



Contribution of Collaborative Engagement Strategies to Enhancing Female Teachers Leadership Capacity in Tanzania: Evidence from Public Secondary School in Morogoro Region

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Abstract: *This study examined the Contribution of collaborative engagement strategies on female teachers' leadership capacity in secondary school. The study employed convergent research under a mixed method research approach. The study targeted population of 2950 teachers, 250 female teachers, 250 heads of schools and 9 DEOs. The sample size involved 300 teachers, 30 female teacher mentors, 30 school heads and 3 District Education Officers. Questionnaires were collected from 236 teachers and face to face interview was conducted with 26 female teacher mentors, 25 head of schools and 3 District education officers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) and qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis parallel to quantitative findings. The findings revealed that, collaborative engagement fosters leadership experiences effectively among female teachers in schools. Furthermore, the study established that collaborative strategy is not utilized effectively in school settings to enhance leadership capacities among teachers. The study recommends that clear policy guidelines that promote shared decision-making; teamwork and professional development are required for implementing collaborative leadership.*

Keywords: Collaborative Leadership, Leadership capacity, Female teachers, Public school, Tanzania

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1.Introduction

Leadership in education context has shifted from hierarchical models to more collaborative approaches. Leadership is shared among educational stakeholders. These changes reflect in educational context as an organizational practice that values participation, teamwork, and distribution of responsibility in decision making (UNESCO, 2023). Collaborative leadership emphasizes decision making among members, team working, professional dialogue, and participating in problem solving, with school leaders act as facilitators who support teachers and other stakeholders involved in school governance (Bush & Glover, 2021). Studies show that such practices improve school effectiveness, strengthen teacher motivation, and support continuous organizational learning (Hallinger& Heck, 2022) This

means that collaborative leadership can build trust and strengthen confidence among teachers in an organization.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, education system improvement promotes legation of authorities and participatory leadership to improve school quality and responsiveness. These changes encourage practices such as team-based decision making, peer mentoring, and professional collaboration (Nguyen et al., 2023). These approaches increase teachers' competence and support continuous improvement. Even though in education leadership, gender disparities remain a major obstacle. Female teachers face barriers such as socio-cultural norms, limited access to training, and biased recruitment processes (UNESCO, 2021; FAWE, 2022). In other side, domestic responsibilities reduce women's readiness for leadership roles (Oplatka, 2023). These factors

contribute underrepresentation to female teachers in Secondary schools.

In Tanzania, education reform has put emphasize on participatory leadership and school-based management to improve education quality. The Government efforts include; encourage collaboration through staff meetings, peer mentoring, and professional learning communities (United Republic of Tanzania, 2022). These strategies aim at improving teaching and school performance. But still, female teachers remain underrepresented in leadership positions such as heads of schools and department leaders (UNESCO, 2023). This situation shows a need to examine how the collaborative engagement strategies are enhancing leadership capacity among female teachers in Tanzanian public secondary schools.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Female teachers in Tanzania continue to face limited opportunities in participation in leadership position despite constituting a large proportion of a teaching workforce (UNESCO, 2023; World Bank, 2022). In a region like Morogoro, female teachers still face significant barriers in attaining leadership positions within public secondary schools. Although Women constitute a substantial proportional of teaching workforce they remain underrepresentation school leadership positions in Tanzania this is according to Tanzanian Ministry of Education statistics (2022). The under-representation in leadership roles in public secondary schools is associated with cultural beliefs and institutional discrimination as well as structural barriers that limit professional growth. (Mbepera, 2023; Nyoni, 2020). However, there is a lack of empirical studies examining how leadership engagement within collaborative school environments enhances female teachers' practical leadership abilities in public secondary schools. Therefore, this study examined the Contribution collaborative engagement strategy on female teachers' leadership capacity in Tanzania.

1.2 Research Objective

This study was guided by the following Objective which focused on examining the Contribution of Collaborative Engagement strategies enhancing building leadership capacity among Female Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Morogoro Region.

To examine the Contribution of Collaborative Engagement Strategies enhancing building leadership capacity among Female Teachers in Public secondary schools in Morogoro Region.

1.3 Research Question

To achieve the research Objective this study was guided by the following research Question;

To what extent does collaborative leadership engagement strategies enhance leadership capacity among female teachers in public secondary school?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Review

Internationally, recent studies have highlighted that collaborative leadership engagement practices like mentoring, teamworking and group discussion are major practices of building teacher leadership capacity. Prummer (2024) conducted a study focusing on the collaborative leadership development strategy of peer group mentoring program in educational organizations. The research concluded that peer mentoring positively influenced the emotional intelligence, communication, and decision-making capabilities of leaders using survey data and mediation analysis. The authors concluded that mentoring relationships are effective in enhancing leadership skills and confidence in professional educators, particularly when mentorship is incorporated in leadership development programs. Nevertheless, the research concentrated more on overall development of leadership and did not address how collaborative strategies of engagement affect willingness of female teachers to be in administrative positions.

Moreover, Glover (2024) carried out research about mentoring strategies that are implemented to promote teacher growth in teacher education programmes. The research used qualitative interviews of mentors and mentees to discuss the practice of mentoring. The results indicated that mentoring relationships helped in development of professional identity, enhanced teaching practices, and career motivation in teachers. Nonetheless, the studies primarily focused on teacher preparation and instructional development mentoring instead of mentorship programs aimed at developing collaborative leadership capacity in female teachers.

Furthermore, Debnath (2025) investigated collaborative leadership and teacher collaboration in secondary schools in Bangladesh using qualitative research approach. The researcher conducted interviews with school leaders and teachers. The results reveal that shared decision-making, professional dialogue, and trust-building are collaborative leadership practices that greatly enhanced teacher engagement and professional learning in schools. The researchers concluded that a team-based leadership atmosphere can motivate educators to act independently and engage in leadership practices. However, the research was general on teacher collaboration and failed to examine how collaborative leadership can specifically empower female teachers to be able to take up leadership roles.

Moreover, a qualitative study by Dube and Mnguni (2025) investigated the experiences of women teachers who switched to leadership roles in South African secondary schools. The research design involved focus

group discussion among female department heads, deputy principals and principals to understand their leadership experience. The results showed that female educators encounter various difficulties during their leadership process, such as gender stereotypes, a lack of mentors, and work-life balance. The research highlighted that mentorship, and supportive systems of collaboration are critical in equipping female teachers with leadership roles. Nevertheless, the research concentrated on the experiences of women who already held leadership roles and did not examine the impact of collaborative engagement mechanisms to build leadership capacity among female teachers prior to being appointed.

Although these international and regional research reveal the significance of mentorship and collaborative leadership in building teacher leadership capacity, empirical research on how collaborative leadership involvement can build leadership capacity among female teachers in Tanzanian public secondary schools is limited. Most existing studies focus on general teacher professional development or mentorship for beginner teachers rather than leadership development for women educators. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining the contribution of collaborative leadership engagement strategies toward female teachers' leadership building capacity in public secondary schools in Morogoro, Tanzania.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT), by James Downton in 1971, which was later developed by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and Bernard Bass 1985. James Downton's Transformational Leadership Theory states how leaders inspire and motivate their followers to move beyond their self-interest through guidance and support for personal growth, commitment and work towards organization Goals. The theory emphasizes that leaders guide followers to move beyond self-interest through shared vision, intention, intellectual, stimulation and personal attention (Burn,1978; Bass, 1985). The components of transformational theory include; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The four component is directly linked with this study because these components explain how collaborative engagement strategies such as mentoring teamwork, group discussion develop leadership skills and build confidence on collaborative engagement strategies on female teachers' readiness for admirative roles.

Recent scholars like Northouse (2021), Bush (2020), Leithwood et al (2020) point out that transformational leadership theory supports capacity development, motivation, and professional growth among teachers. Therefore, this theory aligns with this study due to Collaborative engagement strategies that motivate female teachers to pursue leadership roles, develop

critical thinking and build confidence through collaborative support.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In conducting this study, convergent research design was employed allowing integrating both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Data were collected simultaneously and analyzed convergently. This design relies on descriptive and analytical methods to explore how leadership mentee strategies contribute to preparing female educators for administrative roles. By merging findings, this study identified patterns, similarities, and differences to ensure data triangulation, complementarily, and a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Islam et al., 2022). This design allows a researcher to compare data and integrate from different sources in order to strengthen the validity of the findings.

3.2 Sample size and Sampling Techniques

Sample Size Determination

The sample size for the teachers was determined using Yamane Formula (1967) as presented below.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n=Sample size, N =Population size, e = Margin error 0.05, 1 = is constant

Therefore, in this study the population of teachers was 2950 the formula produced the sample of 352 teachers Due to time and resources the study uses 300 teachers which is adequate for representation. Proportional sampling was applied to distribute 300 teachers to each school according to their numbers. 30 Female teacher mentors, 30 Head of schools and 3 DEOs were selected using purposive sampling technique. The rationale for selecting these groups is informed by the fact that the sample groups hold the knowledge and experience of responding to the research questions and thus, data gathered corresponds to the study objectives.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The study employed questionnaires and semi structured interviews to collect data on the research problem. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on female teacher mentor, Heads of schools and District education officers in order to obtain rich description of contribution of leadership mentorship strategies in enhancing female teacher's readiness for leadership roles. Furthermore, questionnaires with Likert statements were distributed among teachers gathering quantitative measurements on the problem of the study (Kumar, 2019). Thus, Likert scale questionnaires are effective in collecting structured information to participants' opinion and perception.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained permission from relevant educational authorities and school administrations before collecting data. The respondents were informed concerned the study purpose and their rights. Structured Questionnaire was administered to Teachers and Interview were conducted to DEOs, Heads of Schools and Mentors. Completed Questionnaire were checked, coded and prepared for analysis. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, organized into themes. Confidentiality was maintained through the process.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected in this study were analyzed with the assistance of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software version 20 which facilitated the process of classifying, sorting, organizing and summarizing quantitative data into frequency and percentages that made meaningful analysis for the findings by the researcher. Qualitative data obtained from the predetermined themes from the questionnaire tool used to collect quantitative data. The analysis of both quantitative and qualitative enriched the findings of the study (Creswell & Creswell 2023). This means combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis increase understanding of research findings by allowing comparison and integration of the results

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations employed in this study aimed at safeguarding rights, as well as physical as well as psychologically well-being of the participants in the research. Formal ethical approval was obtained from Jordan University College and the study fully conformed to the national research ethic and standards. Moreover, official research permits were sought from the Morogoro Region and district authorities of Mvomero District Council, Kilombero District Council, and Morogoro District Council in order not to violate any laws governing research in the country. All participants were required to sign consent forms before they participated in the study since they understood the reasons of the study purpose, fallback activities, and risks of the research, besides the merits. It was also noted that participants' voluntariness was ensured, meaning participants voluntarily participated in the study and they were informed of the possibility of anytime withdraw from the study without any consequences. Participants' anonymity was ensured through the use of letter codes and the data were only accessible to the researchers. The study observed transparency since the sources containing the information used were correctly acknowledged.

4. Results and Discussion

This study was guided by one objective which aimed at examining the Contribution of Collaborative Engagement Strategies toward building leadership capacity among Female Teachers in Public secondary school in Morogoro Region. Therefore, the findings emerged from the 5 predetermined content shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Response on the Extent to which use of collaborative Engagements Strategies enhance Leadership Capacity in Public secondary schools. (n = 236)

STATEMENT	SD		D		U		A		SA		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1. Collaboration engagement encourages shared decision-making	102	43.2	21	8.9	12	5.1	81	34.3	20	8.5	2.6
2. Female teachers are involved collectively in collaborative engagement.	117	49.6	13	5.5	9	3.8	49	20.8	48	20.3	2.6
3. Collaborative engagement fosters open communication	106	44.9	19	8.1	12	5.1	83	35.2	17	7.2	2.6
4. Collaboration supports the professional growth of teachers.	120	50.8	12	5.1	9	3.8	47	19.9	48	20.3	2.6
5. Collaborative engagement enhances teachers'	47	19.9	12	5.1	14	5.9	47	19.9	116	49.2	3.8

Key SD=Strong disagree, D=Disagree, U=neither agree nor disagree, A=Agree, SA=Strong agree; Source: Field Data (2025)

4.1 Collaborative engagement Strategies encourage shared decision-making

The data indicated that 55.1% of respondents disagreed that collaborative leadership encourages shared decision-making in their schools, 39.8% agreed, while 5.1% remained undecided. The fact that the majority of teachers and especially the female teachers do not feel involved meaningfully during the decision-making process in their respective school's points to this. Furthermore, face-to-face information added more insights into the quantitative findings raising, one of the participants narrated:

"Most of the decisions in schools are made through engaging teachers in meetings. This influences the capacity to participate in leadership practices among teachers in the school, which may later be helpful when assigned administrative roles."

This implies that in schools, decisions are made collectively resulting in encouragement of leadership skills among teachers. Information from the other participants notes don the lack of collaborative leaders in schools. One of the participants stated that:

"I had realized a long time ago that individual leaders who make decisions undermine teamwork. I can use teachers to bring me on board in an effort to find practical solutions to my problem, which I might not have seen on my own. It enhances cohesiveness and a culture in which all are accountable to the development of schools"

The data indicate that collaborative leadership is not entirely exercised as a participatory approach of any significance in most state secondary schools, especially shared decision-making. In the vision of the study, this can be seen as a consistent overarching of top-down leadership forms, in which power is at the top, and teachers have no active role in school administration. Findings coincide with Harris (2022) and Tian et al. (2021), who claim that collaborative leadership necessitates a conscious transition to shared responsibility and inclusive involvement, which seems to be under-achieved in the schools under study. This

means that when teachers are not involved in making decisions in a large capacity, the chances of attaining leadership skills like critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving are limited. Moreover, the qualitative data show that though formal structures like meetings exist, they do not always translate into meaningful participation. Such structures, the researcher argues, are procedural as opposed to arenas of real influence.

Additionally, the continuity of individualistic leadership practices, which are demonstrated in the findings, indicates that there are hybrid leadership contexts, as defined by Bush (2020). In these conditions, participatory leadership is usually weakened by collaborative and autocratic practices. Thus, the results reveal the necessity to make deliberate attempts to cultivate authentic collaborative leadership to enhance inclusivity, empowerment, and capacity building among female teachers.

4.2 Female teachers involved collectively in leadership activities

The Statistics revealed that 50.4% of respondents disagreed that school leaders involve teachers collectively in leadership activities, 45.3% agreed, and 4.2% remained undecided. The qualitative findings reported the same results as those of quantitative showing that participatory leadership is still ineffective in schools. One education officer narrated:

"What is unique about schools where collaborative leadership practiced is the extent to which teachers are participating in leading committees, clubs, academic units and discipline groups. This communal engagement fosters a feeling of commitment, since teachers feel more of contributors towards progress as opposed to those who pass instructions"

Furthermore, one of the school heads stated:

"I purposely delegate leadership tasks to departmental teachers. When they serve as the chairpersons of committees or task forces, they become professional and more effective in leadership skills and experiences. It also lessens the stress on the top"

leadership and makes sure that all teachers feel as members of the leadership structure”

These findings imply that opportunities of leadership involvement provide critical skills on leadership development among teachers in school including female teachers. The results are in line with the Instructional Leadership Theory that states that the role of the leader is not merely to coordinate school activities but to develop leadership potential in teachers by modeling, coaching, and sharing professional responsibility (Hallinger, 2022). Conversely, in schools with stable and inclusive leadership involvement, teachers acquire more of a sense of ownership, professional agency and confidence, which is required of future administrators (Mpangala & Urio, 2024). The gender dynamics in leadership paths imply that a female follower has lesser chances of self-nominating unless it is very clear and backed by some authority (Mbepera, 2023). Thus, it is necessary not only to make opportunities available, but also to facilitate active involvement, discover potential, and support the idea of leadership ability.

4.3 Collaborative engagement strategies foster open communication

The data revealed that 53.0% of respondents disagreed that collaborative leadership fosters open communication in their schools, while 42.4% agreed and 5.1% remained undecided. The fact that most people disagreed implies that open communication is not firmly integrated into the process of leadership in the schools under study. This implies that communication patterns can still be primarily top-down, directive and hierarchical where the administration to the teachers is more top-down than dialogic, reciprocal and participatory. One of district education officers explained:

“Meetings in such schools are quite interactive as teachers have the freedom to give their opinions. The unrestricted communication atmosphere enables problems to be raised quickly and motivates educators to make solutions and, as a result, the school administration system becomes more transparent and responsive”

Furthermore, one of the teacher mentors reported:

“Communication in our school has been opened up. Educators are candid in discussing issues, emerging concepts and

instructional requirements. Even disputes are done in a respect manner since the atmosphere promotes a positive communication as opposed to intimidation and silence”

These findings imply that a significant number of teachers do not feel free, roomy, or motivated to offer their ideas, opinions, or worries regarding how schools are run and what they are taught as Hartigan (2024) state that, open communication is the focus of collaborative leadership as it enables transparency and the development of trust and diminishes professional distance between teachers and administrators. Communication being insufficient or manipulated means leadership will be symbolic and not relationship based and hence undermines the role of leadership in development. This deficiency of open communication has direct leadership preparation consequences especially to female teachers. The studies have continuously indicated that women need supportive communication climates in order to build professional confidence and voice of leadership. Coleman (2021) stresses that once female teachers are heard and listened to, they become more inclined to become proactive in the circumstances of leadership.

4.4 Collaboration in school supports the professional growth of teachers

The statistics revealed that 55.9% of respondents disagreed that collaboration supports their professional growth, 40.3% agreed, and 3.8% remained undecided. The fact that most respondents are in disagreement means that collaborative structures in the schools examined are not viewed as major players in the professional growth of the teachers. This implies that, whilst they may be collaborating to certain extent, it is not done intentionally and strategically to develop teachers in terms of instructional skills and leadership abilities as well as career preparedness. Qualitatively, one of the education officers narrated:

“Schools that have a high collaborative culture have realized relative advancement in teacher professionalism. Teachers also learn with each other, hold workshops collaboratively, and mentor each other. This student-to-student development improves the quality of the teaching in the schools in general”

Furthermore, one of the female teacher mentors added:

“Collaboration with other employees has helped me to develop professionally. I help

senior teachers with planning, assessment of the classroom and classroom management, and senior teachers support me with the work using ICT. This reciprocity learning is what assists us to build our abilities and enhance our performance”

This indicates that collaborative is one of the key tools for equipping teachers with leadership and professional competencies. Heads of school play key roles in subjection to this fact. One of the school heads stated:

“Teachers are going to grow professionally because we have a culture of collaboration. They experience together, go to development forums and mentor one another. Through this form of collective learning, the teachers get better confidence and are able to provide better education to our students”

The quantitative results show that collaboration in schools is not a well-recognized factor in the professional development of teachers, although it is considered an important aspect in the literature of educational leadership. Based on the findings of the study, this implies that collaborative practices might be present in schools, but they are not well organized or aligned towards professional development objectives. This absence of deliberate intent constrains the possibilities of collaboration to support teacher instructional capabilities, leadership, and career development.

The modern literature is very favorable on the issue of collaboration as a means to enhance the growth of the teachers. As an example, Hargreaves and O'Connor (2018) highlight that collaborative professionalism that involves joint working, shared responsibility, and collective inquiry leads to better teaching quality and professional learning. Moreover, the qualitative results are strong evidence that in the case of collaboration being properly implemented, it contributes greatly to professional development. Education officer, mentor and school head narratives illustrate practices like peer mentoring, joint lesson planning and collaborative workshops, which enable reciprocal learning and skill development.

4.5 Collaborative engagement strategies enhance confidence for female teachers

The data of the study showed that 68.8 percent of the respondents agreed, 24.9 percent disagreed and 5.9 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. The findings indicated majority of the teachers have awareness that collaborative leadership determines and influences

development of confidence in leadership tasks among teachers. These quantitative findings were echoed with qualitative findings from participants that collaborative practices provide teachers especially female teacher's confidence in leading others. One of the female mentors narrated:

“It is very true that, the active collaborative leadership provides us female teachers with confidence that we can also become the best leaders especially when we experience leadership involvement from our fellow female head of schools. It gives us positive spirit and prepares us towards leadership duties and functioning with confidence

The quantitative findings imply that majority of the teachers including female teachers indicates that collaboration in many schools significantly contribute to building teachers' leadership confidence. This suggests that teachers who work under leaders who encourage participation, delegate responsibilities, and involve them in school decision-making processes have the potential to become more effective leaders. This finding is consistent with Mwakabenga's (2025) finding that collaborative leadership promotes autonomy, self-belief, and professional empowerment for teachers. Likewise, Bodalina et al. (2022), emphasized, collaborative work like collective planning and co-solving problems and sharing information with other teachers helps in the development of teachers' leadership and decreases fear of failure to take risks in professional work. This confirms quantitative findings that indicate positive perceptions of collaborative leadership's role in increasing confidence across the board.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion on Findings

This study's results indicate that collaborative is present in public secondary schools, however, it is not always organized or used as a means to improve teachers' professional development. This indicates that team working is mostly informal and not well connected to the professional development aims and leadership capacities. Many schoolteachers, especially Female teachers, are not fully availed of opportunities for peer learning, mentoring and skills development because of the lack of institutional support and strategic implementation, while some schools have effective collaborative cultures.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings and conclusions the following recommendations were proposed to

strengthens the collaborative engagements and enhance female teachers' leadership Capacity in Public Secondary Schools;

1. School administrations should establish structured Collaborative time, include peer mentoring for teachers, regular collaborative meeting to Support Professional development and leadership skills among female teachers.

2. Ministry of Education should develop and enact policy guidelines that encourage joint leadership in schools. These guidelines should highlight the importance of shared leadership, collaboration and professional learning.

3. Government should provide regular training for heads of schools and education officers in collaborative/distributed leadership approaches to support the effective implementation of participative approaches in schools.

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