The Supervisory Practices Employed by Heads of Schools in Sustaining a Supportive Teacher Working Environment in Iringa Municipality

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Abstract

This research examined the supervisory practices used by heads of schools to maintain a favorable teacher working environment in public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania. The research was informed by the fact that supervision is a crucial factor in improving teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and instructional performance, but supervisory practices in most schools are inconsistent and mainly administrative. A qualitative research approach was used, wherein a case study design was utilized to gain detailed insight into the phenomenon. Data were gathered through focus group discussions with teachers and a review of documents in the selected public secondary schools. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results showed that supervisory practices varied across schools and encompassed checking teaching and learning materials, classroom visits, communication with staff, and the provision of feedback and guidance. Even though heads of schools were supportive and developmental with regard to supervision, some practiced irregular and inspection-

oriented supervision that undermined teachers' morale. Effective supervision was also limited due to limited communication, poor feedback, heavy administrative workloads, and inadequate resources. The research concludes that regular, involved, and mentorship-based supervision improves teacher motivation, cooperation, and development. It suggests enhancing supervisory training among heads of schools, advancing routine developmental supervision, improving communication and feedback systems, delegating administrative responsibilities, and providing adequate resources. These measures would make the supervision process more supportive, increase teachers' satisfaction, and enhance the overall quality of education in Tanzanian public secondary schools.

Keywords: supervisory practices, heads of schools, supportive teacher working environment

1.0 Introduction

The practice of supervision by heads of schools has historically been centered around administration and control and was rarely concerned with providing support to teachers, mentoring, or ongoing professional development. Since the late twentieth century, education systems around the world have evolved to rethink the role of supervision in education as a developmental and collaborative function. Today, supervision includes mentoring, professional coaching, appraisals of teacher performance, and ongoing support to increase teacher motivation and instructional quality (Glickman, Gordon & Ross-Gordon, 2017). A productive workplace culture based on open communication,

professional development, and teacher well-being has become a necessity for maintaining teacher morale and productivity (Lumadi, 2014; Mulatu, 2016). A head of school who supports and motivates his or her teachers contributes to greater job satisfaction, increased commitment, and better classroom performance (Justine, 2017).

Globally, the role of school supervision has shifted from a traditional model of inspection and control toward a more developmental, supportive, and collaborative process. Contemporary education systems, particularly in countries such as the United States, Canada, Finland, and the United Kingdom, emphasize instructional leadership where school heads mentor teachers, conduct classroom observations, guide professional growth, and create an environment that enhances teacher motivation and instructional quality (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2017; Bennett, 2020; Brown &Luzmore, 2021). This shift is strengthened by policy reforms and investments that prioritize teacher well-being, continuous professional development, and shared decision-making. Evidence from these contexts shows that schools with supportive supervisory cultures record higher teacher morale, improved instructional practices, and stronger student outcomes (Anderson, 2019; Keuren, Silova, & McAllister, 2015)

Regionally, many African education systems, however, continue to experience significant supervisory challenges stemming from chronic resource shortages, inadequate preparation of school leaders, and outdated inspection-driven supervisory models. Empirical research across the continent consistently highlights these issues. In Kenya, for instance, teachers report that limited instructional materials, overcrowded

classrooms, and inconsistent supervision contribute to declining morale and reduced instructional quality (Mwangi &Omondi, 2019). In Ghana, Oduro (2020) found that school leaders often lack the training required to implement developmental supervision, resulting in supervision that is largely administrative rather than supportive. Similarly, Asedhous (2017) and Aboagye & Yeboah (2021) noted that poor working conditions, such as inadequate teaching resources, delayed promotions, and weak communication between administrators and teachers, discourage teacher commitment and increase turnover intentions.

In Nigeria, studies reveal that insufficient government funding, fragmented supervision systems, and the absence of structured professional development programs weaken the ability of heads of schools to mentor teachers effectively (Adebola, 2021). Ugandan research further shows that many school heads lack the competency to apply modern instructional supervision techniques due to limited pre-service and in-service leadership training (Kagoda& Sentongo, 2019). This lack of capacity results in superficial classroom observations and feedback sessions that do not translate into real improvement in classroom practice. Research from Ethiopia also indicates that supervision remains largely fault-finding and compliance-oriented, leaving teachers feeling unsupported and demoralized (Dessie, 2016; Tesema, 2014).

Across Southern Africa, similar patterns emerge. In Zimbabwe, Chikoko (2018) found that supervision is heavily constrained by resource limitations, leading to irregular classroom visits and inconsistent reporting practices. In Malawi, Gondwe (2020)

reported that the absence of incentives and poor working conditions discourage school leaders from conducting meaningful supervision, ultimately affecting teacher motivation. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that many African countries face systemic challenges that prevent school heads from executing effective, developmental supervision. These conditions demotivate teachers, increase teacher attrition, and undermine the implementation of quality teaching and learning across the continent (World Bank, 2021).

In Tanzania, heads of schools play a central role in shaping this environment through their supervisory practices, which include monitoring teaching activities, offering feedback, and guiding teacher development. This paper examines the supervisory practices employed by heads of schools in sustaining a supportive working environment for teachers in Iringa Municipality. Although national frameworks such as the Education and Training Policy (URT, 2014) emphasize supervision as a fundamental mechanism for improving teaching and learning, evidence from Tanzanian schools shows that supervision remains inconsistent, inadequately implemented, and often limited to administrative compliance rather than instructional guidance (Sumra, 2016; Lwoga, 2020).

The need for this study arises from persistent challenges in public secondary schools, including irregular classroom observation, limited feedback, shortages of teaching resources, and declining teacher morale. Studies across African contexts indicate that when supervision is weak or absent, teachers experience burnout, reduced commitment,

and diminished instructional quality (Mlowosa, Mamboya&Maziku, 2018; Nsenga, 2019). If these supervisory gaps are not addressed, schools in Iringa Municipality risk further erosion of teacher motivation, weakened collaboration, and compromised student learning outcomes. This is particularly concerning given growing policy emphasis on accountability and quality assurance in the education sector (UNESCO, 2015).

Understanding how heads of schools in Iringa Municipality execute their supervisory duties, the extent to which these practices foster supportive environments, and the barriers they encounter is therefore both necessary and timely. Thus, this paper examines the supervisory practices employed by heads of schools in sustaining a supportive working environment for teachers in Iringa Municipality.

2.0 Materials and Methods

The current section outlines the methodological approach used in conducting the research study on the supervisory practices used by school heads for maintaining a teacher-supportive school environment in the context of Iringa Municipality.

2.1 Research Approach and Design

Qualitative research methods were used to gain an in-depth understanding of heads of schools' practices in creating and sustaining a supportive teaching work environment. The qualitative research approach was chosen for this study because it is particularly effective for exploring complex social phenomena, human behaviour, and subjective experiences, which are central to understanding how heads of schools supervise teachers and how such supervision shapes the working environment. As several scholars argue,

qualitative inquiry is best suited for investigating value-laden issues that cannot be easily quantified (Pregoner, 2025; Siddiqua, 2023).

Qualitative methods also provide a rich understanding of the dynamics of supervision. They enable the researcher to explore how participants interpret their interactions, respond to leadership behaviours, and make sense of their institutional contexts (Alatiq, 2020; Aleixo, 2003; Lai et al., 2024). This interpretive strength is critical for a study like this one, which aims to examine not only what supervisory practices are used but also how they are experienced by teachers and how they contribute to motivation, morale, and professional relationships. As noted by Huang et al. (2023), qualitative approaches yield in-depth and illustrative information capable of unpacking multiple dimensions of a problem, precisely what is required to understand the complexities of school supervision in Iringa Municipality.

Moreover, qualitative research is sensitive to context, offering the ability to understand social behaviours "through the eyes of the participant" while paying attention to environmental and institutional influences (Robinson & Williams, 2024; Nguyen, 2016). Given that supervisory practices are shaped by factors such as resource availability, leadership style, communication patterns, and school culture, a context-driven approach was necessary to capture these dynamics accurately. The flexibility and inductive nature of qualitative research further support this study by allowing themes and insights to emerge naturally from participants' voices rather than being predetermined by rigid variables (Pregoner, 2025).

To complement the qualitative approach, a case study design was adopted because it allows for a detailed and contextualized examination of supervisory practices within real school environments. Case studies are particularly appropriate for answering "how" and "why" questions about contemporary phenomena that occur in natural settings where the researcher cannot manipulate variables (Svihla et al., 2023).

Finally, case studies conducted in natural school settings allow for more trustworthy and authentic insight into what teachers and heads of schools actually do, how they interact, and how supervision unfolds in practice. Such multiple-perspective and observational depth provides a realistic view of supervisory processes, making the case study design particularly suitable for investigating the provision of supportive work environments in schools (Gurr, 2019).

This study sample consisted of teachers in public secondary schools located in Iringa Municipality. This particular group was selected because teachers are directly involved in and affected by the supervisory methods used to create the work environment in schools. The teachers were selected because they are key stakeholders in the supervision process and provide a unique perspective on the implementation of supervision, mentoring, and teacher support processes. In addition, teachers are the ones most directly affected by the supervision process and have a wealth of information about how supervision affects their motivation, collaboration with peers, and overall job satisfaction. Therefore, the selection criteria for participants in this study were

individuals with first-hand experience and practical knowledge of supervisory activities as part of their daily professional responsibilities.

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2.3 Data Collection Methods

To obtain comprehensive information relevant to the study objective, focus group discussions were conducted with groups of 6–8 teachers from the same schools to capture shared experiences, group perspectives, and collective interpretations of the supervisory environment. Participants were purposively selected to reflect a diversity of teaching experiences and subject areas. The FGDs were held in empty classrooms familiar to participants; the discussions lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and followed a discussion guide that encouraged natural conversation. The sessions were moderated by the researcher to maintain focus while allowing flexibility for deeper exploration of emerging views. All FGDs were audio-recorded with the consent of participants. Recordings were transcribed and anonymized for analysis.

Secondary data were obtained through a systematic review of documents relevant to supervisory practices and teacher working environments. These included school reports, supervision logs, teachers' performance appraisal records, and national education policy documents. Access to these documents was obtained through formal requests to school administrations. A document analysis procedure was applied, involving the systematic

gathering, organization, and critical review of documents based on their relevance, authenticity, and context.

2.4 Data Analysis and Ethical Consideration

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data generated through the focus group discussions. This approach was appropriate because it enables the systematic identification of patterned meanings within large textual datasets and allows for a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives on supervisory practices and the teacher working environment. All audio-recorded FGDs were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and to capture both explicit and implicit meanings expressed by participants.

Once transcribed, the data were carefully read several times to enable deep familiarization with the content and to identify initial ideas relevant to the study objectives. Coding was then undertaken by examining the transcripts line by line and assigning labels to meaningful statements, ideas, and expressions that reflected participants' experiences with supervision, support, communication, and workplace challenges. These codes formed the building blocks for more interpretive analysis.

Codes that displayed conceptual similarities were grouped together to form broader analytical categories. These categories were refined through constant comparison across all transcripts to ensure that they accurately reflected recurring patterns within the data. Through this iterative process, coherent themes began to emerge. Each theme was examined in relation to its internal consistency, its distinctiveness from other themes,

and its relevance to the research objectives. Themes that lacked sufficient supporting evidence or conceptual clarity were reorganized or eliminated.

The validated themes were then developed into detailed analytical narratives. Direct quotations from participants were incorporated to illustrate key points and preserve the authenticity of the reported experiences. This strengthened the credibility of the analysis by grounding interpretations in the participants' own voices. Finally, the themes were synthesized and interpreted in relation to existing literature and the theoretical framework guiding the study. This interpretive stage enabled the integration of empirical findings with broader scholarly insights, resulting in deeper understanding of how supervisory practices shape and sustain supportive working environments for teachers

Ethical procedures were followed at every stage of the study. Permission to conduct the research was first obtained in writing from the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies at Ruaha Catholic University. After that, an additional authorization letter was presented to the Iringa Municipal Education Officer, who granted approval for data collection in the selected public secondary schools. Before collecting any data, I visited each school in person, met with the head teacher, explained the purpose of the study, and scheduled FGD sessions. During these visits, I provided teachers with an information sheet outlining the study objective, procedures, potential risks, and their rights as participants. Informed consent forms were distributed and signed before any focus group discussion began.

Participants were assured that their involvement was voluntary and that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. To protect confidentiality, names, job titles, or any identifiable details were not recorded. All audio recordings, transcripts, and notes were stored securely and were accessible only to the researcher. Data collected were used solely for academic purposes, as stated to the participants. By taking these steps, the study ensured respect for participants' rights, protected their privacy, and complied with institutional and professional ethical guidelines.

3.0 Findings and Discussions

This section presents and discusses the findings from the research regarding the school supervisory practices that principals of schools employ to maintain an effective and supportive work environment for the teachers within the municipality of Iringa. The findings were arranged based on the perspectives and experiences of both heads of schools and teachers. The findings of this research were then integrated into relevant literature and were compared to other studies to determine if the findings confirmed, extended or conflicted with previous studies. Overall, the purpose of this integration of the literature and research findings is to provide a broad, overall understanding of the nature of supervisory practices in public secondary schools and the implications for developing and maintaining a supportive work environment for the teachers.

3.1 Supervisory Practices Used by Heads of Schools

Differences were found in the practice of supervision by head of the schools as they were involved in varying degrees with their staff, which in turn affected the level of motivation of teachers and job satisfaction and a feeling of being supported among teachers at all levels of school within Iringa Municipality. Some heads of schools provided the type of supportive leadership and/or active supervision needed to motivate and provide support to their staff while others practiced this activity in an inconsistent manner or not at all.

3.1.1 Checking of Teaching and Learning Materials

Teachers indicated that heads of schools in several schools were involved with supervising instruction by reviewing lesson plans, schemes of work, student's notes, and assessment reports for teachers; such activities were perceived to be instrumental in both encouraging accountability and teacher development. The teacher stated: "*The Head of School examines my lesson plan, journal, students' notes, scheme of work and Continuous Assessment Books at least once a month. Also, he reviews how I run examinations to ensure I follow procedure"* (FGD with teachers, August 4, 2025).

Another teacher during the discussion explained that the Head of School would review instructional materials on a regular basis to determine academic performance and offer support, noting such practices maintained professional expectations; however, not all schools consistently utilized supervision. Several teachers mentioned that supervision was irregular and reactive in nature, and would typically occur prior to an inspector from

outside visiting their school. For example: the teacher had explained that occasionally the Head of School would examine a students' notes, journal and scheme of work, but it tends to happen before the Education Officer comes to inspect.

The findings also revealed that some heads of schools relied on a reactive approach to supervision, often waiting for problems to arise before taking action. In these schools, supervision took place mainly when the school was expecting visitors from the district or other external bodies, rather than being part of a regular and supportive routine. As a result, many teachers felt unsupported and undervalued, explaining that their lesson plans, exercise books, and other teaching materials were rarely checked unless an external visit was anticipated. This irregular, problem-driven approach left teachers to manage their work on their own without consistent guidance, reducing their confidence and weakening the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school.

3.1.2 Physical visits to classrooms

The results of the study also showed that there was inconsistent application of classroom observation. Heads of schools would occasionally enter into a classroom and observe their teachers' lesson delivery; however, these visits were typically unannounced and appeared to be fault finding from the teacher's perspective. The participants stated that ongoing, constructive supervision is an important factor in improving the quality of instruction and creating a positive work environment. As one of the teachers noted:

> Sometimes our head of school will come into the classroom without warning and then use language that appears to be more about criticizing

> what we do, than providing support for what we are doing. It creates discomfort and discourages me from attempting to improve my practice (Focus Group Discussion with teachers, August 4, 2025).

Teachers reported that in some schools, there was no formal schedule for classroom observations, and supervision tended to occur through unplanned, informal visits rather than structured monitoring. According to participants, such unstructured approaches made it difficult for teachers to anticipate when supervision would occur or understand the criteria being assessed. Teachers in several schools also noted that, because heads of schools were heavily occupied with administrative duties, supervisory responsibilities were frequently delegated to department heads or members of internal Quality Assurance Teams. While this arrangement provided some oversight, participants explained that it sometimes led to tension or misunderstandings, particularly when the delegated supervisors' roles and authority were not clearly communicated to staff.

3.1.3 Communication between Heads of Schools and Staff

Effective communication between the head of school and his or her teaching staff is essential for successful supervision. However, many of the teachers expressed very different levels of communication at their respective schools; many of these participants described the communication with their head of school as limited. Teachers who did experience limited communication felt that their voices were not heard and therefore chose not to express themselves or collaborate with others. As one of the teachers noted:

> When we do have an opportunity to voice our thoughts about our students' challenges or suggestions for improving our school community, there is

> little response. For example, decisions are usually made without input from staff regarding student discipline or school resources. Therefore, we no longer feel the need to communicate our suggestions (Focus group discussion with teachers, July 30, 2025).

On the opposite side, many of the participants also reported that they had experienced positive interactions with their heads of schools through encouragement of teamwork, consultation, and professional development. These participants reported that they felt valued by their heads of schools and that they felt supported. As one of the teachers stated:

> My head of school has encouraged me to participate in professional development opportunities. Additionally, he has supported my participation in peer learning activities and has been readily available when I have needed his assistance (Focus group discussion with teachers, July 31, 2025).

The comments by these two groups of teachers provide evidence that there is a relationship between good communication and collaboration or a sense of belonging vs. poor communication and mistrust or disengagement among teachers.

3.1.4 Feedback and Guidance after Supervision

The findings revealed notable differences in the nature and quality of feedback provided by heads of schools following supervision. In some schools, feedback was organized, constructive, and delivered promptly, enabling teachers to reflect on their practice and identify specific areas for improvement. Teachers described such guidance as highly motivating and supportive, noting that it strengthened their professional growth. As one

teacher explained, “the head of school visited my classroom after the observation, and we discussed what worked well and what could be improved. He even provided written notes with suggestions.”

In contrast, other schools demonstrated irregular, unclear, or absent feedback practices, leaving teachers unsure of their performance and without meaningful direction for development. This inconsistency contributed to feelings of neglect and limited opportunities for professional advancement.

In some schools, feedback was delivered through formalized weekly staff meetings, where teachers collectively discussed progress, challenges, and areas for improvement. While this approach promoted transparency and collective problem-solving, it was not universally perceived as supportive. Several teachers expressed discomfort when feedback was issued publicly, noting that such an approach could discourage open dialogue and reduce their willingness to engage in reflective discussions. As one teacher explained, “at times the head may provide feedback in front of the whole group during meetings. It is something that makes some teachers uneasy and less willing to be corrected.” This indicates that although group-based feedback can foster collaboration, it may also undermine psychological safety when not handled sensitively.

In general, the results indicated that there was inconsistency in feedback practices among schools. The positive feedback that was timely, specific, and supportive in tone was linked to increased teacher motivation and professional growth. On the other hand,

ambiguous or slow feedback was frustrating and did not allow the chance of improvement.

3.2 Findings from Documentary Review

A documentary review was conducted using lesson plan review sheets, supervision logs, staff meeting minutes, class journals, internal Quality Assurance reports, and relevant school documents from the selected public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality. The reviewed documents provided important supplementary evidence that helped to confirm, clarify, and expand on findings obtained through focus group discussions. Overall, the documentary analysis revealed considerable variation in the consistency, frequency, and quality of supervisory practices across schools.

3.2.1 Checking of Teaching and Learning Materials

The review of lesson plan files, schemes of work, students' exercise books, and assessment records showed uneven patterns of supervision across schools. In some schools, there were clear records indicating regular monthly reviews of teaching materials, often signed and dated by the head of school. These documented checks aligned with focus group discussion data showing that some heads of schools actively monitored teachers' instructional preparation.

However, in several other schools, documentary evidence revealed long intervals with no recorded supervision. Some files showed gaps of two to three months, and in certain cases, supervision logs appeared updated shortly before external inspections, reflecting a reactive rather than developmental approach. These findings corroborated teachers'

accounts that their teaching materials were often checked only when the school anticipated a visit from the district education office.

3.2.2 Physical Visits to Classrooms

Documented evidence from classroom observation forms indicated further inconsistencies in supervisory practices. A few schools maintained completed observation sheets containing notes on teaching approaches, student engagement, and recommended improvements. These records reflected more structured supervisory routines.

In contrast, several schools had blank or partially completed observation forms, or none at all, suggesting that classroom visitation was infrequent or undocumented. In some cases, only internal Quality Assurance Team reports were available, confirming that classroom supervision was often delegated to department heads, as also reported by participants in FGDs. This documentary evidence supported teachers' claims that classroom visits lacked predictability and clear purpose.

3.2.3 Communication between Heads of Schools and Teachers

Staff meeting minutes provided insight into how communication occurred within schools. In schools where supervision was perceived as supportive, meeting records showed regularly scheduled meetings, documentation of teacher contributions, discussions of instructional challenges, and joint planning of school activities. These documents demonstrated a collaborative communication culture.

However, in other schools, meeting minutes were either irregular, overly brief, or focused mainly on administrative announcements. No teacher contributions were recorded, and minutes often contained only attendance lists and directives from the head of school. This aligned with participant reports that communication was limited and that decision-making was often top-down.

3.2.4 Feedback and Guidance after Supervision

The review of written feedback documents revealed notable differences in feedback practices across schools.

•In schools with stronger supervision cultures, feedback sheets included specific comments, actionable recommendations, and follow-up plans.

•In other schools, feedback forms contained only general statements such as "improve teaching," with no detailed guidance or evidence of follow-up.

•A few schools had no written feedback records, indicating that feedback was either not provided or not documented.

These gaps supported teachers' statements that feedback was inconsistent and, in some schools, entirely absent. Documentary evidence confirmed that meaningful, developmental feedback was not uniformly practiced.

3.3 Discussion

The findings of this study show that supervisory practices among heads of schools in Iringa Municipality vary widely in consistency, depth, and developmental orientation.

Although four key supervisory practices checking teaching and learning materials, conducting physical classroom visits, maintaining communication between heads of schools and teachers, and providing feedback after supervision were identified across schools, their implementation was uneven. These differences significantly shaped teachers' perceptions of the working environment and their sense of professional support. When supervisory practices were consistent, structured, and relational, teachers described their working environment as supportive, collaborative, and professionally enriching. However, where supervision was irregular, reactive, or purely administrative, teachers felt disconnected, undervalued, and professionally isolated. The findings therefore underscore the notion that supervision is not merely a managerial activity, but a relational and developmental process that directly influences teacher morale, motivation, and instructional quality.

3.3.1 Checking Teaching and Learning Materials

The review of teaching and learning materials emerged as one of the most universally recognized supervisory practices across the schools. In schools where heads of schools engaged in regular monitoring of lesson plans, schemes of work, class journals, and assessment records, teachers perceived this practice as affirming, supportive, and professionally grounding. Regular scrutiny of instructional documents helped ensure curriculum alignment, encouraged thorough preparation, and promoted accountability in teaching practice. Teachers expressed that when heads of schools consistently engaged

with their documents, it demonstrated commitment to maintaining academic standards and provided a sense of shared responsibility in the instructional process.

These results align with those of Hallinger & Wang (2015) as they stated that systemic assessments of instructional resources will improve the coherence of instruction and contribute to higher levels of teacher performance. In addition, the practices described above represent two of the key components of Transformational Leadership Theory; specifically, "intellectual stimulation" which is a leader's role to encourage teachers to continually evaluate and improve their instructional processes via ongoing observation and review. Although in some of the schools, the use of instructional materials was reviewed or checked, only when an external inspector was scheduled to visit. Therefore, this model of supervisory accountability represented a reactive rather than proactive approach to supporting teachers and providing them with continuous support, direction and opportunity to grow and develop professionally. The irregular nature of this type of practice has been identified as one of the many challenges noted by Chaula, Lawrent, &Warioba (2024) regarding the limitations that school administrators encounter in attempting to provide consistent instructional oversight due to the numerous resource constraints and competing administrative demands placed upon the time and attention of school administrators.

3.3.2 Physical Visits to Classrooms

Classroom observation is one of the most direct ways through which heads of schools can influence instructional quality and create a supportive teaching environment. In

schools where heads conducted regular Physical Visits to Classrooms, teachers reported increased confidence, clearer pedagogical direction, and stronger professional identity. Such visits provided opportunities for heads to witness teaching dynamics, identify strengths, and guide areas requiring improvement. These findings strongly align with Lema and Otieno (2022), who reported that structured and continuous supervisory contact encourages a heightened sense of professional identity and collective responsibility among teachers.

However, the study revealed that in many schools, classroom visits were irregular and largely prompted by external inspection schedules rather than internal developmental goals. Teachers described these sporadic visits as punitive or fault-finding rather than supportive. This perception undermined the developmental intent of supervision and reinforced anxiety among teachers. From a theoretical perspective, this pattern reflects the contrast between transformational supervision, which is grounded in professional growth, and transactional supervision, which is centered on compliance. Teachers in schools with inconsistent classroom visits perceived supervision as merely evaluative, lacking mentorship or instructional guidance. This reactive approach diluted the potential value of classroom observation as a developmental tool.

3.3.3 Communication between Heads of Schools and Teachers

The findings also show that communication is a central determinant of whether supervision is experienced as supportive or oppressive. In schools where communication was open, transparent, and reciprocal, teachers reported feeling respected, informed, and

connected to the overall instructional vision of the school. Heads of school who maintained active communication channels created an environment where concerns could be expressed freely, issues were resolved constructively, and decisions were made collaboratively. This strengthened professional relationships and cultivated a sense of belonging and unity among staff.

This aligns closely with Chigudu (2016), who observed that participatory communication and collaborative leadership significantly enhance teacher morale, motivation, and job satisfaction. Good communication also reflects the individualized consideration component of Transformational Leadership Theory, as it signals relational trust and emotional support. Conversely, in schools where communication was minimal or sporadic, teachers felt misunderstood, excluded from decisions, and isolated in their instructional responsibilities. Poor communication not only weakened supervisory relationships but also contributed to fragmented school cultures, where teachers operated independently with limited guidance or cohesion. Thus, communication was not simply an accompanying practice but a foundational condition shaping the teachers' broader perception of supervision.

3.3.4 Feedback and Guidance after Supervision

Feedback emerged as one of the most influential yet inconsistently applied supervisory practices. In schools where feedback was timely, clear, specific, and constructive, teachers perceived it as meaningful support that enhanced their instructional competence. Teachers valued feedback sessions that included professional dialogue,

objective reflections, and actionable recommendations. This type of feedback reinforced teacher confidence, strengthened professional relationships, and encouraged reflective practice all essential components of a supportive work environment.

However, the study also revealed that in some schools, feedback was general, delayed, or entirely absent. In several cases, feedback was delivered publicly during staff meetings, which teachers described as uncomfortable and demoralizing. Such practices hindered openness and reduced teachers' willingness to engage in professional reflection. The inconsistency of feedback mirrors the broader inconsistencies in supervisory practices observed across the municipality. When feedback lacked depth or regularity, teachers felt unsupported and undervalued, weakening the potential of supervision to foster professional growth. From a theoretical standpoint, the absence of constructive feedback disconnects supervision from its developmental purpose and reinforces a compliance-based approach rather than a transformational leadership model.

4.0 Conclusions

This study examined how supervisory practices employed by heads of schools contribute to a supportive working environment for teachers in public secondary schools in Iringa Municipality. The findings revealed that supervisory practices varied widely across schools, shaping teacher motivation and workplace satisfaction. Schools where heads consistently checked teaching materials, conducted classroom observations, maintained open communication, and provided constructive feedback reported higher teacher morale, stronger collaboration, and greater job satisfaction. In contrast, irregular or

purely administrative supervision led to feelings of neglect, low motivation, and limited professional growth among teachers.

The study demonstrates that supervision extends beyond administrative oversight; it is a developmental process that strengthens mentorship, professional relationships, and teacher confidence. However, inconsistent supervision, heavy administrative workloads, and inadequate training for heads of schools undermine its effectiveness.

5.0 Recommendations

The findings suggest that strengthening supervision in public secondary schools requires action both at the school and policy levels. At the school level, heads of schools should adopt structured and consistent supervision schedules for checking teaching and learning materials, ensuring that monitoring occurs routinely rather than only during expected inspections.

Classroom observations should be formalized, developmental, and guided by training in clinical or instructional supervision so that visits become supportive rather than fault-finding. Communication between heads of schools and teachers must also be improved through regular consultative meetings and participatory decision-making that enhance trust, teamwork, and shared responsibility for school improvement.

Feedback following supervision should be timely, specific, and privately delivered to protect teachers' confidence and psychological safety, avoiding the discomfort linked to public criticism. At the government and policy level, the Ministry of Education and local authorities should reduce the administrative burden placed on heads of schools and

clearly define supervisory expectations through updated guidelines aligned with instructional leadership principles.

In addition, policy-makers should provide sustained capacity-building programs for heads of schools particularly in instructional leadership, communication, and mentorship and ensure the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources to support effective supervision. Strengthening these school-level and systemic measures will collectively promote a more motivating, collaborative, and supportive working environment for teachers.

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