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Developing Instructional Leadership in Tanzania: Impact of a British Council Initiative

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Abstract

Instructional leadership is widely recognized as important for school improvement and a significant tool for creating an effective teaching and learning environment. The British Council is committed to promoting and developing instructional leadership and is offering programmes to develop it in several African countries, including Tanzania. These programmes focus on developing and improving instructional leadership in schools. The programme is provided by British Council facilitators to school leaders and is delivered over a period of six to nine months, including time for a school-based project. Previous research shows that leadership in many sub-Saharan African countries, including Tanzania, is primarily administrative and that instructional leadership is often neglected. Data were collected with 20 participants of the British Council programme, all primary school leaders, chosen through volunteer and purposive sampling. The findings show many reported gains from participation, notably greater understanding of key concepts such as vision and missions distributed leadership, and instructional leadership processes, notably classroom observation.

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Introduction

Instructional leadership is widely recognized as important for school improvement (Robinson et al, 2008), and a significant tool for creating an effective teaching and learning environment (Hallinger and Walker, 2014). The British Council is committed to promoting and developing instructional leadership and is offering programmes to develop it in several African countries, including Tanzania. These programmes focus on developing and improving instructional leadership in schools. The programme is provided by British Council facilitators to school leaders and is delivered over a period of six to nine months, including time for a school-based project. Previous research (e.g., Bush, Fadare, et al., 2021) shows that leadership in many sub-Saharan African countries, including Tanzania, is primarily administrative and that instructional leadership is often neglected.

The Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has a School Improvement Toolkit (MoEVT, 2013,) that documents how instructional leaders should lead the improvement of instruction. It provides guidelines on how school leaders should engage the school community, carry out continuous assessment of teachers, track teacher attendance, teacher motivation and accountability, enforce supervision and coaching of teachers, and source teaching and learning materials. Nyambo (2017) also notes that the Tanzanian government authorizes school leaders as internal supervisors to ensure implementation of educational policy, regulations, programmes, directives and monitoring instruction, to enhance learners' achievements.

Education in Tanzania

Educational provision in Tanzania is guided by national education policies, programmes and strategic plans. These include the Tanzania Development National Vision 2025, the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, and the National Five Years' Development Plans of 2016/2017 to 2020/2021. The National Vision delineates the national goals, while the National Five Years' Development plans are intended to help in achieving the vision. The Educational Sector Development Plan (ESDP), 2008-2017, supplements the national policies and plans through its various sector development programmes. However, their focus is more on improving access, quality, and equity, than on seeing that learning is taking place.

Tanzania adopted decentralized governance structures and policies from the 1990s, that promoted school-based management, and increased accountability for school heads. It further promoted instructional leadership and heads were expected to improve the core functions of teaching and learning (Nguni, 2005, Maneseh, 2016).

The Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP 2017-2021) outlines expectations that school management teams will be responsible for supervising and overseeing high quality teaching and learning, including observing time on task; ensuring a conducive teaching and learning environment, implementing inspection recommendations; and tracking learning achievements with particular emphasis on student basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2018).

Literature Review

There is growing evidence that high quality leadership is essential for student growth and school improvement, accounting for up to 27 per cent of variation in student outcomes (Leithwood et al 2006, 2020). Bush (2020) discusses several leadership models, noting that transformational, distributed, and instructional approaches are particularly prominent in the leadership literature.

Robinson et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis of published research indicates that instructional leadership has more powerful effects on student outcomes than other leadership models. The closer leaders are to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to make a difference to students (ibid). Shatzer et al.'s (2014) study of elementary schools in the US reached a similar conclusion that instructional leadership accounted for more of the variance in student outcomes than transformational leadership.

Bush and Glover (2014, 556) stress that 'instructional leadership, or leadership for learning, focuses primarily on the direction and purpose of leaders' influence; targeted at student learning via teachers'. Hallinger (2005) adds that the notion that principals should be instructional leaders is enduring, a passing fancy that refuses to go away. Hallinger and Lee (2014, 6) note that 'instructional leadership from the principal is essential for the improvement of teaching and learning in schools'. However, they add that 'in many parts of the world, the practice of instructional leadership remains both poorly understood and outside the main job description of the principal' (ibid). They also comment that this model has travelled well beyond its American origins to become a global phenomenon. Significantly, they stress that the context shapes the exercise of instructional leadership, for example in Thailand (Ibid).

Some cultures, for example in parts of Africa and Asia, may experience challenges in applying this model in what are very different national and school cultures.

Dimensions of effective instructional leadership

The international literature and research offer guidance on the dimensions of effective instructional leadership. Hallinger and Heck (1999) argue that instructional leaders influence learning and teaching in three ways:

1. *Directly, by personal intervention*

This may be enacted through their own teaching, or through modelling good practice.

2. *Reciprocally, by their work alongside other teachers*

This may be enacted through classroom observation and constructive feedback.

3. *Indirectly, via other staff*

This may be enacted, for example, through dialogue with teachers.

Monitoring, followed by constructive feedback, and modelling good practice, are the instructional leadership strategies most frequently reported in the literature (Bush, Fadare, et al., in press).

Monitoring

Southworth (2004) says that monitoring includes analysing and acting on students' progress and outcome data, for example assessment and test scores. The English Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2003) found that there was a very strong link between good monitoring and good teaching. Southworth (ibid: 80) adds that 'monitoring classrooms is now an accepted part of leadership'.

Observation needs to be seen as a formative process, intended to raise standards of classroom practice, if it is to gain the co-operation of educators. It should also be regarded as a 'normal' aspect of school management if it is to become embedded. Bush (2013) argues that this is likely to require a paradigm shift in many schools, prompted by firm but supportive leadership.

Modelling

Where educators' pedagogic skills are weak, monitoring alone is unlikely to be effective in raising standards. Identifying aspects needing improvement is only a starting point. Good feedback is essential but this may need to be supported by professional development. While workshops may help to improve classroom teaching, modelling of good practice by the principal, the HoD or another educator, is more likely to produce favourable outcomes (Bush 2013). Southworth (2004: 78) claims that 'modelling is all about the power of example'. Successful leaders are aware that they must set an example and use their actions to show how colleagues should behave.

Instructional leadership in sub-Saharan Africa

Bush, Maringe and Glover's (2021) systematic review of the literature on instructional leadership in Africa identified 36 sources across 15 countries, suggesting the growing importance of this model in many parts of the continent. Their report refers to four main aspects of instructional leadership. First, there is advocacy for this model because of its perceived benefits, for example in Nigeria (Bello, 2015) and Ghana (Abonyi and Sofo, 2019). Second, there are studies of how instructional leadership is practiced. For example, Onyine and Nwaanne (2018) claim that Nigerian principals define school mission, and manage instructional programmes, to a high level. Third, there is evidence of the efficacy of instructional leadership in enhancing student learning, for example in Kenya (Mutuku, 2018). Fourth, several studies point to the challenges inhibiting principals from acting as instructional leaders. Mestry (2017) argues that South African principals 'repudiate' their role in managing teaching and learning. Tedla (2012) says that the time of Eritrean principals is not focused on instructional leadership while Allieu (2019) notes that most heads in Sierra Leone are not practicing instructional leadership. Mestry et al's (2013) comment that South African principals need to balance their administrative and instructional roles appears relevant to leaders across the continent, including those in Tanzania.

Bush, Fadare, et al.'s (2021) overview of instructional leadership in six African countries (Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) is based on a synthesis of 55 interviews, linked to a systematic review of the academic and official literature. They conclude that education ministries should articulate that the role of the school principal is primarily that of a professional leader, focused on developing teaching and learning. They add that, at the school level, principals should introduce clear strategies for instructional leadership, including monitoring, notably through classroom observation, with constructive feedback designed to encourage beneficial change rather than to damage teacher confidence.

Instructional leadership in Tanzania

Bush, Fadare et al. (2021), and Maneseh (2016), show that, in Tanzania, the head teacher is considered to be an instructional leader, for example by the Ministry of Education. They are recognized as internal instructional supervisors and their core function is to ensure that the curriculum is implemented according to the rules and regulations, through monitoring, the preparation and use of teaching professional documents such as syllabi, schemes of work, lesson plans, subject logbooks and lesson notes, as well as through classroom instruction provided by teachers to pupils. Manaseh (2016) describes the school head as an instructional leader for playing roles such as personnel administrator, instructional programming administrator, and supporting administrative functions. Similarly, Musumi and Mkulu (2020) claim that heads' instructional roles include ensuring effective communication, ensuring teaching and learning resources, and conducting collaborative teaching and learning. However, Nyambo, (2017) notes that, due to pressure from their multiple roles, some instructional leaders find alternative ways of leading, such as delegating some of their responsibilities to their subordinates, including deputy head teachers, to accomplish institutional objectives.

In a study to assess the understanding and improvement of instructional leadership practices in primary schools in the Karatu District of Tanzania, Kaai (2016) found that school leaders communicate and drive instructional goals but were not able to explain the vision and mission of their schools. Similarly, Nyambo's (2017) Tanzanian study found that head teachers were not much engaged in classroom observation and were not aware that they are supposed to provide feedback to teachers after classroom observation. Their other work inhibited them from conducting instructional supervision. Nyambo (2017) also notes that some head teachers delegate their responsibilities to other leaders, especially deputy heads and middle leaders, a mode of allocative distribution. However, Bush, Fadare et al (2021) report that Tanzanian school leaders perceive that they are not responsible for classroom observation, or for giving feedback to teachers after observations, and for checking lesson plans and schemes of work.

Emiru's (2020) study of the instructional leadership practices of the heads of six urban secondary schools in Iringa, shows that the participants are not familiar with the concept of instructional leadership. The instructional programme was not managed effectively, as heads of departments were not involved in curriculum coordination, syllabi were not covered on time, and heads did not undertake classroom observations or review curriculum materials. Similarly, Siamoo's (2013) research shows that there is little or no oversight of classroom instruction in most Tanzanian secondary schools. This limited but growing body of research provides the backdrop for the present authors' evaluation of the British Council's instructional leadership programme in Tanzania.

Methodology

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the British Council's Instructional Leadership programme in Tanzania. The specific aims were to explore awareness about instructional leadership among participants and to establish whether, how, and to what extent it is practiced in a sample of schools in Tanzania, including perceptions about its impact. These aims led to several research questions:

1. What is the level of awareness about instructional leadership among participants in the British Council training programme?
2. Why did participants choose to take part in the British Council programme?
3. What is the balance between instructional and administrative aspects of principal leadership?

4. How, and to what extent, are instructional leadership responsibilities distributed or delegated to other senior and middle leaders?
5. What are teachers' perceptions about the nature and impact of instructional leadership?
6. What evidence, if any, is there of a link between instructional leadership behaviours and student learning outcomes?

Interviews were conducted with 20 participants, selected by volunteer and purposive sampling, from school leaders taking part in the British Council Instructional Leadership programme. The 20 participants comprised 16 heads, two deputy heads, and two teachers. All the participants lead primary schools. The majority (11) of the schools are in rural areas whilst nine are urban. This small sample means that findings should be regarded as indicative rather than conclusive.

Data analysis was undertaken by scrutinizing interview transcripts to develop themes, some of which arose from the interview guide while some were emergent from the participants' comments. Validity was addressed through participant triangulation where responses were compared to establish the 'weight' of evidence and to note similarities and differences. The data were collected in English and Swahili. The Swahili data were translated by the researcher who is fluent in both languages. The next section presents these thematic research findings.

Findings

The findings are presented thematically, as shown below.

Motivation for participation

It appears that 'word-of-mouth' was a significant influence on programme participation, as most participants (16) mentioned being motivated by a colleague in a different school (see table 1). A recommendation from the district office was also an important factor for five participants.

Table 1.

Motivation for joining the British Council programme

Motivation	Frequency
Motivated by a colleague in a different school	16
Motivated by the District Education Office	5
To develop my school	4
Other schools were developing	2
To learn English	2
To participate in distance learning opportunities	2
Existing UK-Tanzania partnerships in the country	1
A different course I attended	1
To develop digital skills	1
Continuous learning and professional development	1
Motivated by adverts on vehicles	1

To confront challenges of attendance and performance	1

Colleagues who previously attended the British Council programme are the biggest influence on new entrants to the programme, as illustrated below:

> *First, we were not in the programme, but later the way our colleagues were talking about it, we became inspired (ZL).*
>
> *I heard from fellow teachers from a neighbouring school (OL).*
>
> *I knew British Council from HTs who were already British Council participants (MM).*

Other participants were nominated by district officers, giving the impression that they were required to attend, rather than arising from personal motivation:

> *We got a letter from the District Education Officer informing us to attend the training (OL).*
>
> *I was just informed of the training that I had to attend [by] the Ward Education Officer who also was informed by the district education office (JM).*
>
> *We were nominated by the district education office (HA).*

The desire for school improvement provides a substantial motive for participants to join the British Council programme, as shown below:

> *Motivated because I wanted to develop my school (PN).*
>
> *I joined so that I can help the school and students (SM).*

AK was motivated by comments from colleagues who attended the programme:

> *The big issue that motivated me was due to my experience from teachers who I had known that they were in British Council programmes. They were benefiting from British Council, for example, about teaching and learning. They told me they learnt a lot (AK).*

Overall, a mix of personal and professional considerations influenced leaders' participation in the British Council programme. They wanted to experience high quality professional development leading to enhanced student learning and school improvement.

Professional development approaches

The participants were asked to comment on their professional learning through the British Council programme, and their responses were mostly positive (see table 2).

Table 2.

Participants' positive programme experience

Positive programme experience	Frequency
Activity based	6
Ways of cascading learning to the school	2
Programme raised my motivation	2
Excellent use of teaching aids and visuals	2
Use of practical examples such as developing a school garden	3
How to engage pupils and parents in problem solving	3
Learning about problem solving and thinking out of the box	3

The use of technology and power-point	2
Learning about school and programme planning and management	2
Delegation of power and responsibilities	2

Table 2 shows that participants enjoyed several aspects of the British Council programme. They mostly liked that the training was activity based with numerous opportunities for discussion and sharing with each other:

> *All the topics were provided in the best ways e.g., modules were provided with activities. closely involving tutors, taught how to live with teachers, community and how to plan, act and evaluate (1RS).*
>
> *Generally, it's a good programme the British Council staff have initiated… It makes teachers active, it raises motivation, without it, things would be haphazard (NN).*

Other key positive experiences on the programme relate to the opportunities to experience problem solving first-hand, and how to work with both students and parents to address knowledge deficits and disinterest.

> *We have learnt how to face pupils' problems, how to involve parents e.g., before training we had no production of vegetables, where pupils learn even how to grow, sell, and manage the use of money gained from selling vegetables (SM).*

This example also captures an important dimension of rallying the school around a unifying project such as the school garden. This energises people around a common purpose in pursuit of a mutually beneficial undertaking.

Impact of the Instructional Leadership programme

Personal development

Table 3 summarises programme learning reported by participants.

Table 3.

Programme learning and understanding

Understanding of instructional leadership	Frequency
Distributed leadership roles	10
Creating vision, mission, and goals	8
Focus on improving quality of teaching	4
How to work with pupils	4
How to work with communities to enhance learner outcomes	3
How to work with teachers to improve outcomes	3
How to improve performance	3
Leading by example	2
Enhancing school management processes	2
Enhancing digital learning and problem-solving skills	2

The most frequently reported understanding of Instructional Leadership by these participants was linked to notions of distributed leadership. While this could be interpreted as representing conceptual blurring between these two models, it appears that participants understood instructional leadership as a process that cannot be led effectively by the principal or any single person.

> *I understand that instructional leadership involves distributing leadership roles, everything goes on even if I am not there... [For]*

> *monitoring teaching and learning, we created a team of quality assurance (QA) out of the academic master's team, each with its distinct roles. The QA are responsibility to see that teachers go with their objectives. we were given a seminar to oversee quality of each teacher while academic team is more general to see teachers teach as per the curriculum (RS).*

> *The key issue is on how to work with teachers, community members, and pupils; to see how to resolve challenges, e.g., children can be better helped how to achieve goals, Generally, if a school follows instructional leadership, it is easy to set mission and to meet objectives (PN).*

A strong view was expressed about how instructional leadership is linked to the idea of school vision. Participants expressed generic comments about the nature of vision, similar to those found in international literature, but some were also able to show how it applies in their schools:

> *We developed a school vision and now we use it, we distribute responsibilities to teachers (1 RS).*

> *We managed to update our school vision. The specific benefit is that I can do proper supervision in my roles (4 SM).*

> *On the school vision, it was outdated, we never updated it. We thought, if it is instituted, it cannot be changed (14 DM).*

> *We had no school vision, [but] through BC we are now in the process of making it, in collaboration with teachers, the school committee and parents, monitoring positively by discussing and participating on what should be done, instead of just providing order (6 RP).*

Arguably, vision is a generic component of leadership, rather than being specific to the instructional model, but it is clearly a significant element of the British Council programme judging by the number of participants mentioning its impact on their professional development.

Eight participants mentioned the importance of monitoring, as defined by two of them:

> *Monitoring starts from the head teacher; ...is the teacher preparing for the lessons? Scheme of work? Does he give students enough exercises? Or is there a need to help them find extra time to study? The academic master ensures that teaching aids and notes are prepared, and whether exercises are provided and marked (15 YM).*

> *Monitoring is a way of controlling the teaching and learning-how it goes on in the classroom throughout the lesson plan stages. It focuses on how the teacher is teaching. Follow up need to check whether the scheme of work, lesson plan and teaching aids go together (12 AJ).*

Some responses suggest a top-down approach to monitoring, making it sound like an aspect of control:

> *Monitoring means controlling or managing staff roles. For example, the school management ensures that lessons are going on as planned with everyone performing the roles assigned accordingly (13 JM).*

> *It is a way to keep track of how things are going. It is a way of making follow-up on how things are going, supervising to see whether things are going as expected (16 MB).*

> *Monitoring is an act of making follow-ups of implementation of plans… We make follow-ups on courses offered, schemes of work, lesson plans, we do it weekly- The teacher is evaluated… based on objectives to see whether learning objectives reflect the syllabus (1 RK).*

> *It is a practice to enable teachers to improve their teaching. Yes, monitoring can be classroom observation, which involves evaluating the teaching and learning actions. In our school it is done by the head teacher, the academic master and the QA teacher (9 AJ).*

An alternative view, expressed by several leaders, is that it is a participatory practice to enhance teaching and learning:

> *Monitoring is supervision made to ensure the plans are implemented. We have set ourselves the task that every morning we check the lesson plans and lesson notes. The QA committee members make sure that the responsibilities are carried out. I ensure that every morning my lesson plan is on the table (17 AI).*

> *We make follow-up on teachers in every week. We distribute ourselves in units. We check lesson plans, class work, and attendance in classes. So, we do this cooperatively together, we have a specific form to report academic progress. In the department we share ideas; we invite one another as guest speaker for our classes (3 LC).*

These comments indicate that participants are aware of the importance of monitoring, for effective learning to take place.

School development

The participants outlined several ways in which the British Council programme impacted on their schools (see Table 4).

Table 4.

Impact of the British Council programme in schools

Impact on the school	Frequency
Developed school vision	10
Created inter-school partnerships with British Council support	10
Set up a monitoring and evaluation team	6
Greater parental involvement and engagement	6
Developed strategies for increasing pass rates	6
Enhanced school activity levels and energy / enthusiasm / motivation	5
Raised school pass rates and quality of passes	5
Teachers teaching more effectively	4
Distributed shared responsibilities	3
Lesson evaluation is more frequent	2
Developed leadership confidence	2
Enhanced teaching quality	2
Opened minds to creative problem solving and greater independence	2
Created a competitive culture amongst learners	2
Got equipment from government and British Council	1

The British Council participants claim wide-ranging impact in their schools, although such self-reports should be interpreted cautiously. Most significant was the influence on developing or redeveloping school visions, mentioned by ten participants. However, the responses lacked specificity about how such visions were revised or developed to have a more direct impact on teaching and learning. One participant mentioned the challenges involved in developing and planning the school mission:

> *We face difficulties when we have set mission and planned for resource, for example, to raise pass rate is a process that require teachers and parents' commitment; for pupils to remain at school for extra hours. Parents are the ones to work at home, they hinder the mission (RS).*

Ten interviewees noted how the British Council programme impacted on the creation of new knowledge partnerships with other schools, for example:

> *We have managed to develop exchange partnerships, who are doing their things collaboratively, e.g. conferences, primary and secondary school visits made them come with their children (AH).*

> *We have links, we exchange contacts, if we have challenges, we share so that we get solutions, e.g. if a pupil has a problem (LM).*

Six participants stressed the importance of raising pass rates in public examinations, for example:

> *We have developed strategies to increase 'As' to improve performance (PN).*

> *We have policies on improving academic performance. We want to reduce 'Cs' in Class 7. We have succeeded, last year we had 2Cs only (ZL).*

Three participants reported how their instructional leadership learning was cascaded in their schools, a form of distributed leadership. At LM's school, for example, participants, and those who had not participated in the British Council programme, were assigned to a common learning group where the new ideas were shared and disseminated:

> *We formed a committee composed of teachers who participated in the British Council training and those who did not. To build capacity among students on confidence for self-expression (LM).*

Other important benefits reported by participants include perceived enhancement of what some called leadership confidence, enhanced competitiveness for top grades among learners, and the creation of monitoring and evaluation teams to measure progress. The British Council programme appears to have created a basis for continuous professional development in schools and for scaling up standards in the sector.

Inhibitors to British Council Programme Learning

The participants identified two distinct inhibitors. These were challenges to their leadership learning (see table 5) and challenges in implementing their learning in schools (see table 6).

Table 5.

Learning challenges

Challenges of learning	Frequency
Lack of resources in schools	7
Lack of computers	4
Time for school-based training	4
Parental disengagement	3

The comments below illustrate the challenges to programme learning identified by participants. These mostly relate to environmental factors and resources:

> *The environmental programme at school did not materialise due to lack of resources and draughtiness, e.g., lack of resources limited the implementation of academic programmes to improve performance (ZL).*
>
> *The big issue is on science and technology -ur community cannot contribute for school facilities, mainly it is facilities for ICT that is still a challenge. Also, on the part of pupil teacher ratio, timetable, and the way to lead clubs, f you want to extend time for pupils, parents will raise up that you are making their children late to madras (AK).*
>
> *For a vision to be implemented requires cooperation between staff and the community. It becomes challenging due to a low response (FS).*

Table 6.

Challenges of implementation in schools

Challenges of implementation in schools	**Frequency**
Resource inadequacies in schools	6
Parents not always cooperative	2
Improving school pass rates, a long-drawn process	2
Family poverty especially among coastal communities	1
Predominantly new staff in the school	1

The comments below illustrate the challenges of implementing programme learning in their schools:

> *We face difficulties when we have set a mission and planned for resources, e.g., to raise pass rate is a process that require teachers and parents' commitment- For pupils to remain at school for extra hours. Parents are the ones to work at home, they hinder mission accomplishment (RS).*
>
> *It was intervened by a lot of timetable activities; students census for classes with national exams this year, e.g., we were invited to another seminar (during the BC training period). you participate but you must attend to other leadership matters (AK).*
>
> *Most of what we learn are digital, we don't have facilities such as computers and recorders, we fail to put them in practice (EK).*
>
> *We fail to prepare materials e.g., those that require electricity, ICT is hard to implement, records are manually kept thus prone to being lost (EK).*

Another comment relates to the feasibility of implementing instructional leadership in practice:

> *We found it hard to apply the BC methods in the actual timetable for teachers in large sized classrooms of about 120 pupils (MM).*

These comments suggest the need for British Council facilitators to review their pedagogy to make it less dependent on technology, so that the benefits of participant learning are not inhibited by the realities of the infrastructure and facilities available in schools, especially those in rural contexts.

Improving the Instructional Leadership Programme

The participants offered several suggestions to improve the British Council programme in respect of enhanced learning and enhanced impact (see tables 7 and 8).

Table 7.

Suggested improvements to enhance learning

Suggested improvements to enhance learning	Frequency
Lengthen the time for training	5
Increase the number of participants from each school	3
Need for school-based activities to be responsive to context	3
More regular training	3
More sessions on teacher leadership	2
Need for materials in soft copy	2
The language of communication	1

Table 7 shows that increasing the training time, increasing the number of participants from each school, and having more school-based training, are among the most frequent suggestions, illustrated by the comments below:

> *On the part of school-based activities, it could be better if they could come to schools and share the ideas. e.g., creating confidence, we have English club-it builds pupils' self-confidence, and competition with other schools (LM)*
>
> *The number of workshops should be increased as well as the number of participants (AH).*

> *Materials, everything is in soft copy, we would like to have pamphlets for our reference to revise when we have time (FS).*

Most of these suggestions indicate satisfaction with the programme in that participants seem to want more training time for more participants. This is unlikely to be feasible unless a Train the Trainer programme is introduced to facilitate cascading to more leaders and teachers. Some comments, however, notably these asking for 'responsiveness to context', and for soft copies of materials, imply criticism, and may encourage the British Council to review these aspects of the programme.

Table 8.

Suggested improvements to enhance impact

Suggested Improvements to enhance impact	Frequency
Training to become more regular	7
More school-based training and visits	3
All teachers must get a chance to participate	2
Obtain feedback before next training	2
Reduce content coverage in individual sessions	2
Create opportunities for inter-district training and collaboration	1
Inform teachers in advance	1

The comments below illustrate the suggestions made by participants to increase the impact of programme learning in their schools:

> *There should be frequent training, there should be feedback before they go for the next phase of training to see whether they (trainees) were implementing or not, and to know the step reached and generally to know what is going on (PN).*
>
> *The training should continue for all teachers to get a chance to participate (SM).*
>
> *I suggest training should be regular as they build us, too long a lapse [1nd] we forget. Also, teachers should be informed a month in advance before the training. We left our phone numbers for sharing ideas through WhatsApp groups (AK).*
>
> *These BC tutors should visit these schools that participate in the programmes so that participants become motivated to implement knowing that they (tutors) will come to check (AK).*
>
> *I would like the course to be offered every year, e.g., at the end of the semester, because learning is continuous (RP).*
>
> *Since they are training to build the capacity of teachers, and they bring a large content to be covered within a short time. I suggest that the time should be extended (EK).*

These comments mostly indicate a wish to extend the training, through more frequent sessions, involving more participants, and with a school-based dimension. While these ideas are understandable, resource constraints are likely to mean that they are not achievable. Extending programmes to scale is the major challenge for all professional development providers. Cascade models of learning, with a 'train the trainers' dimension, would be helpful but may lead to 'dilution' (Bush, Ng et al., 2021), as second and third generation facilitators lead the programme. An alternative is to further develop the virtual elements of the programme but, as noted above, this may be inhibited by limited infrastructure and resources, especially in rural settings.

Discussion

This rationale for the programme is well supported by international research and literature that show the importance of instructional leadership for school improvement and student outcomes (Bush 2013, 2020, Robinson et al 2008). Similar findings are evident from research in Africa (Bush, Maringe, & Glover, 2021, Musumi & Mkulu, 2020). Leithwood et al. (2006, 2020) show that school leadership is second only to classroom practice in its influence on student learning. Instructional leadership differs from other leadership models in offering a direct link between leadership and classroom teaching and learning (Bush 2020).

Answering the research questions

This section shows how these research questions have been addressed through the enquiry, linking the data with previous research and literature.

1. What is the level of awareness about instructional leadership among participants in the British Council training programme?

The data show that participants have a good understanding of instructional leadership concepts and practice, notably vision and mission, understanding teaching and learning, distributed leadership, and monitoring, including classroom observation. However, there is much less awareness of other instructional leadership ideas, such as modelling, mentoring, and professional development. This imbalance suggests a stronger focus on 'control' aspects of instructional leadership than those leading to teacher empowerment. In terms of the Hallinger and Heck (1999) model, reported above, there is a stronger emphasis on reciprocal learning, through classroom observation and feedback, than direct or indirect approaches, such as modelling or dialogue with teachers.

2. Why did participants choose to take part in the British Council programme?

Programme participants reported powerful intrinsic motivators, such as wishing to develop their instructional leadership knowledge and understanding as a stepping-stone to school improvement. 'Word-of-mouth' recommendations from satisfied participants appear to have been particularly significant, showing the importance of personal connections in enhancing motivation. There are also significant external motivators, such as nomination by the Ministry of Education. These indicate Government support for the programme but may also lead principals and other leaders to consider that participation is an expectation rather than a personal choice. Previous research (e.g. Bush et al, 2021) shows that professional development is more effective when it is 'owned' by participants rather than being an obligation imposed by the formal hierarchy.

3. What is the balance between instructional and administrative aspects of principal leadership?

It was not possible to assess this issue confidently, as schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and researchers could not observe school leadership practice. However, some participants commented that their administrative work made it difficult for them to give sufficient time to their instructional responsibilities. Elsewhere in Africa, as noted above, principals are not focused on instructional leadership, leading Mestry et al (2013) to conclude that principals need to balance their administrative and instructional roles.

4. How, and to what extent, are instructional leadership responsibilities distributed or delegated to other senior and middle leaders?

The British Council programme has greatly increased the awareness of participants about the importance of distributed leadership, and half of them (ten) referred to this model when commenting on their gains from the programme, more than any other perceived benefit. Some participants commented that they had developed team approaches to classroom observation, for example through introducing quality assurance teams, while many appeared to understand instructional leadership as a process that cannot be led effectively by the principal or any single person. However, this may be partly a pragmatic response to the need to balance administrative and instructional requirements, as also noted in Tanzania, by Nyambo (2017).

5. What are teachers' perceptions about the nature and impact of instructional leadership?

It was not possible to engage with teachers beyond those taking the British Council programme, most of whom were principals. The participants mostly developed a clear understanding of the nature of instructional leadership and were also able to report on the impact of the programme on their personal development and leadership practice. The data indicate that many participants claimed to have embedded key aspects of instructional leadership in their schools, notably vision, distributed leadership and monitoring, including classroom observation. This confirms Mushi and Ye's (2021) finding that instructional leadership in Tanzania impacts on leadership processes, including setting vision and mission, sharing school goals, and supervising and monitoring instruction. However, care must be taken in interpreting both sets of claims as they could not be triangulated through teacher interviews or school visits.

6. What evidence, if any, is there of a link between instructional leadership behaviours and student learning outcomes?

There is very little direct evidence of a link between instructional leadership learning and behaviours on student outcomes, although some participants mentioned the positive effects of the British Council programme on school development. There are two main reasons why a substantive link cannot be established. First, schools were deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and many participants referred to the impact this had on their ability to implement programme learning. Second, there is evidence (e.g., Bush & Glover 2012) of the long-term nature of the impact of interventions on student outcomes. Their study of the impact of a principal development programme on student learning in South Africa showed that it was two years before it had a positive effect on student outcomes as judged by school leaving examination results. The long-term nature of impact on student outcomes in Tanzania was also noted by Mushi and Ye (2021).

Conclusion

International and African research and literature (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2006, Bush & Glover, 2012, Nyambo, 2017, Mushi & Ye, 2021) attest to the importance of high quality leadership for school improvement and student outcomes. Robinson et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis shows that instructional leadership has a greater impact on student learning than any other leadership model. The British Council's recognition of the importance of instructional leadership, encapsulated in its Connecting Classrooms programme, is a major step towards school improvement and enhanced student outcomes in the many countries where the programme is offered. The present research shows that school leaders in Tanzania reported many gains from their participation in this programme. These included greater understanding of key concepts such as vision and mission, teaching and learning, distributed leadership, and monitoring, including classroom observation. There are also claims, that could not be corroborated, that such practices were becoming embedded in participants' schools.

The research findings also have implications for programme development, for the British Council and other providers. First, taking development initiatives to scale is a major challenge. The Tanzanian participants, enthused by the programme, suggested expanding the programme to more schools, and to a wider range of leaders beyond the principals who are the main target of the current programme. Some of the contributors also suggested expanding the programme to all teachers. These ideas are a compliment to the programme but also reflect a perceived lack of other suitable professional development opportunities. Expanding current provision in this way is not feasible but the programme could be taken to scale through a 'cascade' model to enable graduates of the programme to develop other professionals in their own schools and beyond. This is likely to require a 'train the trainers' initiative. A linked issue is to determine an appropriate balance between virtual and in-person learning in a post-pandemic context. Virtual learning enables easier access for participants who are remote from the learning centre and may also help to take the programme to scale, but such colleagues are also more likely to have weak connectivity, with implications for equity.

Second, there are sustainability issues for externally-generated professional development that may be dependent on short-term NGO or donor funding. Such initiatives, however successful, often do not continue after the withdrawal of funding. This indicates a need for African ministries of education and universities to develop their own professional and leadership development programmes, so that they are embedded within national education systems. Third, there is a need for greater knowledge production on school leadership by Africa scholars, to provide a stronger indigenous element for professional development and to reduce dependence on international research and literature that may not be appropriate for school leadership in African contexts. The British Council instructional leadership initiative is a positive development but sustainability, scale, and developing context-specific curricula, are major challenges.

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