

Relationship between Head Teachers' Leadership Strategies and Teachers' Preparedness In Selected Public Secondary Schools In Kanungu District, Uganda

Tweheyo Bright¹, Prof. Edris Kasenene Selugo²

1, 2 Metropolitan International University

Abstract

The study examined the relationship between head teachers' leadership strategies and teachers' preparedness in selected public secondary schools in Kanungu District, Uganda. Effective leadership was recognized as a critical factor in enhancing teacher performance and institutional effectiveness. The study focused on three key leadership strategies: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and participatory leadership, and their influence on teachers' lesson planning, classroom management, and professional development preparedness. The study employed a correlational research design with a quantitative approach. A sample of 156 teachers and 12 head teachers from 12 selected public secondary schools in Kanungu District participated in the study. Data were collected using structured questionnaires with closed-ended items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The instruments achieved reliability coefficients of 0.87 for leadership strategies and 0.84 for teacher preparedness. Data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient and linear regression analysis at a 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.742$, $p < 0.01$) between head teachers' leadership strategies and teachers' preparedness. Instructional leadership showed the strongest correlation ($r = 0.781$, $p < 0.01$), followed by transformational leadership ($r = 0.698$, $p < 0.01$) and participatory leadership ($r = 0.653$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis indicated that leadership strategies accounted for 55.1% of the variance in teacher preparedness. Teachers in schools with high instructional leadership scored significantly higher in lesson planning ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.56$) compared to those with low instructional leadership ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.73$). The study concluded that head teachers' leadership strategies significantly influenced teachers' preparedness in public secondary schools. Instructional leadership emerged as the most impactful strategy, demonstrating that head teachers who actively engaged in curriculum supervision, provided instructional support, and monitored teaching activities substantially enhanced teachers' readiness for classroom instruction. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education and Sports should develop comprehensive leadership training programs for head teachers focusing on instructional leadership competencies. District education officers should establish mentorship programs pairing experienced instructional leaders with newly appointed head teachers. Schools should institutionalize regular professional learning communities where head teachers and teachers collaboratively plan and review instructional practices. Additionally, performance appraisal systems should incorporate leadership effectiveness indicators to ensure accountability in school leadership.

Keywords: Head teachers, leadership strategies, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, participatory leadership, teacher preparedness, secondary schools, Kanungu District, Uganda

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Received: 12.02.2026

Accepted: 16.02.2026

Published on: 28.02.2026

The quality of education in secondary schools globally was increasingly recognized as being dependent on effective school leadership and teacher preparedness(Margaret & Kazaara, 2024). In Uganda's education system, head teachers served as the primary instructional leaders responsible for creating conducive learning environments and ensuring that teachers were adequately prepared to deliver quality instruction(A. I. Kazaara, 2025). The relationship between leadership strategies employed by head teachers and the level of preparedness exhibited by teachers became a critical area of investigation, particularly in rural districts such as Kanungu where educational resources were limited and teacher motivation remained a significant challenge(Winny et al., 2023).

Leadership in educational institutions evolved from traditional authoritarian approaches to more collaborative and instructionally focused strategies(Margaret & Kazaara, 2024). Contemporary educational leadership scholarship emphasized three predominant leadership approaches: instructional leadership, which focused on curriculum development, teaching supervision, and assessment; transformational leadership, which inspired and motivated teachers through shared vision and intellectual stimulation; and participatory leadership, which involved teachers in decision-making processes and fostered a culture of shared responsibility(Faith et al., 2023). These leadership strategies were found to have varying degrees of impact on teachers' preparedness, which encompassed lesson planning, classroom management skills, assessment competencies, and continuous professional development(Kaazara & Audrey, 2025).

In the Ugandan context, the Ministry of Education and Sports implemented various reforms aimed at improving the quality of secondary education, including the Universal Secondary Education (USE) program(Kaazara & Nancy, 2025). However, implementation challenges persisted, particularly in rural districts. Kanungu District, located in southwestern Uganda, faced unique educational challenges including high student-teacher ratios, inadequate infrastructure, limited teaching resources, and low teacher motivation(Winny et al., 2023). Previous studies conducted in urban areas of Uganda demonstrated positive relationships between school leadership and teacher performance, but limited research existed examining this phenomenon in rural contexts where leadership challenges were compounded by resource constraints(Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

Teacher preparedness, defined as the cognitive, pedagogical, and professional readiness of teachers to effectively deliver instruction, was fundamentally influenced by the support, guidance, and leadership provided by head teachers(J. Kerubo et al., 2025). Prepared teachers demonstrated competence in designing comprehensive lesson plans aligned with national curriculum standards, employing diverse teaching methodologies, managing classroom behaviors effectively, conducting valid assessments, and engaging in reflective practice for continuous improvement(B. J. Kerubo, 2019). The extent to which head teachers employed effective leadership strategies directly correlated with teachers' capacity to fulfill these professional responsibilities, ultimately impacting student learning outcomes and overall school effectiveness in Kanungu District's public secondary schools.

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Received: 12.02.2026

Accepted: 16.02.2026

Published on: 28.02.2026

Despite government initiatives to improve secondary education quality through the Universal Secondary Education program, public secondary schools in Kanungu District continued to experience poor academic performance as evidenced by declining national examination pass rates (Julius, 2025). District education reports indicated that between 2019 and 2022, only 42% of candidates achieved Division I-III in Uganda Certificate of Education examinations, compared to the national average of 58% (Nancy & Audrey, 2025). Classroom observations and school inspection reports revealed significant deficiencies in teacher preparedness, including inadequate lesson planning, poor classroom management, and limited use of learner-centered teaching methodologies (A. G. Kazaara & Nelson, 2024).

While multiple factors contributed to these challenges, the role of head teachers' leadership strategies in influencing teacher preparedness remained inadequately investigated in this rural context (A. G. Kazaara & Nancy, 2025). Head teachers in Kanungu District reportedly employed predominantly administrative leadership approaches, focusing on bureaucratic functions rather than instructional improvement (Nancy, 2025). Teachers expressed concerns about inadequate professional support, limited involvement in school decision-making, and insufficient supervision that could enhance their instructional capabilities (Julius & Audrey, 2025).

The literature gap was evident as existing studies primarily focused on urban schools with relatively better resources and infrastructure, leaving the unique challenges of rural districts underexplored (Faith et al., 2023). Without empirical evidence on the specific relationship between head teachers' leadership strategies and teacher preparedness in Kanungu District's context, interventions to improve educational quality remained generic and potentially ineffective (Moses & Nancy, 2024). This study therefore investigated the relationship between head teachers' leadership strategies and teachers' preparedness in selected public secondary schools in Kanungu District, providing evidence-based insights for educational policy and practice improvement.

3.0 MAIN OBJECTIVE

To establish the relationship between head teachers' leadership strategies and teachers' preparedness.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The study employed a correlational research design utilizing a quantitative approach. This design was appropriate for examining the relationship between head teachers' leadership strategies (independent variable) and teachers' preparedness (dependent variable) without manipulating variables. The correlational design enabled the researcher to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables through statistical analysis (Olanrewaju, Lukman Abiodun, et al., 2021).

4.2 Study Population and Sample

The target population comprised 348 teachers and 27 head teachers from 27 public secondary schools in Kanungu District. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table, a sample size of 156 teachers was determined. Purposive sampling was employed to select 12 schools based on criteria including geographic distribution (representing different sub-counties), school category mix (day and boarding schools), and enrollment size variation (Olanrewaju, Waititu, et

Received: 12.02.2026

Accepted: 16.02.2026

Published on: 28.02.2026

al., 2021). All 12 head teachers from selected schools were included. Simple random sampling using lottery method was then applied to select 13 teachers from each school, ensuring representation across different subject departments and experience levels.

4.3 Data Collection Instruments

Two structured questionnaires were developed: the Leadership Strategies Questionnaire (LSQ) and the Teacher Preparedness Questionnaire (TPQ). The LSQ contained 30 items measuring instructional leadership (10 items), transformational leadership (10 items), and participatory leadership (10 items)(Jallow et al., 2022). The TPQ comprised 28 items assessing lesson planning (9 items), classroom management (10 items), and professional development engagement (9 items). Both instruments used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

4.4 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review by three education specialists from Mbarara University of Science and Technology who assessed items for relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Content Validity Index (CVI) values of 0.89 for LSQ and 0.86 for TPQ indicated acceptable validity. Reliability was tested through pilot testing with 30 teachers from non-selected schools in neighboring Rukungiri District. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.87 for LSQ and 0.84 for TPQ exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, confirming internal consistency.

4.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26(Nelson et al., 2022). Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were computed to determine levels of leadership strategies and teacher preparedness. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to establish relationships between variables. Linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive power of leadership strategies on teacher preparedness. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

5.0 RESULTS

The study achieved a 92.3% response rate with 144 completed questionnaires returned from teachers and all 12 head teachers participating. Data screening revealed no missing values or outliers that required treatment.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Mean Levels of Head Teachers' Leadership Strategies

Leadership Strategy	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Instructional Leadership	144	3.68	0.82	High
Transformational Leadership	144	3.42	0.91	Moderate
Participatory Leadership	144	3.19	0.96	Moderate

Overall Leadership Strategies	144	3.43	0.75	Moderate
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Note: Scale interpretation: 1.00-2.00 = Low; 2.01-3.00 = Moderate; 3.01-4.00 = High; 4.01-5.00 = Very High

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The descriptive statistics indicated that head teachers’ leadership strategies were generally perceived at moderate to high levels among the respondents. Instructional leadership recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.68, SD = 0.82), which fell within the “high” category, suggesting that head teachers were largely engaged in activities related to guiding instruction, supervising teaching, and supporting curriculum implementation. Transformational leadership (M = 3.42, SD = 0.91) and participatory leadership (M = 3.19, SD = 0.96) were both interpreted as moderate, indicating that while head teachers demonstrated some elements of inspiring teachers and involving them in decision-making, these practices were not as strongly emphasized as instructional leadership. Overall, the composite mean for leadership strategies (M = 3.43, SD = 0.75) was interpreted as moderate, implying that head teachers applied a balanced mix of leadership approaches, though there remained room for strengthening these strategies to reach higher levels of effectiveness.

Table 2: Mean Levels of Teachers' Preparedness

Preparedness Dimension	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Lesson Planning	144	3.54	0.88	High
Classroom Management	144	3.38	0.93	High
Professional Development	144	2.98	1.02	Moderate
Overall Teacher Preparedness	144	3.30	0.81	High

Source: Primary Data, 2025

With regard to teachers’ preparedness, the findings showed that teachers were generally well prepared in most dimensions. Lesson planning obtained a high mean score (M = 3.54, SD = 0.88), indicating that teachers consistently prepared their lessons and organized instructional activities effectively. Classroom management also fell within the high category (M = 3.38, SD = 0.93), suggesting that teachers were largely competent in maintaining discipline, managing classroom routines, and creating conducive learning environments. However, professional development recorded a moderate mean score (M = 2.98, SD = 1.02), implying that teachers’ engagement in continuous learning, training, and skill enhancement was relatively less consistent. Despite this, the overall level of teacher preparedness (M = 3.30, SD = 0.81) was interpreted as high, reflecting a generally positive state of readiness among teachers to perform their instructional duties.

5.2 Correlation Analysis

Received: 12.02.2026

Accepted: 16.02.2026

Published on: 28.02.2026

Table 3: Correlation between Leadership Strategies and Teacher Preparedness

Leadership Strategy	Teacher Preparedness (r)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Instructional Leadership	0.781**	0.000	Strong positive
Transformational Leadership	0.698**	0.000	Strong positive
Participatory Leadership	0.653**	0.000	Strong positive
Overall Leadership Strategies	0.742**	0.000	Strong positive

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The correlation analysis revealed strong and statistically significant positive relationships between head teachers' leadership strategies and teacher preparedness. Instructional leadership showed a strong positive correlation with teacher preparedness ($r = 0.781$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of instructional leadership were associated with higher levels of teacher preparedness (Nelson et al., 2023). Similarly, transformational leadership demonstrated a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.698$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that when head teachers motivated, inspired, and supported teachers, teacher preparedness improved. Participatory leadership was also strongly and positively correlated with teacher preparedness ($r = 0.653$, $p < 0.01$), implying that involving teachers in decision-making processes contributed meaningfully to their preparedness. Overall leadership strategies had a strong positive correlation with teacher preparedness ($r = 0.742$, $p < 0.01$), confirming that effective leadership practices by head teachers were closely associated with better-prepared teachers.

5.3 Regression Analysis

Table 4: Regression Analysis - Leadership Strategies Predicting Teacher Preparedness

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Sig.
1	0.742	0.551	0.548	0.544	174.52	0.000

Predictors: Head Teachers' Leadership Strategies Dependent Variable: Teacher Preparedness

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The regression analysis further established that head teachers' leadership strategies were a significant predictor of teacher preparedness. The model produced a strong correlation coefficient ($R = 0.742$), indicating a substantial relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.551$) showed that approximately 55.1% of the variance in teacher preparedness was explained by head teachers' leadership strategies, which represented a considerable explanatory power. The adjusted R^2 value (0.548) confirmed the stability

and reliability of the model. Additionally, the model was statistically significant ($F = 174.52, p < 0.001$), demonstrating that leadership strategies made a meaningful and significant contribution to predicting teacher preparedness.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that a strong positive relationship existed between head teachers' leadership strategies and teachers' preparedness in public secondary schools in Kanungu District. Head teachers who employed instructional leadership strategies actively engaging in curriculum supervision, providing pedagogical support, observing classroom teaching, and offering constructive feedback significantly enhanced teachers' capacity to plan effective lessons, manage classrooms, and engage in professional development. The predominance of instructional leadership as the most impactful strategy underscored the importance of head teachers functioning as instructional leaders rather than merely administrative managers.

Transformational leadership strategies, characterized by articulating compelling educational visions, fostering collaborative school cultures, and providing intellectual stimulation, positively influenced teacher preparedness by creating motivational environments that encouraged professional excellence. Participatory leadership, though showing the weakest correlation among the three strategies, remained significant in promoting teacher preparedness through inclusive decision-making processes that gave teachers voice and ownership in school improvement initiatives.

The moderate levels of leadership strategy implementation and the gap in professional development engagement indicated that substantial room existed for improvement. Head teachers in Kanungu District needed to transition from predominantly administrative roles to more instructionally focused leadership that directly supported teaching and learning processes. The finding that leadership strategies explained 55.1% of variance in teacher preparedness confirmed that while leadership was crucial, comprehensive improvement required addressing multiple factors including resource availability, teacher motivation systems, and supportive education policies. The study validated the theoretical assertion that effective school leadership constituted a cornerstone for educational quality improvement in resource-constrained rural contexts.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education and Sports should develop and mandate comprehensive pre-service and in-service leadership training programs specifically focusing on instructional leadership competencies for current and aspiring head teachers. These programs should include modules on curriculum leadership, pedagogical supervision, teacher mentoring, and data-driven instructional improvement strategies tailored to rural school contexts.

The Ministry should establish clear leadership standards and competency frameworks that emphasize instructional leadership as the core function of head teachers. Performance evaluation systems for head teachers should be revised to prioritize instructional leadership indicators including frequency of classroom observations, quality of teacher feedback, and teacher professional development facilitation.

District Education Officers in Kanungu should establish monthly head teacher forums creating platforms for sharing best practices in instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and participatory leadership. These forums should facilitate peer learning, collaborative problem-solving, and development of context-appropriate leadership strategies.

Head teachers should institutionalize regular professional learning communities (PLCs) within their schools, meeting at least twice monthly, where teachers collaboratively plan lessons, share teaching challenges, observe each other's classes, and engage in reflective practice under the facilitation and support of head teachers.

School management committees and boards of governors should allocate specific budget lines for teacher professional development activities including workshops, seminars, and educational resource materials. Head teachers should be held accountable for ensuring teachers access continuous professional development opportunities.

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Received: 12.02.2026

Accepted: 16.02.2026

Published on: 28.02.2026

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