborative teaching and learning in our school, I use to join the teacher in-class teaching and observe how teaching and learning take place then after the period we use to sit together to positively sharing some inputs for improvement. (Interviewee number three, 16.09.2020).

collaborative teaching and learning enhances effectiveness in teaching and learning however on contrary, Lee, Walker and Chui (2012) pointed out that if the school head focuses too much on classroom observation on teaching associated with quality assurance, it may lead teachers developing negative pressure which enhances poor curriculum implementation.

### Challenges encountered by heads of school on the practice of instructional leadership style

The findings from secondary school teachers identified various challenges face by heads of school in practicing instructional leadership approach in enhancing students' academic performance as presented in figure 2.

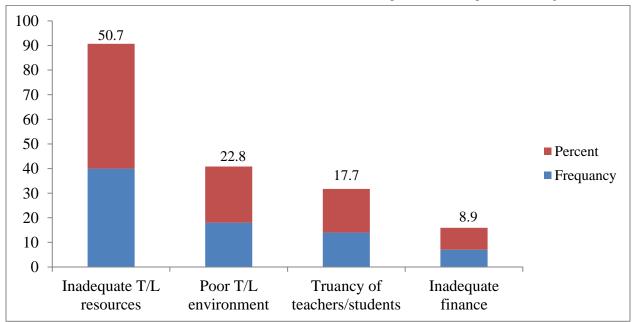


Fig.2: Challenges encountered by heads of school on the practice of instructional leadership styles

Source: Field data 2020

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### Inadequate teaching and learning resources

This challenge was highly described whereby 50.7 percent of respondents shown that it hinders the effective practice of the approach. The interview conducted also revealed the presence of the challenge. Head of school C claimed about the presence of laboratory building without reagents and shortage of teaching and learning materials especially books. The finding concurs with what was found by Dinie, Tirfe and Ayenew (2017) who describe that one of the major factors affecting instructional leadership includes inadequate teaching and learning resources, shortage of instructional materials and inappropriate communication between teachers and school heads.

### Poor teaching and learning environment

This is another pinpointed challenge in which 22.8 percent of teachers mentioned it. In the interview, the head of school A expressed the overclouded classes, poor condition of classrooms which do not have floor and glasses in the windows; school is located alongside the main road which always faces noisy pollution from cars and motorcycles. In overclouded classes, he explained that

There is a massive enrolment of students in secondary schools due to free education as announced by the president while the extension of classrooms is very small, something which has forced us to allocate a big number of students in a single classroom. (Interviewee number one, 14.09.2020).

This finding can be attributed to the fact found by Feye (2019) who explain that physical environment such as visible and inviting classrooms, library, laboratory, a social environment like communication, diversity and multiculturalism when not conducive they tend to affect the practice of teaching and learning process.

#### Truancy of teachers and students

The response from figure 2 revealed that 17.7 percent mentioned the truancy of teachers and students as one of the challenges facing heads of schools. This was also advocated

by the head of school D during the interview. He explained that;

We are facing the challenge of student truancy especially girls. This happens mostly when girls became matured and engage in female genital mutilation then society considers them as matured enough to be married. Some of them have come to school and write a letter to the school head requesting to suspend their studies. (Interviewee number three, 16.09.2020).

On the teachers' side, some of them attend at the workplace at late time and others leave the workplace before the official departing time although some disciplinary measures have already taken against those who have been engaging in such misconducts.

### **Inadequate finance**

In inadequate finance, 8.9 percent of teachers illustrated this challenge. In an interview, the head of school A informed that the government provides the ration which does not meet the needs of the schools because of the big number of enrolment done in several past years. Therefore, there are no enough laboratory reagents, books, stationeries hence the schools sometimes are forced to involve parents in contribution to rescue the prevailing bad situation. Making a similar observation Mason (2013) conducted a study on the challenges of instructional leadership: superintended and principals' experience. The findings identified financial as one of the challenges faced by the heads of schools in the implementation of the instructional leadership approach. He revealed that school heads face a shortage of financial resources for buying teaching and learning materials which hamper the teaching and learning process.

## Measures to be taken to enhance the instructional leadership styles

Some measures have been proposed by respondents to enhance the instructional leadership styles to promote students' academic performance as shown in table 2.





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Item	Frequency	percent	
Effective planning	34	43.1	_
Ensure in-service training	4	5.1	
Collaborative teaching and learning	14	17.7	
Effective communication	7	8.9	
Control of teachers and students truancy	y 20	25.3	

Source: Field data 2020

### Effective planning

This was among the measures to be taken whereby 43.1 percent of respondents proposed it. Moreover, the interviewee also revealed some responses to effective planning. The head of school C contended that planning should focus on the effective utilization of little resources available, hiring more teachers even though they can be part-time to cover the gap of shortage in some subjects, renovate some infrastructures and buying teaching and learning resources. Kaparou and bush (2015) contended that for high students' performance, school heads play a significant role to ensure good academic performance through planning and exercising control on the available resources.

#### **Ensure in-service training**

The findings in table 2 reveal that 5.1 percent of teachers identified the ensuring of in-service training as a measure for enhancing the instructional leadership approach. Moreover, in an interview with heads of schools, the head of school B said that:

There is no in-service training that has been done in our schools since 2015 when science subjects' teachers attended the seminar which was conducted to equip them to be aware of how they can conduct laboratory experiments on their teaching subjects. (Interviewee number two, 15.09.2020).

This is attributed to what was written by Donkor and Asante (2016) who revealed that teachers are role models for students, they have to be competent in mastering the subject matter and this is built on the base of in-service training.

#### Collaborative teaching and learning

The findings in table 2 also show that 17.7 percent of teachers' response indicates that collaborative teaching and

learning is one among the measures to be taken to enhance instructional leadership styles. This also was supported by all respondents in the interview. The interviewee from school A explained that;

Heads of schools and academic officers have to plant the culture within their schools of visiting classes when teaching and learning session is taking place to observe what's done by teachers and also should provide the positive feedback to teachers for the aim of having reflection and improve. (Interviewee number one, 14.09.2020).

This finding relates to the finding of Tsai and Liu (2017) who revealed that teachers engaging in collaborative teaching seem to advance their professional growth by improving their teaching. Moreover, Houchens, Stewart, and Jennings (2017) who insisted on collaborative coaching, revealed that collaborative coaching enables school heads to have self-reflection on their leadership style hence they get feedback which use to continue revising their action strategies until they managed to practice the approach effectively.

### **Effective communication**

Effective communication was among the items described by teachers whereby 8.9 percent of teachers responded positively to the measure. Moreover, in an interview with the head of school B he explained that;

The establishment of effective communication between the head of school, teachers, students and parents creates a friendly environment for sharing information within the school. In students also it builds their confidence in seeking



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assistance whenever they meet the challenges either at school or in their home environment. (Interviewee number two, 15.09.2020).

Making a similar observation the finding of Brym (2016) demonstrates that instructional leadership should cultivate the culture in which teachers walk within, school heads listen and care for subordinates, establish a friendly working environment and must be role models to subordinates towards work commitment.

### Control of teachers and students truancy

The findings also identified that 25.3 of respondents proposed the control of teachers and students truancy as a measure for enhancing instructional approach. In the interview, all respondents revealed the presence of the matter, especially to students. The interviewee from school D expressed that;

Our district faces a challenge of student truancy which is inculcated by these young boys to have the desire of being rich by engaging in small business especially in Sirari border and Nyamongo mining. This has become a chronic disease hence we are communicating with their parents to solve the matter although even parents' responses are not quite active. Moreover, some female students engage in early marriage which led them to abandon the school and this has been highly influenced by female genital mutilation. (Interviewee number three, 16.09.2020).

For the sake of solving the truancy of students, the finding from Kaptich, Kiplangat and Munyua (2019) reveal that positive relationship between parent, teachers and students' through the regular meeting, parents checking their children academic progress, the collaboration between teachers and parents in solving students discipline matters all these plays the big role on enhances students' academic performance.

### VI. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, discussion and summary the following conclusion was made; the instructional leadership approach has a very significant role in students' academic performance as it enhances the increase of students'

performance. Heads of school perform various roles including ensuring effective communication within a school; ensure availability of teaching and learning resources, good planning and budgeting and collaborative teaching. Also, the study concluded that heads of school face challenges in the implementation of instructional leadership styles. Besides, heads of school encounter problems of shortage of teaching and learning resources, poor teaching and learning environment, truancy of teachers, students and shortage of financial resources. Lastly, the response from the participants concluded that; there should be effective planning, provision of in-service training to heads of schools and teachers, effective communication and control of teachers and students truancy.

### VII. RECOMMENDATION

The study adopted one theory in interrogating the instructional leadership styles on influencing students' academic performance; the contingency theory of leadership. The study has demonstrated how instructional leadership enhances students academic performance, the researcher recommended some issues for the attainment of good students academic performance; the government through policy-makers to provide training to heads of schools and a special program should be created for those teachers who want to become heads of secondary schools in the future. The heads of schools have to engage effectively in establishing good communication with teachers, students and parents, provide regular in-service training to teachers to enhance them with professional growth, NGOs and other stakeholders should engage in contributing some amount of money to support schools in solving the challenge which face them and lastly, parents should engage fully in making follow up on their children behavior and should be the ambassador of restricting the female genital mutilation which influences early marriage in the Tarime society.

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