

POLICY BRIEF: RESEARCH AND LEARNING**SCHOOL MANAGEMENT****Principles for improving school management in Tanzania: Lessons from global evidence**

Strong leaders manage their schools effectively to facilitate high quality teaching and learning. Tanzania's [school management practices are weak](#) when compared against other countries where similar data exists. Within Tanzania, management practices in the education sector are also significantly weaker than the private manufacturing sector. This means there is great potential to strengthen teaching and learning performance by focusing on school management improvements.

This Policy Brief draws on growing evidence from around the world to showcase ways that school management interventions can be implemented in Tanzania to improve teacher and learner performance. This Policy Brief is based on the technical note '[Principles to Improve School Management in Tanzania: Drawing on Evidence from Around the World](#).'¹ This work is contributing to two key Shule Bora programme outcomes: "Quality and effectiveness of teaching & learning improved" and "Enhanced evidence-based planning and management in basic education sector".

Summary of findings

Focus on instructional guidance (actions taken by school leaders to improve teaching): the most effective programmes are those that support teachers' learning and development.

Use student data to inform practice: collecting and using student learning data allows leaders to target improvements.

Provide practical tools: school leaders improve their management skills when they have access to tools that are easy to follow and implement.

Ensure quality of implementation: straightforward interventions and local government follow-up can improve programme success.

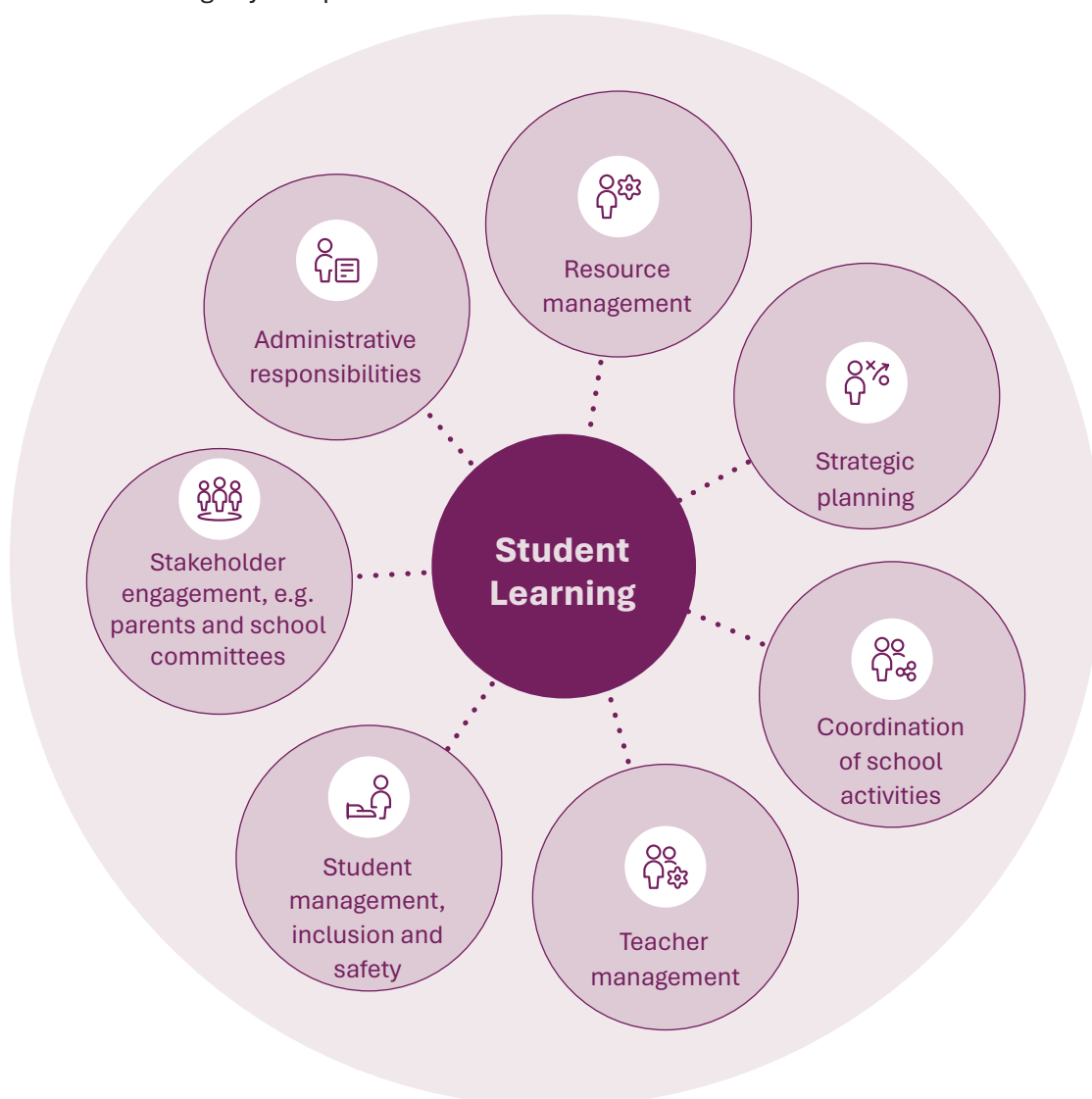
Avoid diluting the impact of training: when using 'train the trainer' models, support is needed to ensure impact is achieved and maintained.

What is school management?

The Tanzania Agency for the Development of Educational Management (ADEM) defines school management as "the process of coordinating and closely monitoring the implementation of school activities and optimising resources to bring efficiency and productivity." This aligns with our understanding of school management, where productivity is measured by student learning outcomes.



ADEM's recent Head Teacher School Leadership and Management Manual outlines the following key components:



Most of the management practices that are the focus in this brief are included in various chapters of ADEM's manual. However, the evidence in this brief points to specific ways in which head teachers can be supported to implement these practices more effectively to improve student learning.

While headteachers are not solely responsible for school management practices and should be supported by a school management team, they ultimately bear the responsibility for ensuring these practices are implemented effectively.



Key findings from research

1

Instructional guidance programmes are most effective

[A meta-analysis of studies on school leadership and management programmes](#) in high-income countries concluded that those focused on instructional guidance made greater impact on student learning than other programme approaches. Instructional guidance² programmes focus on activities that improve school leaders' abilities to manage curriculum and teaching practice, such as setting goals and standards, observing classrooms, giving feedback on lessons and encouraging teachers to attend training. Though headteachers can share some tasks with their teaching staff, for example peer classroom observations, they should take responsibility for setting up consistent, quality systems for these activities.

2

Student data allows targeted management

Education systems can promote instructional guidance and improve management by enabling school leaders to use student assessment data to inform activities and to monitor change. A [recent study on the Global South](#) found that data could be used to: identify additional support needs for teachers or learners; highlight re-allocation of resources (e.g. extra classes, assigning teachers where most needed); target teaching on weaker topics and set measurable goals for improvements. [Studies in Mexico](#) and [Argentina](#) showed that training principals and teachers respectively on the use of simple student learning data allowed them to improve instruction, pedagogical practice and student learning.

3

Practical tools boost implementation

Programmes were most valuable to school managers when they offered practical tools, such as simple forms and checklists. A study from Ghana³ showed that a 30-minute classroom observation activity was helped by a short teacher guide on what to do. [In Guatemala](#), a programme provided headteachers with a poster and checklist they could use after training to remember basic principles of management practice. [Another study in Brazil](#) provided school managers with sample tools for assessments, alongside implementation and coordination training for teachers and school coordinators. These were all effective because they were easy for staff to use regularly. This highlights an opportunity in Tanzania to complement the new school leadership and management manual with a simple checklist that captures key elements of effective daily practice.

4

Simple and supportive programmes improve implementation

School management programmes fail when: 1) school managers are overwhelmed by too much information or requirements; or 2) they aren't supported to implement change by the wider system. Keeping interventions simple is vital for leaders who already have many responsibilities, as shown by a [successful programme in Madagascar](#) that focused interventions on six clear domains of activity. Implementation is also improved when managers receive follow-up from local government officials after initial training. [In Tanzania](#), a school quality assurance programme became successful after using text messages to prompt Ward Education Officers (WEOs) to visit headteachers after they had been sent recommendations for improvement activities.



There is significant evidence that programme efficacy is greater when direct training models are used (i.e. an expert trains every school leader), compared to train-the-trainer models (i.e. an expert trains some school leaders who then share knowledge with others). Direct training is more expensive and time-intensive though. When 'train-the-trainer' models are unavoidable, there are ways to reduce the dilution of programme impact:

- Give clear, detailed guidance on how to deliver training (while allowing some local adjustments), as well as resources and tools to support delivery.
- Carry out regular monitoring to ensure local training is taking place and is well implemented. If obstacles are identified, coaching can be provided.
- Provide short, refresher training opportunities to boost skills. In Ghana³, trainers met before the start of the school year, before the second term and before the third term to refresh knowledge and problem-solve challenges.
- Ensure local trainers have time and professional incentives to carry out training.

Conclusion

Improving school management is key to improving student outcomes when programmes are implemented with care:

- focusing on instructional guidance;
- providing tools and follow up support;
- using student data;
- keeping things simple; and
- reducing dilution of training impact.

To deliver enduring behavioural change amongst school managers, all interventions should be regularly evaluated with data collected and used to identify gaps and to make improvements to programming.

Shule Bora is already using this evidence. For example, the Government, through ADEM is developing training on instructional leadership for headteachers as part of the activities supported by Shule Bora. This pilot will be evaluated to test its impact and the most cost-effective way of delivering this type of intervention. Through this support, Shule Bora aims to contribute to Tanzania achieving its potential to create effective school managers who are leading transformative change for teaching and learning.

¹ Cilliers, Erasmus Jacobus Petrus; Evans, David. Principles to Improve School Management in Tanzania: Drawing on Evidence from Around the World (English). Washington, D.C., World Bank Group.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099909309132418286/IDU18fb7379d1585914b3e19ecf10f5e6f3516e8>

² Instructional guidance refers to practices used by school leaders to help teachers to teach better. The terms instructional leadership and instructional guidance are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature.

³ Beg et al. Managing to Learn. Unpublished manuscript (2023).

This brief was produced as part of the Learning and Evaluation (L&E) support to the Shule Bora Programme in Tanzania led by the World Bank's Development Impact (DIME) team with partners from the World Bank's Education Global Practice, Georgetown University, the University of Dodoma, the University of Dar es Salaam, and the Center for Global Development.



Shule Bora is a UK International Development funded programme led by the Tanzanian government. It is implemented in nine regions of Tanzania by an association led by Cambridge Education in partnership with ADD International, International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Plan International.

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