



Instructional Supervision as a Multi-Level Leadership System for Competence-Based Curriculum Implementation in Tanzania

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Abstract: The study explored how instructional supervision is coordinated as a multi-level leadership system within the 2023 Competence-Based Curriculum implementation in Tanzania. A qualitative multiple-case study design was used, informed by Instructional Leadership Theory, Developmental Supervision Theory, Situated Learning Theory and Communities of Practice Theory. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings revealed that instructional supervision is evolving from a compliance and inspection-based approach towards a more developmental and collaborative approach, involving coaching, mentoring, reflective conversations, teaching demonstration and feedback provision to support teachers' professionalism for effective curriculum implementation purposes. However, coordination of supervision practices across educational levels remained limited, while resource constraints, heavy administrative workload, transport challenges and inadequate follow-up restricted instructional supervision effectiveness. Drawing from these findings, the study proposes a Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework, which conceptualises supervision as a coordinated leadership system integrating developmental supervision, situated teacher learning, and collaborative professional practice in a social setting. The study extends understanding of instructional supervision beyond conventional inspection-oriented practices and offers practical guidance for strengthening instructional leadership, continuous teacher professional learning, situated professional learning during competence-based curriculum reforms in Tanzania and comparable educational contexts.

Keywords: Instructional supervision, Instructional leadership, Teacher professional learning, Developmental supervision, Curriculum implementation

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1. Introduction

Across many education systems, competence-based curriculum reforms have fundamentally changed the role of school leaders in supporting curriculum implementation. This change is significant as education systems seek to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values and competencies required for the twenty-first century (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). Accordingly, these demands have necessitated the transformation of teaching pedagogies, classroom assessment practices and other teaching and learning strategies that enable the application of acquired knowledge to real-life situations. The effectiveness of these reforms depends more on the implementation of these new practices in classrooms than

on policy formulation alone (Fullan, 2016). Evidence consistently shows that implementation of these new pedagogies and assessment practices depends less on curriculum documents than on the quality of instructional leadership in supporting teachers in everyday classroom practices (Fullan, 2016; Hallinger, 2011). Consequently, instructional supervision has emerged as a crucial link between curriculum policy and classroom practice, making it a key focus in educational transformation. The instructional supervision relationship has become a developmental process through which educational leaders offer professional guidance, constructive feedback, coaching and mentoring, and opportunities for reflection and refinement of teaching practices within the curriculum implementation (Glickman et al., 2018; Sullivan & Glanz, 2013).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In 2023, the Government of Tanzania revised the national curriculum to strengthen Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). This reform is meant to improve the learners' acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and competencies necessary for national development and lifelong learning. Achieving these curriculum goals depends not only on the quality of curriculum design but also on effective implementation of revised curriculum pedagogies and assessment practices in the classroom setting. Thus, for implementation, the curriculum has allocated roles of educational leaders at the school, ward and district levels, such as Head Teachers, Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs), to monitor and supervise the curriculum implementation (MoEST, 2023). These leaders are expected to support the implementation of the curriculum through administrative and instructional support, including coaching, mentoring, reflective dialogues, problem-solving and ongoing professional development. While instructional supervision is recognised as a mechanism for supporting curriculum implementation, the roles of these actors and interactions among them remained poorly understood within Tanzania's 2023 revised Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC).

Research in Tanzania has examined instructional supervision largely through school level and quality assurance perspective, resulting in limited understanding of how supervisory responsibilities are coordinated across multiple levels of administrative levels (Mwakajitu et al., 2022). Although Urio and Manase (2024) examined the roles and tasks of school heads in promoting quality education, whereas the present study extends this perspective by examining instructional supervision as a coordinated process involving Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs across multiple administrative levels. Little is known about how instructional leadership is coordinated across the interconnected levels of the education system in supporting teachers' professional learning and addressing the challenges associated with implementing the 2023 revised curriculum. This gap is especially significant, because effective implementation of the competence-based curriculum requires coherent and coordinated instructional leadership across school, ward, and district levels (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020). Without a comprehensive understanding of how supervisory responsibilities are enacted and aligned across these leadership levels, policy makers and education managers will continue to lack the evidence they need to strengthen instructional support systems needed to strengthen the curriculum implementation (UNESCO, 2024). Therefore, this study explores instructional supervision from the perspective of Head Teachers, Ward Education officers and School Quality Assurance Officers in order to develop a theoretical understanding of instructional supervision as a coordinated multi-level leadership process in supporting curriculum implementation. In doing so, the study proposes the Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework as a conceptual framework for strengthening coordinated instructional leadership,

promoting continuous professional learning and enhancing competence-based curriculum implementation in the Tanzanian context.

1.2 Purposes of the study

The study explored instructional supervision from the perspective of a multi-level leadership system in implementing the competence-based curriculum in Tanzania. Drawing from Instructional Leadership Theory, Developmental Supervision, Situated Learning, and Communities of Practice, the study conceptualises instructional supervision as a multi-level leadership process to support teacher professional learning for the effective curriculum enactment. These objectives helped clarify the process of how coordinated leadership could enhance the implementation of the curriculum. Specifically, the study a) examined how Head Teachers, Ward Education Officers, and School Quality Assurance Officers conceptualise instructional supervision during competence-based curriculum implementation, b) explored the supervisory practices employed by educational leaders to support curriculum implementation, c) investigated how instructional supervision contributes to teachers' professional learning and curriculum enactment, d) identified contextual factors influencing instructional supervision during curriculum implementation. The findings contribute to the growing literature on instructional supervision by extending understanding beyond inspection and accountability toward supervision as a system of continuous professional learning within the curriculum implementation.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study adds to the literature by proposing a Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework, which is a synthesis of instructional leadership, developmental supervision, situated learning, and communities of practice to articulate how coordinated leadership can contribute to the curriculum implementation. The findings also have policy significance by informing the Ministry of Education, the Tanzania Institute of Education, the President's office–Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) and the School Quality Assurance Division about the strategies for strengthening instructional supervision within the revised 2023 competence-based curriculum. Further, the research offers practical guidance for Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs on effective collaborative supervision, coaching, mentoring and professional learning approaches which enhance classroom practice. The study draws on three levels of leadership, thus complementing previous research that has been limited to teachers or one supervisory actor to gain a broader perspective on instructional supervision as a coordinated leadership process.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical framework

This research employs an integrated theoretical approach that integrates Instructional Leadership Theory,

Developmental Supervision Theory, Situated Learning Theory and Communities of Practice Theory. Together, these theories helped to explain how educational leaders provide instructional supervision, support teachers' professional development during supervision, facilitate collaborative knowledge and enhance curriculum implementation. In particular, Instructional Leadership Theory as developed by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and later by Hallinger (2011), provides the lens to examine how educational leaders can facilitate curriculum implementation. The theory places learning and teaching at the heart of school improvement through coordinated classroom supervision, professional development and instructional monitoring. In this view, Instructional leadership is not just the responsibility of the school principal, but involves multiple actors of leadership involved in instructional guidance. Accordingly, this theory provides a lens for conceptualizing instructional supervision as a coordinated leadership process operating across multiple levels of the education system rather than as the responsibility of a single supervisory actor.

In Tanzania, supervision is a shared responsibility amongst Head Teachers, Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs), each performing a complementary supervisory role at different administrative levels. Head teachers provide school-based instructional leadership through classroom observation, follow-up, mentoring and professional support. WEOs coordinate instructional activities across schools within their ward, while SQAOs provide external supervision, monitor curriculum implementation to ensure quality education provision within their district. Although Instructional leadership theory explains who provides leadership for instructional supervision, it provides less guidance regarding how supervision is conducted and coordinated to promote teachers' professional development. This limitation necessitated the inclusion of developmental supervision theory in this study.

Developmental Supervision Theory, as developed by Glickman (1981), and later by Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2018), provides a framework for understanding how instructional supervision can support teachers with different levels of professional knowledge, expertise, commitment and instructional capacity. The theory rejects the use of a uniform supervisory approach and proposes that supervisors should adapt their supervisory approaches to teachers' levels of professional development, expertise, commitment and instructional needs. Depending on the teachers and instructional situation, supervision may take directive-control, directive-informational, collaborative or non-directive approaches. This framework helped to explore differentiated supervisory approaches that correspond to teachers' stages of professional development. The theory is relevant to competence-based curriculum implementation because the reform requires teachers to adopt new pedagogical and assessment practices that cannot be developed through a single training event. Accordingly, developmental supervision theory illuminates how this multilevel leadership system (Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs) can transform classroom

supervision into an opportunity for professional learning instead of just evaluating teaching. Although this theory provides a description of the supervisory process, it is not a complete description of how teachers learn from the supervisory interaction. Situated Learning Theory helped with this aspect.

Situated Learning Theory, as developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) was helpful in explaining instructional supervision as the process of guided participation in professional practice and not just an external evaluation of teacher performance. Based on the theory, professional practices take place through engagement in real tasks, interaction with experienced practitioners, and through engaging in professional activity. It is through these ongoing supervision practices (observation of classes, lesson demonstrations, co-planning of lessons, reflective conversations, and analysis of teaching) supervisors offer authentic learning opportunities for interpreting the curriculum expectations in the context of teachers' experiences. The theory was useful in explaining the implementation of the competence-based curriculum, where teachers are expected to develop complex pedagogical knowledge, formative assessment practices and other curriculum approaches that cannot be fully learned theoretically through one training. Instead, these skills are developed through continuous engagement in classroom practices, collaborative lesson planning, classroom observation, reflective dialogues, mentoring, coaching and participation in professional learning communities. Instructional supervision provides situated opportunities for teachers through ongoing activities that are connected directly to classroom experiences. Therefore, the theory provided a valuable lens for understanding how teachers learn to implement the curriculum in everyday instructional activities and interactions with instructional supervisors. Yet it does not give much consideration to how professional learning can be maintained as a community of schools and learning systems. Communities of Practice Theory is one way of addressing this dimension.

Communities of Practice Theory, as developed by Wenger (1998), builds on Situated Learning theory by emphasising that professional knowledge is developed through sustained interactions of people who share a common professional interest and practice. Through shared learning, collaboration on solving problems, people build a joint professional identity. Thus, Communities of Practice theory suggests that professional learning should extend beyond individual classrooms through sustained collaboration among teachers, Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs. Through professional dialogue, mentoring, peer observation, school-based learning communities, and reflection, supervisors can establish professional networks that promote collective learning and instructional improvement. The theory applies especially to the implementation of the competence-based curriculum because this reform requires ongoing adaptation rather than isolated instructional change. Consequently, Communities of Practice provides an important explanation for how instructional supervision can sustain professional learning beyond formal supervisory visits.

The integration of these four theories was helpful in explaining how this multi-level leadership system (Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs) can work together effectively to provide instructional supervision. The four theories are not independent but complementary in explaining various aspects of instructional supervision within the curriculum implementation. Together, these theories conceptualise instructional supervision as a multi-level leadership process, which is orchestrated and interconnected, and moves from episodic inspection to continuous professional learning.

2.1.1 Theoretical Framework

Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS)

This study proposes the Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework as a conceptual synthesis. The framework posits that effective instructional supervision emerges from coordinated leadership across school, ward, and district levels, where supervision is organized as a continuous cycle of professional learning. Figure 1 conceptualises it.

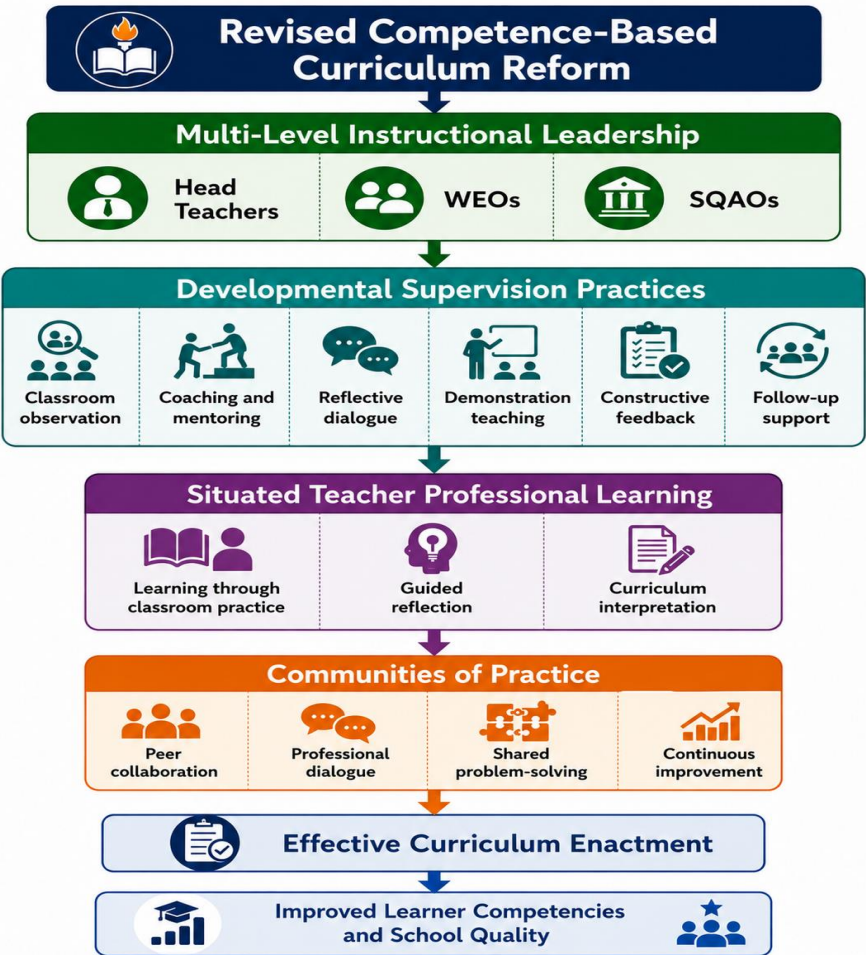


Figure 1. Proposed Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Instructional Supervision: Concept and Evolution

Over the last few decades there has been a significant shift in the conceptualisation of instructional supervision. Traditionally, supervision was seen mainly as the inspection function, which focused on monitoring conformity with educational rules, effectiveness of teaching and learning, and curriculum goals (Sullivan & Glanz, 2013). Supervisors were tasked with accountability functions, expected to evaluate teacher competence by observing classroom practices, inspecting professional records, and evaluating teaching

effectiveness. Although these accountability functions helped maintain educational standards and ensure compliance with policy requirements, instructional supervision was largely perceived as a hierarchical and inspection-oriented process in which teachers were evaluated for accountability rather than supported professionally in their continuous learning and instructional improvement. Recent scholarship, however, has increasingly conceptualised instructional supervision as a developmental process designed to enhance instruction and learning, whereby supervisors are expected to work collaboratively, engage in professional dialogue, and provide continuous professional support (Glickman et al., 2018). These researchers postulated the need for supervision to focus on coaching, mentoring, reflective practice, and provision of constructive feedback

rather than evaluation of teaching in order to help teachers improve their instructional practice. This paradigm represents a transformation in educational leadership, recognising that sustainable improvement in teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching depends on continuously building teachers' capacity rather than relying solely on external accountability mechanisms. This shifts supervision towards a developmental process that supports teacher in adapting pedagogical practices, formative assessment, and other competence-oriented practices through continuous professional support. Accordingly, instructional supervision is increasingly recognised as a means of teacher professional learning rather than an instrument for teacher evaluation. These perspectives: developmental supervision, instructional leadership, and professional learning communities all recognise that meaningful improvements in teaching happen when supervision is not about diagnosing what teachers are doing wrong or right, but rather is an ongoing process of dialogue, coaching and collaborative inquiry (Glickman et al., 2018; Wenger, 1998).

2.2.2 Instructional supervision in Competence-Based Curriculum Reforms

Competence-based curricula have been adopted in various countries in Africa to link learning to the development goals of the country. Despite these reforms, research in Africa consistently shows that teachers struggle to implement competence-based curriculum (Kasuga & Kalolo, 2025; Kimario, & Otieno, 2022; UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2022). This gap highlights the need for continuous support to teachers to enable them to implement these reforms effectively. Consequently, instructional supervision has gained increasing attention as a key support to teachers to enhance curriculum implementation. This is because it offers meaningful instruction, in-class coaching, and professional learning opportunities. Such recognition does not always seem to be reflected in empirical results. However, instructional supervision has been found to enhance teacher confidence, pedagogical skills and curriculum implementation when described in terms of collaborative support, coaching and constructive feedback (Glickman et al., 2018; Zepeda, 2017; Kraft et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2008). Yet, studies suggest that supervision may remain strongly oriented towards monitoring and inspection of lesson plans, schemes of work, and professional documentation, with relatively fewer opportunities for sustained coaching, mentoring, and demonstration of instruction (Urio & Manase, 2024; Mwakajitu et al., 2022), which makes supervision more reliant on administrative leadership than instructional leadership.

Instructional leadership differs from administrative leadership, which is mainly concerned with the management of the organisation. Therefore, the role of instructional leadership in achieving curriculum reform is becoming increasingly significant as its coordinated support goes beyond teacher evaluation. This distinction is important because educational leaders facilitate curriculum implementation by interpreting policy, organizing professional development, monitoring

instruction, and offering feedback to teachers to adjust new pedagogical practices to their teaching environments (Fullan, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Previous research shows that instructional leadership provides the framework and conditions for effective implementation of the curriculum reform (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson et al., 2008). However, new research has found that instructional leadership is strongest when leadership roles are shared among a variety of educational stakeholders, not just the school principal (Hallinger, 2018; Harris, 2014). This view aligns with the complexity of implementing competence-based curriculum, where the Head Teachers, the Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) play complementary roles of instructional leadership. However, empirical studies are still largely concentrated on school principals, providing limited insights into the function of instructional leadership at various administrative levels of the educational system (Gümüş et al., 2018). Instructional leadership creates the organizational context for instructional improvement, but the success of instructional implementation depends on teachers' opportunities for ongoing and coordinated professional learning from these supervisors.

2.2.3 Instructional Supervision and Teacher Professional Learning

Instructional supervision should function as a mechanism for teacher professional learning, not just accountability. It should allow teachers to engage in critical reflection on teaching, use feedback for improving teaching methods, collaboratively discuss problems and find solutions that help them continually improve teaching practice (Timperley, 2011). When supervision is accompanied by coaching, mentoring, classroom observation, and reflective dialogue, it can support teachers' professional development and improve learner outcomes. Situated Learning Theory suggests that teachers develop their own competence effectively through engagement in real teaching situations and hence knowledge is constructed within the context of actual classroom practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Likewise, Communities of Practice emphasises collaborative learning through shared professional engagement, solving common classroom challenges, and building a shared professional learning base (Wenger, 1998). Recent studies suggest that supervision that emphasizes collaborative discussion, coaching, and long-term follow-up is more effective in improving instruction compared to supervision that centers on inspection and evaluation alone (Robinson et al., 2008; Kraft et al., 2018; Glickman et al., 2018; Zepeda, 2017). However, evidence from many developing education systems suggests that professional learning opportunities within supervision remain inconsistent because organizational factors often restrict supervisors' ability to provide ongoing instructional support. However, it becomes more evident during the implementation of competence-based curriculum as teachers are expected to adopt different teaching and assessment methods to suit the curriculum demands.

2.2.4 Organizational Factors Influencing Instructional Supervision

While instructional practices are necessary in improving curriculum implementation, the effectiveness of instructional supervision is determined not only by supervisory approaches but also by the organisational environment(s) in which supervision takes place. However, research identifies shortages of supervisory personnel, heavy workload, lack of funding, lack of transport, large geographical jurisdictions and insufficient follow-up as significant barriers to the effective instructional supervision in many developing education systems (Hallinger, 2011; Bush & Glover, 2014; De Grauwe, 2007). These structural issues reduce supervision to periodic inspection visits, thus limiting opportunities for sustained coaching and professional dialogue. School-level factors also influence supervisory effectiveness. The effectiveness of supervision is enhanced when there is supportive leadership, collaborative school cultures, regular professional meetings and teachers are willing to engage in reflective practice (Glickman et al., 2018; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020). Low levels of trust between supervisors and teachers, excessive administrative responsibilities, and fragmented supervisory structures and weak coordination among educational leaders, weaken supervision's capacity to facilitate instructional improvement (Hallinger, 2011). Research suggests that while organisational change is necessary, changes in supervisory practice are necessary to improve instructional supervision (Glickman et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2008). Improving coordination between educational leaders may be as important as increasing the frequency of supervisory visits, as coherent and collaborative instructional leadership is more likely to support teachers' professional learning and effective curriculum implementation (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Existing research has largely conceptualised instructional supervision as a school-level activity undertaken by a principal or quality assurance officers. Yet there is little understanding of the role of multiple educational actors in curriculum implementation. Moreover, there is very little empirical research which focuses on how Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs work together (or fail to work together) in supervision at school, ward and district level. This gap is important because competence-based curriculum implementation requires a coherent leadership system rather than isolated supervisory practices. In view of these gaps, this study explored instructional supervision from the perspective of a Head Teacher, Ward Education Officer and School Quality Assurance Officer. Based on an integrated theory, the study conceptualises instructional supervision as a coordinated leadership process that facilitates teacher professional learning and effective enactment of curriculum. Thus, this study proposes the Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework as an integrative leadership model that explains how instructional leadership, developmental supervision, situated teacher learning and communities of practice interact across schools, ward and district levels to support competence-based curriculum implementation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study is a qualitative multiple-case study, which explored the enactment of instructional supervision across varying tiers of educational leadership within the implementation of the revised competence-based curriculum in Tanzania. A qualitative method was used as the study aimed to explore participants' experiences, supervisory practices, and interactions in their educational environments, instead of measuring predetermined variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A multiple-case study design was used to explore instructional supervision across three interconnected leadership levels: Head Teachers, Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs). Considering these participant groups as complementary cases in school supervision allowed for comparison of perspectives, identification of common practices and development of a comprehensive understanding of instructional supervision as a multi-level leadership process. This design was relevant because roll-out of the competence-based curriculum requires coordinated leadership across schools, wards and district structures for quality assurance, rather than a single supervisory actor. Thus, inclusion of these participants allowed the study to explore instructional supervision across varying tiers of educational leadership.

3.2 Study Area and Population

The study was carried out in four selected regions of Tanzania (Tanga, Pwani, Kagera and Iringa), with one district selected from each region. The selected areas represented diverse geographical, administrative, and urban/rural contexts, thus affording variation in supervisory experiences and educational leadership practices. The study sites and participants were purposively selected. Thus, districts and schools with active school quality assurance structures, involved Head Teachers, Ward Education Officers and School Quality Assurance Officers were selected. A purposive sampling method was also used to select participants for the study due to its wide acceptance in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to choose information-rich participants who can offer detailed answers to the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015). Participants were selected if they were actively involved in instructional supervision and were directly responsible for supporting the 2023 curriculum implementation. The sample consisted of 10 Head teachers, 12 Ward Education Officers and 6 School Quality Assurance Officers. These participants were chosen because they hold complementary roles in the instructional supervision structure in Tanzania and hence offer different but complementary views on the issue of curriculum implementation. The diversity of study sites and participants enabled the study to capture supervisory practices across varied educational settings and participants. This enabled triangulation across multiple perspectives and levels of leadership.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Head Teachers, Ward Education Officers and School Quality Assurance Officers to gather the data. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allow in-depth exploration of the phenomenon from participants themselves. Interviews focused on the participants' knowledge about instructional supervision, supervisory roles and practice, strategies to facilitate the classroom instruction, professional development for teachers, and recommendations for strengthening supervision. Interviews were conducted in Swahili, the national language to allow rich and authentic expression of experiences. Interviews were conducted for about 45-60 minutes and audio-recorded with the participants' permission. All the interviews were then transcribed in Swahili and translated into English for analysis. Translations were carefully reviewed against the original transcripts before coding began, to ensure that the correct original meaning is conveyed.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) reflexive thematic analysis. The data analysis process involved six interactive phases: a) familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of the interview scripts; b) generating initial coding to form meaningful units of data, c) the search for thematic relationships among codes, d) reviewing and refining the final themes for coherence and differentiation, e) defining and naming themes, and f) producing an analytical narrative, that integrated the themes with illustrative quotations and relevant theories to answer the research questions. A comparative and integrative approach to data analysis was used rather than analysing each participant group separately. This approach enabled the identification of convergent and divergent perspectives across Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs, thereby providing a deeper understanding of how instructional supervision is enacted across different levels of the education system. The proposed Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework was developed using this analytical strategy which involved the synthesis of perspectives from the three leadership levels.

Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were used to establish trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The credibility of the findings was enhanced through triangulation of perspectives across different education leaders. Moreover, probing questions were used during interviews to obtain rich information and clarify meanings from participants themselves. Verbatim quotations were also incorporated into findings to authentically represent participants' experiences and support the interpretation of data. Transferability was enhanced through the provision of detailed descriptions of the study context, participants and instructional supervision practices, so the reader could evaluate the transferability of the findings to similar educational contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The dependability of the study was supported by keeping a

clear audit trail, recording the interview process, coding process, development of themes and reflections on analysis throughout the study. Confirmability was also promoted through reflexive and continual comparison of emerging interpretations with the original interview data to ensure that findings reflected participants' accounts rather than researcher assumptions.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Prior to the data collection, research permissions were obtained from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, President's Office – Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), Regional Administrative Secretaries, District Executive Directors, District Education Offices and Heads of schools. Thereafter, participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, the right to withdraw without consequence and the voluntary nature of participation. All participation was voluntary. The names and identifying information of the participants were not included in interview data, but instead replaced with codes for each participant (e.g., HT01, WEO03, SQA002) to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

3.6 Data Presentation and Analysis

Findings are structured into five themes. Rather than reporting views of each participant separately, the analysis integrates their views to illustrate how the instructional supervision is carried out at various levels of the education system within the 2023 revised competence-based curriculum implementation. Themes are supported by representative quotes and interpreted in relation to the conceptual focus of Multi-Level Instructional Supervision.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Instructional Supervision as a Shared Leadership Responsibility

Participants consistently described instructional supervision as a leadership role designed to enhance teaching and learning, rather than merely ensuring compliance with administrative requirements. Overall, at all three levels supervision was viewed as a way to support teachers in their implementation of the competence-based curriculum. Head Teachers, in particular, reported monitoring classroom instruction, guiding lesson preparation and providing immediate feedback to teachers for improvement purposes. Head teachers' proximity to the school enabled them to conduct instructional supervision and address instructional challenges through mentoring and professional dialogue. As one Head Teacher reported: "My responsibility as the Head Teacher is not just checking lesson plans but assisting teachers to understand how the competence-based lesson should be implemented and giving them guidance where needed". (Head Teacher 4). Ward Education Officers also described their role as

“coordinating instructional supervision from school to school” (WEO 2). “Coordination help to ensure consistency in the implementation of the curriculum” (WEO 7). “I also support Head Teachers to strengthen the instructional leadership” (WEO 1), “We visit schools regularly to monitor implementation and support Head Teachers on how to supervise instruction effectively, because they are closest to classroom practice.” (WEO 2). School Quality Assurance Officers regarded instructional supervision as a system-level process that fosters educational quality by providing professional support instead of fault-finding. The emphasis of quality assurance is no longer just on inspection; “we encourage schools to take supervision as a chance to improve continuously” (SQAQO 3). These results suggest that instructional supervision is increasingly understood as a distributed leadership process with complementary roles in the school, ward and district levels. Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAQOs did not perceive their roles as separate; rather they viewed them as interdependent in supporting curriculum implementation.

4.2 Developmental Supervision Practices Supporting Teacher Professional Learning

The participants reported the use of different supervisory activities in order to enhance teaching effectiveness. Classroom observation was the most common supervisory activity reported, but participants suggested that this activity was considered effective only when accompanied by quality post-observation support. As one Head Teachers reported that: “after observing a lesson, we sit with a teacher, discuss what worked well and area for improvement” (Head Teacher 7). Similarly, WEOs reported that coaching and mentoring are significant practices during supervision, as they noted that many teachers were still facing difficulties in applying competence-based instructional approaches. “Teachers required continuous coaching as they are still adapting to the principles of learner-centred approaches” (WEO 5). Likewise, SQAQOs reported that the supervision increasingly incorporates demonstration teaching, professional discussion and collaborative problem-solving. “Instead of writing report only to our teachers, we demonstrate good practice and discuss about practical solutions”. (SQAQO 3). These quotes suggest that these leaders see supervision as a developmental process through which teachers are provided with constructive and timely feedback, followed by ongoing support to enable them to implement new curriculum practices. These supervision activities suggest a gradual shift from evaluative supervision towards developmental supervision.

4.3 Instructional Supervision as a Process of Situated Professional Learning

Participants further saw instructional supervision as a situated process of learning, where teachers gain instructional competence mostly through concrete interaction with classroom situations and new experiences, and not through stand-alone activities.

“Teachers learn most when we discuss real classroom experience together” (Head Teacher 2). WEOs reinforced this supervision approach by reporting that “Instructional supervision promotes inter-school learning by enabling schools to share successful instructional practices, experiences, and teaching innovations with one another.” (WEO 6). Reflective dialogue was emphasized as an important part of supervision by SQAQOs. “Teachers learn from feedback given after observing their lesson” (SQAQO 4). The findings suggest that instructional supervision is perceived as a learning environment, whereby teachers’ professional knowledge is developed in practice, through reflection, and in the collaborative process.

4.4 Collaboration across Leadership Levels Strengthens Instructional Supervision

Throughout, it was reported that the successful implementation of the curriculum was dependent on how Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAQOs worked collaboratively. Head Teachers were appreciative of regular support from WEOs. “WEOs make regular visits which increases our competencies in supporting teachers” (Head Teacher 5). Ward Education Officers described themselves as a link between schools and quality assurance at their ward level. “Our work links Head Teachers and SQAQOs, thus making supervision ongoing and not episodic”. (WEO 3). School Quality Assurance Officers also emphasised the importance of partnership rather than a hierarchical mode of inspection. “Effective supervision demands a whole team approach, rather than each office going its own way”. (SQAQO 2). Results suggest that coordination between leadership levels establishes continuity in instructional supervision, and therefore allows for shared responsibility for curriculum implementation.

4.5 Structural Challenges Limiting Multi-Level Instructional Supervision

Participants identified various factors that limited the effectiveness of instructional supervision. The most commonly cited barriers were the lack of funding, limited transportation for school visits, heavy supervisory loads and limited professional development for supervisors and time constraints due to other administrative responsibilities. Head Teachers stated: “Administrative responsibilities leave little time for classroom observation” (Head Teacher 9). The Ward Education Officers also reported: “Transportation limitations make some of the schools difficult to reach”. (WEO 1). School Quality Assurance Officers also noted: “One officer may supervise many schools spread across a large district”. (SQAQO 5). These findings suggest that the effectiveness of instructional supervision is related to organizational conditions that allow leaders to provide sustained professional support.

The integrated findings suggest that instructional supervision is shifting from an inspection-based activity to a coordinated leadership process that focuses on teacher professional learning. Head Teachers, WEOs, and

SQAOs perform complementary roles to support the implementation of the competence-based curriculum through classroom observation, coaching and mentoring, reflective dialogue and collaborative problem solving. The findings thus support the study's central proposition that competence-based curriculum implementation is more effective when instructional supervision is a multi-level leadership process that encourages continuous professional learning.

4.6 Discussion

4.6.1 Instructional supervision as a multi-Level leadership process

The shared supervisory responsibilities among the Head Teachers, Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) suggest a shift from hierarchical supervision towards more coordinated leadership across different administrative levels. The present findings extend Instructional Leadership Theory (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2011) which postulates that improving teaching and learning within curriculum should be the central responsibility of educational leaders. However, evidence from this study broadens the perspective by demonstrating that instructional leadership during curriculum operates as a coordinated system rather than as an individual leadership function. While previous studies have primarily examined principal instructional leadership, this study suggests that instructional leadership effectiveness depends on complementary interactions among the Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs, whose interdependent roles and responsibilities form a coherent system of support for instruction. This multi-level perspective adds to the literature by elucidating the need for coordinated leadership, not just isolated supervisory efforts, for successful curriculum reform. The results are also consistent with research from sub-Saharan Africa which has reported a gradual transition from inspection-oriented supervision to the developmental instruction-oriented supervision. This study, however, contrasts with previous research that examined leadership at individual levels, by suggesting the need for collaboration across various leadership levels to enhance curriculum implementation.

4.6.2 Developmental Supervision Promotes Teacher Professional Learning

Supervisory practices such as coaching, mentoring, reflective dialogue, demonstration teaching and constructive feedback, suggest that supervision is increasingly viewed as a developmental process to improve teachers' instructional competence, rather than as a form of evaluation of teachers' activities and practices in school. This finding is consistent with Developmental Supervision Theory (Glickman et al., 2018) and with Kraft et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis of 60 causal studies, which demonstrated the potential of teacher coaching to improve instruction and student achievement. Together, these findings highlight the importance of adapting supervision based on teachers' professional needs and providing continuous support for their development. The provision of feedback, coaching, and mentoring emerged

as important supervisory practices for strengthening teachers' professional learning and supporting the implementation of the Competence-Based Curriculum. This shows a shift in focus of instructional supervision from compliance-based supervision to mentoring for professional learning.

The findings also align with international research that suggests curriculum reform and adoption of a competence-based approach require sustained professional support to help teachers develop new pedagogical skills in their teaching process, which cannot be achieved through one-off training programmes (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Fullan, 2016; Kraft et al., 2018). However, developmental supervision appears relevant in the Tanzanian context as the introduced teaching pedagogies and formative assessment reform in the curriculum demand continuous support, experimentation and reflection for effective adaptation. These leaders work with teachers in school settings to provide continuous support needed to meet the curriculum demands. Therefore, developmental supervision becomes a process of capacity building, to enhance teachers' confidence and the effectiveness of their instruction.

Another significant finding was participants' perception of supervision as a practical learning process embedded in teachers' daily practice in the classroom. Practical activities such as lesson observation, collaborative lesson planning, reflective discussions and demonstration teaching enabled teachers to reflect and use supervisory feedback constructively in their teaching. This suggests that instructional supervision, if used effectively, can create situated opportunities for teachers to learn new practices. This finding aligns with Situated Learning Theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) that postulates that the construction of professional knowledge takes place through teachers' participation in authentic workplace activities. Teachers develop the knowledge of competence-based pedagogies effectively through continuous supervision activities, including teaching, reflection and interaction, and not only in formal workshops. Therefore, this evidence reinforces that effective professional learning occurs when it is context-specific and directly linked to classroom-related activities. In the context of a competence-based curriculum, instructional supervision should serve not only as an accountability mechanism, but also as a structured learning space in which teachers redefine and reimagine curriculum expectations, adjust teaching methods, and improve instructional decision-making.

The research also found that collaboration among Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs was instrumental in supporting instructional practice with continuity in professional support. Supervision was reported as a collaborative endeavour involving shared activities that involve professional conversations, dialogue, and learning across schools, within and across schools and administrative levels. The results are in line with Communities of Practice Theory (Wenger, 1998), that states that the knowledge of a profession is built by sustaining interaction between practitioners who share common goals and experiences. When participants shared

their practices collaboratively, it helped them learn together and improve their practice. The finding suggests that a successful educational reform requires sustained collaboration rather than isolated intervention. This collaboration can develop into professional learning communities and provide an opportunity for teachers and supervisors to share experiences, share challenges, and jointly develop practical solutions suited to local contexts. Thus, instructional supervision has a broader impact than just on the individual teacher; it also has an impact on organisational learning across a school and the education system.

4.6.3 Structural Constraints Continue to Limit Effective Instructional Supervision

Existing structural barriers reduced the frequency and quality of supervisory contacts and also decreased the opportunity for supervision follow-up. These findings support earlier research in Tanzania and other low and mid-income countries that showed that policy actions to support instructional leadership are often undermined by heavy administrative workloads, resource constraints and limited infrastructure (Hallinger, 2011; Bush & Glover, 2014). As a policy implication, these results suggest systemic investment is needed to improve instructional supervision in terms of logistical support, staffing, professional development, and resource allocation. Even the best models of supervision may fail, if these conditions are not present.

The findings collectively suggest that instructional supervision should be conceptualised as a comprehensive multi-level leadership system. This system promotes continuous professional learning and coordinated instructional leadership across different administrative levels. The Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework conceptualises instructional supervision as an interconnected process linking national curriculum reform, multi-level instructional leadership, developmental supervision, situated professional learning, collaborative professional practice, effective curriculum enactment, and improved learner competencies. The MLIS Framework should extend beyond compliance and focus on constructive feedback and provide continuous professional learning across various layers of educational leadership. Unlike other models that conceptualise supervision as the responsibility of a single leader, the MLIS framework positions instructional supervision as a coordinated leadership process that is distributed across school, ward, and district levels. This framework adds to the literature by providing an integrated explanation of how instructional supervision can aid competence-based curriculum implementation in a decentralised education system. It also offers a practical framework for policy, leadership and professional development.

The study has three major contributions to the literature on instructional supervision and curriculum reform. First, it extends instructional leadership research by illustrating that curriculum implementation leadership is not just the domain of school-based actors, but is distributed across school-, ward-, and district-level actors. Second, it

reshapes instructional supervision from an inspection activity to a developmental process of continuous professional learning, so that supervision is directly related to teacher capacity building. Third, it introduces the Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework that combines elements of instructional leadership, developmental supervision, situated learning and communities of practice into a cohesive account explaining how supervision supports competence-based curriculum implementation. This framework offers both a theoretical perspective for further investigation and a practical guide for creating supervision systems that balance accountability with professional development.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study examined instructional supervision as a multi-level leadership process supporting the implementation of the competence-based curriculum in Tanzania. Generally, the findings indicated that instructional supervision is increasingly emerging as a developmental process, in which teaching and learning are improved collaboratively through instructional supervision practices. The instructional supervision practices reflect a gradual shift from a traditional inspection approach towards a model of supervision that promotes continuous teacher learning and instructional improvement. The study also shows that coordinated leadership at the school, ward and district levels is essential for effective instructional supervision. The roles of Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs complement each other and are mutually reinforcing when it comes to teacher capacity development for curriculum implementation.

Despite this transition, instructional supervision practices are constrained by resource limitations, heavy workloads, logistical challenges, and insufficient opportunities for sustained professional development. The findings therefore suggest the need to address these constraints to enable effective supervision practices. The Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework provides a theoretical explanation of how coordinated instructional supervision can strengthen competence-based curriculum. The MLIS Framework adds to the body of knowledge by taking the discussion on the role of instructional supervision beyond the compliance-based inspection model to one that is collaborative and developmental in nature. Finally, the study offers practice-based guidance to policymakers, educational leaders, and researchers interested in strengthening teacher professional learning and enhancing quality of education through coordinated leadership.

5.2 Recommendations

The results of this study have implications for policy, practice and research. Based on the evidence, the following recommendations are made.

1. The study suggests that a multi-level coordination system is necessary for strengthening multi-level coordination in instructional supervision. There is a need to enhance the coordination between Head Teachers, Ward Education Officers (WEOs) and School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) for effective instructional supervision throughout the 2023 revised curriculum implementation. Clear communication channels, joint supervision planning and shared monitoring systems should be established to improve supervision and thereby providing effective support during competence-based curriculum implementation.
2. It proposes the need to reorient supervision from an inspection-oriented process into a developmental process. Supervisory arrangements also should focus on teacher learning and instructional improvement rather than compliance with administrative requirements.
3. There should be opportunities for CPD for Head Teachers, WEOs and SQAOs to develop their skills in instructional leadership, coaching, mentoring and feedback provision. This training will enhance supervisors' ability to facilitate teachers' professional learning, hence support teachers to implement competence-based pedagogies. This may cut the cost of large-scale teacher training programmes in future. Trained supervisors may serve as catalysts in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that are established in schools and across schools. WEOs and SQAOs should promote these efforts by building cross-school learning networks and disseminating effective practices in instruction. Given the constraints reported by participants, the government should prioritise transport, financial resources, instructional materials and staffing allocation to enable regular supervisory visits and follow-up support to teachers. Administrative demands for school leaders should be reduced, so that head teachers have more time for instructional leadership and classroom-based supervision. The effectiveness of the proposed Multi-Level Instructional Supervision (MLIS) Framework can be further explored in various educational contexts through mixed-methods or longitudinal designs for future studies.
4. Further refinement of the framework and an evaluation of its impact on teacher professional learning, curriculum enactment and learner outcomes could be achieved through comparative studies across regions and school settings.

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