



SUPERVISION FEEDBACK PRACTICES AND TEACHERS' JOB PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS: EVIDENCE FROM MBEYA CITY COUNCIL, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT :

This study examined the effects of heads of school supervision feedback practices on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Mbeya City Council, Tanzania. Guided by three specific objectives to explore the supervision feedback practices used by heads of schools, to examine teachers' perceptions regarding those practices, and to explore how supervision feedback influences teachers' job performance the study adopted a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twelve purposively selected participants comprising three heads of schools and nine teachers. Thematic analysis was used to organize and interpret the data. The findings revealed that supervision feedback in the studied schools is predominantly verbal, rarely documented in writing, and frequently delayed due to competing administrative responsibilities. Feedback content focuses mainly on lesson preparation, classroom management, syllabus coverage, and learner participation, with limited attention to instructional methodology and pedagogical innovation. Follow-up support after feedback sessions is largely absent, leaving teachers to implement recommendations without structured professional guidance. Teachers' perceptions of supervision feedback are shaped by its usefulness, tone, fairness, and the degree of openness permitted during feedback discussions. Constructive, respectful, and dialogical supervision improves lesson preparation, classroom instruction, classroom management, student assessment, motivation, and professional commitment, while harsh or fault-finding feedback reduces confidence, increases anxiety, and causes compliance-based changes that do not translate into sustained professional growth. The study concludes that supervision in Mbeya City Council still operates largely as an inspection mechanism rather than a developmental professional support system. It recommends that heads of schools introduce written feedback forms, provide timely post-observation discussions, conduct follow-up supervision visits, and shift toward a coaching-oriented model of instructional leadership.

Keywords: *Supervision feedback, instructional supervision, teachers' job performance, Instructional Leadership Theory, Feedback Intervention Theory, secondary schools, Mbeya City Council, Tanzania*

1.0 Introduction

Teacher supervision and feedback constitute the central mechanism through which school leadership translates policy expectations into improved classroom practice. Globally, education reforms emphasize instructional leadership as a core responsibility of school heads, requiring them to move beyond administrative management toward active engagement with teaching quality through classroom observation, professional dialogue, and continuous guidance of teachers (Bush, 2018; Robinson, 2020). Research from the United States demonstrates that continuous, timely, and constructive feedback improves teachers' lesson planning, classroom management, and learner assessment practices (Danielson, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2020). In Europe, structured feedback linked to professional development strengthens teacher effectiveness in countries such as the United Kingdom (Ofsted, 2019), while collaborative and trust-based feedback practices in Finland produce high levels of teacher motivation and pedagogical quality (Sahlberg, 2020). In Asia, supervision systems in China, Japan, and Singapore that embed feedback within professional learning communities have improved instructional consistency and teacher professional growth (Li & Liu, 2019; Lewis, 2020; Tan, 2021).

In Africa, however, instructional supervision continues to face significant challenges. Okeke (2019) and Oduro (2020) document that supervision in many Sub-Saharan contexts remains inspection-oriented, with feedback that is informal, irregular, and focused on identifying faults rather than supporting professional development. UNESCO (2021) confirms that this pattern reduces teacher motivation and weakens the relationship between supervision and improved classroom practice. In Tanzania, studies have found that heads of schools frequently provide general, verbally delivered, and fault-finding feedback that lacks specificity and is rarely accompanied by follow-up support, resulting in limited impact on teachers' instructional practices (Mfaume & Bilinga, 2018; Komba, 2020; Lyimo, 2021). In Mbeya City Council specifically, teachers have been reported to describe supervision feedback as discouraging and compliance-focused rather than developmental, yet limited empirical evidence exists on how specific feedback practices affect teachers' professional performance in this context (Mwakyusa, 2022).

This study was guided by two theoretical frameworks. Instructional Leadership Theory focuses on the role of school leaders in improving teaching and learning by providing supervision, guidance, and feedback that promotes professional growth (Bush, 2018; Robinson, 2020). Feedback Intervention Theory explains how feedback influences performance by directing attention to specific aspects of practice and helping recipients adjust their actions toward desired outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2019). Together, these frameworks explain both the leadership context within which supervision feedback occurs and the mechanisms through which feedback influences teacher performance. The study pursued three specific objectives: to explore the supervision feedback practices used by heads of schools in public secondary schools in Mbeya City Council; to examine teachers' perceptions regarding those feedback practices; and to explore how heads of school supervision feedback practices influence teachers' job performance.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Mbeya City Council, located in Mbeya Region in the southern highlands of Tanzania. The council was selected because it has a substantial number of public secondary schools where heads of schools are responsible for conducting instructional supervision and providing professional feedback to teachers as part of school management. The urban setting of Mbeya City Council also means that secondary schools operate under increasing performance expectations from education authorities and communities, making the quality of supervision feedback particularly consequential for teachers' professional practice and student learning outcomes.

2.2 Research Approach and Design

The study adopted a qualitative research approach because it sought to gain in-depth understanding of how heads of schools provide supervision feedback and how such practices influence teachers' job performance in their natural professional context. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate when a study seeks to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of a phenomenon within its natural setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A case study design was employed, which is suitable when a researcher seeks a comprehensive understanding of a specific issue within a defined setting (Yin, 2018). This design enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information from teachers and heads of schools regarding their experiences with supervision feedback and its influence on professional practice.

2.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Purposive sampling was used to select twelve participants comprising three heads of schools and nine teachers from public secondary schools in Mbeya City Council. Purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative studies because it allows intentional selection of information-rich participants who have direct and relevant experience with the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). The three heads of schools possessed between 11 and 18 years of leadership experience and all held Master of Education degrees, ensuring high-level professional insight into supervision practices. Among the nine teacher participants, teaching experience ranged from four to thirteen years, incorporating both relatively new and experienced professionals. Six teachers held Bachelor of Education degrees and three held Diploma qualifications, providing a diversity of professional backgrounds that enriched the depth of the data.

2.4 Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection instrument. Interview guides covered three thematic areas aligned with the study objectives: supervision feedback practices, teachers' perceptions of feedback, and the influence of feedback on job performance. Each guide included open-ended questions and probes that allowed participants to describe their experiences freely while enabling the researcher to seek clarification and deeper explanation where necessary. Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Data collection was conducted in 2026.

2.5 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts. Following Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher repeatedly reviewed the transcripts, assigned codes to significant statements, grouped related codes into categories, and developed themes representing major patterns within participants' experiences and perceptions. Both deductive coding guided by the research objectives and inductive coding allowing for emerging patterns were employed. Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility by accurately recording and verifying participants' responses, dependability by maintaining a clear audit trail of analytical decisions, and confirmability by grounding interpretations in participants' actual verbatim statements (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.0 Results

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The twelve respondents who participated in the study included three heads of schools and nine teachers. The heads of schools had between 11 and 18 years of leadership experience and all held Master of Education degrees, reflecting strong professional preparation for instructional supervision. Teacher respondents had between four and thirteen years of professional experience, with six holding Bachelor of Education degrees and three holding Diploma qualifications. This combination of administrative and classroom perspectives, as well as varied experience levels and qualifications, enabled the study to capture a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of supervision feedback practices and their influence on teachers' job performance.

3.2 Supervision Feedback Practices Used by Heads of Schools

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of the first research objective: the types of feedback practices used, timing of feedback, focus areas of supervision feedback, and follow-up support after feedback sessions, alongside challenges affecting those practices.

Regarding the types of feedback used, verbal feedback provided through face-to-face discussion after classroom observation was identified as the dominant practice across all participating schools. Heads of schools described inviting teachers to their offices after lesson observation to discuss strengths and areas for improvement collaboratively. One head of school explained: *"After I observe a teacher, I usually invite the teacher to my office for a discussion. We go through the lesson together, identify the strengths, discuss the areas that need improvement, and agree on what should be done differently during the next lesson"* (HOS-01). Written feedback, however, was rarely provided. Teachers consistently reported that no written supervision reports or feedback forms were shared following observation sessions, leaving them dependent on memory when implementing recommendations. One teacher expressed: *"Normally the head of school talks to me after observing my lesson, but there is no written report. After several days I cannot remember everything that we discussed"* (T-04).

On the timing of feedback, heads of schools generally preferred immediate post-observation discussions when circumstances permitted, recognizing that timeliness enabled teachers to recall specific classroom events and connect recommendations with the observed lesson. One head of school stated: *"Whenever I observe a lesson, I try my best to meet the teacher immediately after the class or later on the same day. At that time both of us still remember what happened during the lesson"* (HOS-03). Teachers similarly valued immediate feedback because it reduced confusion and increased the likelihood of implementing recommendations. However, feedback was frequently delayed by days or weeks due to administrative responsibilities. One teacher explained: *"Sometimes the head of school observes my lesson and then becomes occupied with meetings or other administrative work. I may wait for several days before we discuss the observation. By that time I have already taught many other lessons, making it difficult to relate the comments to the lesson that was observed"* (T-07).

Regarding content focus, supervision feedback concentrated primarily on lesson preparation, classroom management, syllabus coverage, and learner participation. Heads of schools checked lesson plans, schemes of work, and lesson notes, and assessed whether objectives aligned with classroom activities. However, participants noted that feedback paid comparatively limited attention to instructional methodology and learner-centred pedagogy. One teacher observed: *"Most of the feedback I receive focuses on whether I prepared my lesson well and covered the required content. Very little attention is given to discussing different teaching methods or ways of helping learners understand difficult concepts"* (T-09).

Follow-up support after supervision was largely absent. Most teachers were expected to implement recommendations independently without coaching, mentoring, demonstration lessons, or repeated classroom observations. One teacher explained: *"After the head of school gives me feedback, I am normally expected to improve on my own. There is no follow-up meeting, classroom coaching, or demonstration lesson to show me how to improve"* (T-05). Heads of schools acknowledged this limitation, attributing it to heavy administrative responsibilities that competed with instructional leadership duties (HOS-02). Departmental meetings served as an occasional collective alternative to individual follow-up, but these were not systematically organized.

The challenges limiting effective feedback practices included heavy administrative workload, insufficient time for supervision, inadequate professional training in feedback delivery, and teachers' variable attitudes toward supervision. One head of school described: *"As a head of school, I perform many responsibilities every day. Besides supervising teachers, I attend meetings, prepare official reports, manage school finances, and respond to instructions from higher authorities. Sometimes these responsibilities leave very little time for conducting classroom observations and providing comprehensive feedback to teachers"* (HOS-03).

3.3 Teachers' Perceptions of Supervision Feedback Practices

Four major themes emerged regarding teachers' perceptions: perceptions of the usefulness of feedback, the tone and communication style of feedback

delivery, fairness and trust in supervision, and openness during feedback sessions.

On usefulness, teachers generally valued feedback that was specific, practical, and directly connected to classroom practice. Participants who received targeted guidance on how to improve lesson objectives, classroom interaction, or learner engagement reported that such feedback helped them identify clear areas for professional growth. However, feedback perceived as vague or general without practical suggestions was viewed as unhelpful. One teacher explained: *"When the feedback is specific and practical, I find it very useful because I can clearly understand what to improve and how to do it. But when comments are too general, it becomes difficult to know exactly what the head of school expects me to change in my teaching"* (T-03).

Concerning tone, teachers distinguished clearly between constructive and harsh feedback delivery. Feedback delivered respectfully and privately, acknowledging strengths before discussing weaknesses, was perceived positively. Feedback delivered in an authoritative, commanding, or publicly humiliating manner generated fear, resistance, and reduced willingness to accept professional guidance. One teacher noted: *"When supervision feedback focuses only on my mistakes without recognizing what I have done well, I feel discouraged. I become anxious about being supervised rather than looking forward to it as an opportunity to improve"* (T-06).

Regarding fairness and trust, teachers who perceived supervision as objective and consistent expressed greater confidence in the process and greater willingness to implement recommendations. However, perceived favoritism where some teachers felt colleagues with closer personal relationships with the head of school received softer feedback reduced trust and credibility. One teacher stated: *"Sometimes it appears that teachers who have a closer relationship with the head of school receive softer comments during supervision, while others receive stronger criticism for similar classroom situations. Whether this is intentional or not, it creates doubts about the fairness of the supervision process"* (T-09). Heads of schools responded by encouraging open dialogue when disagreements arose, with one explaining: *"If a teacher disagrees with any observation, I encourage discussion so that we can understand each other's perspectives. My intention is to improve teaching rather than judge individual teachers"* (HOS-01).

On openness, teachers who were permitted to explain their classroom decisions, ask questions, and participate actively in post-observation discussions perceived supervision more positively and felt more motivated to act on recommendations. Conversely, one-directional feedback sessions where teachers were expected to listen passively reduced their sense of professional ownership. One teacher described: *"Most supervision meetings involve the head of school talking while I listen. There is very little opportunity to explain my teaching decisions or discuss the challenges that affected the lesson. Sometimes I leave the meeting feeling that my perspective was never considered"* (T-04).

3.4 Influence of Supervision Feedback on Teachers' Job Performance

Five themes emerged regarding the influence of supervision feedback on job performance: effects on lesson preparation, classroom teaching practices, classroom management, student assessment practices, and teacher motivation and professional commitment.

Supervision feedback consistently improved lesson preparation by encouraging teachers to prepare more comprehensive instructional plans, align learning objectives with classroom activities, and organize teaching materials more carefully before entering the classroom. One teacher explained: *"After receiving supervision feedback, I became more careful when preparing my lesson plans. I now make sure that the lesson objectives, teaching activities, and evaluation methods are properly connected before entering the classroom"* (T-01). Heads of schools confirmed observable improvements, with one noting that many teachers demonstrated noticeably higher-quality lesson plans after receiving regular constructive feedback (HOS-02).

Classroom teaching practices improved through feedback that encouraged more learner-centred approaches, clearer explanations, and greater use of teaching aids. One teacher described: *"During one classroom observation, the head of school advised me that I was speaking most of the time while students remained passive listeners. After discussing the lesson together, I started introducing group discussions, classroom presentations, and more questions during my lessons"* (T-09). However, improvements were constrained where recommendations were not accompanied by practical demonstrations. One teacher expressed: *"The head of school often tells me that I should improve my teaching methods, but sometimes I am not shown exactly how to do it. Without demonstration lessons or professional workshops, it becomes difficult to understand how some of the recommended teaching strategies should be applied"* (T-06).

Classroom management improved through advice on organizing activities clearly, managing learner behaviour proactively, and improving time allocation across lesson phases. Student assessment practices strengthened as teachers became more consistent in conducting classroom exercises, marking work promptly, and providing written feedback to learners. One teacher described: *"I have become more organized in recording assessment results and providing feedback to learners after every exercise. This has improved both my record keeping and students' learning progress"* (T-07).

Motivation and professional commitment were the dimensions most profoundly influenced by supervision feedback. Constructive, appreciative, and encouraging feedback increased confidence, professional pride, and willingness to invest in lesson preparation and school activities. One teacher stated: *"Whenever the head of school recognizes the effort I put into preparing and teaching my lessons, I become more motivated to continue improving. Positive feedback gives me confidence and reminds me that my work is appreciated"* (T-01). Conversely, harsh or fault-finding feedback reduced morale, created anxiety, and caused some teachers to become defensively cautious rather than professionally innovative. One participant explained:

"When supervision focuses mainly on mistakes without recognizing the positive aspects of my work, I become discouraged. Instead of feeling motivated to improve, I begin worrying about making more mistakes during the next observation" (T-08).

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Supervision Feedback Practices

The finding that supervision feedback in Mbeya City Council is predominantly verbal, rarely written, frequently delayed, compliance-focused in content, and largely unsupported by structured follow-up aligns closely with existing literature on instructional supervision in Tanzania and Sub-Saharan Africa. Mfaume and Bilinga (2018) and Komba (2020) both found that classroom supervision in Tanzanian public secondary schools relies heavily on verbal communication with limited documentation, a pattern attributed to heavy workloads and insufficient time for preparing detailed supervision reports. The present study confirms that this pattern persists in Mbeya City Council and identifies administrative competition as its primary structural cause, consistent with UNESCO (2021) and Oduro (2020), who document similar constraints across Sub-Saharan African education systems. From the perspective of Instructional Leadership Theory, the finding that administrative responsibilities routinely displace instructional supervision represents a fundamental tension between the policy expectation that school heads should prioritize teaching and learning and the operational reality that they face extensive and competing management demands (Bush, 2018; Robinson, 2020). The limited use of written feedback is particularly consequential because, as Danielson (2019) argues, written supervision reports provide the permanent documentation that enables teachers to revisit recommendations, monitor their own progress, and sustain professional growth over time. Without written records, the developmental value of feedback is confined to the immediate post-observation discussion, after which recommendations progressively fade from teachers' practical recall.

The timing findings support Feedback Intervention Theory directly. Hattie and Timperley (2019) argue that feedback is most effective when delivered promptly because recipients can connect recommendations with the specific task that has just been performed. The present study confirms this mechanism in the school supervision context: teachers who received immediate feedback clearly recalled the observed lesson and could easily apply recommendations to subsequent teaching. Delayed feedback disrupted this connection, reducing both the meaningfulness and the practical applicability of supervision recommendations. The finding that follow-up support is largely absent further limits the transformative potential of supervision, as Mulkeen (2022) and Glickman, Gordon and Ross-Gordon (2018) both argue that professional improvement requires continuous guidance and repeated developmental contact rather than isolated observation-and-feedback episodes.

4.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Supervision Feedback

The finding that teachers' perceptions of supervision feedback are shaped primarily by how feedback is delivered rather than by whether it is given at all is consistent with a broad range of international and African literature. Darling-Hammond (2020) found that teachers perceive feedback positively when it is specific, clear, and focused on professional improvement, while Kraft and Papay (2021) report that teachers experience stress and defensiveness when feedback is evaluative rather than developmental, precisely the distinction confirmed by participants in the present study. The strong correspondence between these international findings and the experiences of teachers in Mbeya City Council suggests that the emotional and relational dimensions of feedback delivery are not culturally specific but reflect universal features of how professional adults respond to supervision.

The perception of fairness and trust emerged as a particularly influential mediator of feedback effectiveness in this study. Ngũgĩ (2019) found that Kenyan teachers resisted supervision when feedback was delivered in a commanding style or perceived as inconsistent, while REB (2021) documented that Rwandan teachers showed greater openness to supervision when they were actively involved in feedback discussions and goal-setting. The present study adds to this East African evidence by demonstrating that perceived favoritism—even when not definitively established—erodes teachers' confidence in supervision as a professional development mechanism, reducing their motivation to engage with recommendations in good faith. This finding has direct implications for heads of schools: the relational credibility of supervision depends not only on objective content but on teachers' perceptions of whether the process is fairly and consistently administered.

Feedback Intervention Theory provides a direct explanatory frame for the openness findings. Hattie and Timperley (2019) emphasize that feedback is most effective when it is dialogical, allowing recipients to connect recommendations with their own professional understanding. The finding that one-directional supervision sessions where teachers are expected to listen passively reduce acceptance of recommendations demonstrates that excluding teachers from post-observation dialogue defeats a fundamental mechanism of feedback effectiveness. Constructive feedback and participatory discussion are not optional enhancements but essential conditions for supervision to achieve its intended developmental purpose.

4.3 Influence of Supervision Feedback on Teachers' Job Performance

The finding that constructive supervision feedback improves lesson preparation, classroom instruction, classroom management, student assessment, motivation, and professional commitment is consistent with theoretical predictions from both Instructional Leadership Theory and Feedback

Intervention Theory, and with empirical evidence from multiple international contexts. Danielson (2019) identifies lesson planning, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and professional responsibilities as the core domains of effective teaching that structured supervision should strengthen, and the present study confirms improvements across all of these dimensions when feedback was constructive, specific, and timely. Sahlberg (2020) found that collaborative and trust-based supervision in Finland strengthens teachers' intrinsic motivation, and the present study provides parallel evidence from a developing-country context by showing that respectful and encouraging supervision increases professional confidence and commitment across multiple performance dimensions.

The finding that motivation and confidence are the performance dimensions most strongly and rapidly affected by supervision feedback quality is consistent with Robinson (2020), who argues that instructional leadership influences teacher performance primarily through motivation rather than authority. The present study demonstrates that this motivational pathway operates powerfully in both directions: constructive supervision accelerates professional investment and creative instructional risk-taking, while harsh or fault-finding supervision activates defensive compliance responses that produce superficial, short-term changes without genuine professional growth. Kraft and Papay (2021) and Okeke (2019) both report similar bidirectional motivational effects in their respective contexts, reinforcing that the emotional quality of supervision feedback is not a soft leadership concern but a determinant of whether supervision achieves its core purpose of improving teaching and learning.

The finding that improvements in classroom teaching practices are constrained when follow-up coaching and practical demonstrations are absent confirms Mulkeen (2022), who argues that supervision without structured follow-up reduces professional development to a process of identifying weaknesses without providing the professional resources needed to address them. Some teachers in the present study specifically described receiving recommendations to adopt more learner-centred teaching approaches without being shown how those approaches should be implemented in Tanzanian classroom contexts with limited resources and large class sizes. This gap between recommendation and supported implementation represents a missed opportunity in which supervision feedback, however constructively delivered, cannot achieve its potential for transforming classroom practice.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the effects of heads of school supervision feedback practices on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Mbeya City Council, Tanzania. The findings establish that supervision feedback in the studied schools operates primarily as an informal, compliance-oriented inspection mechanism rather than a structured and developmental professional support system. Verbal dominance, absence of written records, frequent delays, compliance-focused content, and the near-total absence of follow-up support collectively reduce supervision from a potentially transformative professional development tool to a periodic monitoring exercise whose improvements are predominantly short-term and surface-level.

The study concludes that teachers' perceptions of supervision are not fixed but are constructed through each interaction with supervisors, shaped by the specificity, tone, fairness, and dialogue-orientation of each feedback episode. Teachers who experience supervision as respectful, impartial, dialogical, and practically useful engage with it professionally and implement its recommendations willingly. Those who experience supervision as fault-finding, hierarchical, or inconsistently applied develop protective responses that inhibit genuine professional learning regardless of the accuracy of the observations communicated.

The study further concludes that motivation and professional confidence are the dimensions of teacher performance most immediately and powerfully influenced by supervision feedback quality. Because motivation mediates the relationship between feedback and all other dimensions of job performance – lesson preparation, classroom instruction, classroom management, and student assessment – improving the emotional and relational quality of supervision feedback is not secondary to improving its technical content but is a prerequisite for it.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that heads of schools introduce a standardized written supervision feedback form documenting the date of observation, key strengths observed, specific areas requiring improvement, and agreed action steps. This form should be shared with the observed teacher within 24 hours. Feedback sessions should be conducted privately, with balance between recognizing strengths and addressing areas for improvement, and should include structured time for teachers to explain classroom decisions and ask questions. Heads of schools should conduct follow-up classroom observations within four to six weeks of initial supervision to assess whether recommendations have been implemented and to provide additional guidance where needed. Mentoring, peer coaching, and demonstration lessons should complement post-observation feedback, particularly when teachers require practical support in implementing new instructional strategies. Education authorities at the district and regional levels should organize regular training workshops for heads of schools on effective supervision feedback, coaching skills, communication strategies, and time management for instructional leadership. They should also develop supervision monitoring frameworks that assess the quality of feedback practices rather than merely confirming that classroom observations occurred. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should review and update the national supervision policy to establish explicit standards for feedback quality, communication style, and follow-up support, integrating a coaching-oriented rather than inspection-oriented model of instructional supervision throughout pre-service and in-service education programmes for school leaders.

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