

COMPLEX INTERPLAY BETWEEN DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP, TEACHER PERFORMANCE AND SYSTEMIC

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ABSTRACT

This study explores complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges. Data was collected through interview schedule, field notes and open-ended questionnaire in which criterion purposeful sampling technique was used to select 20 educational leaders from 20 schools. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis, typological analysis, content analysis utilising Atlas.ti. Findings have established complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges, prevail leadership strategies used and complex interplay between them. School leaders should study and learn application of leadership strategies, apply them to optimise success and enhance teacher performance which results on student performance. School leaders should integrate element of leadership strategies to support teacher performance, enhance their job satisfaction and promote students success. Leadership strategies have complex interplay on teacher performance which affects schools performance, teacher performance which results in positive and/or negative student performance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In ever-evolving educational landscape, conventional boundaries of leadership have transcended, prompting a need for the adaptable and responsive leadership practices. Distributed leadership, a transformative framework, has redefined leadership as a collective endeavour involving multiple stakeholders. A central tenant to distributed leadership is shared vision and purpose which unites stakeholders (Zhang et al., 2022). Distributed leadership allows school to engage in collaborative discussions, redefining a compelling vision which resonates with everyone and guides decision-making (Glewwe et al., 2021) in which a shared vision becomes a compass directs efforts toward schools improvement and success. In this leadership practice,

shared purpose aligns diverse perspectives fostering a cohesive leadership.

The implementation of distributed leadership within educational settings requires deliberate and systematic approach which aligns with theoretical foundations of distributed leadership. These theoretical foundations outline practical strategies educators, administrators, and policymakers have to adopt to cultivate distributed leadership practices in schools and school systems (Pan & Chen, 2021).

Studies have explored theoretical foundations, practical strategies, challenges, and implications of distributed leadership in educational contexts for school improvement. Drawing from social learning theory and/or communities of practice, theoretical underpinnings illuminate educational leadership as

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constructed phenomenon (Nadeem, 2024). Practical strategies encompass shared vision, clear roles, distributed decision-making, collaborative learning communities, continuous professional development, effective communication, recognition of contributions, and adaptive leadership (Torres, 2019). Challenges include resistance to change, role ambiguity, and/or trust-building (Mincu, 2022). Critical reflections encompass policy reform, equitable education, and the transformative potential of distributed leadership (Karakose et al., 2022a). Impact of distributed leadership on school improvement is examined through enhanced school climate, student engagement, and academic achievement (Frontiers et al., 2021). Studies emphasize the transformative contribution of distributed leadership to the evolution of educational leadership practices and school improvement (Yalçinkaya et al., 2021).

As noted earlier on, implementing distributed leadership in educational contexts is not without its challenges; these obstacles can be surmounted with thoughtful planning and strategic approaches (Karakose et al., 2022b). By building trust, clarifying roles, and addressing resistance to change, sustain momentum, allocating resources, considering cultural context, balancing autonomy and accountability, and prioritizing leadership development, schools can navigate path toward a more collaborative and inclusive leadership practices (Usman, 2020).

Empowerment lies at the heart of distributed leadership (Li, 2024) in which decision-making can be distributed across multiple levels of organization, allowing for diverse perspectives to shape policies and practices (Zhang et al., 2022). When decisions are collaboratively made, leadership discourse is enriched, and/or innovative solutions emerge (Zheng et al., 2023). Shared decision-making leads to greater commitment and sense of ownership among stakeholders.

To avoid ambiguity, roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined to all members of school community (Kouzes & Posner, 2023). Clarity ensures that every individual understands his/her contributions to the collective leadership endeavor. When the roles are well-defined, educators, administrators, and even students can confidently take ownership of specific tasks which aligns with their expertise (Shen et al., 2020).

Fostering collaborative learning communities which encourage exchange of ideas and knowledge is central to distributed leadership (Karakose et al., 2022a). Professional learning communities, whereby educators collectively reflect on and refine their practices, provide a space for shared learning and growth. These communities facilitate coconstruction of leadership insights. Several studies advocate for communities of practice as spaces for collective learning and/or leadership development (Mifsud, 2024).

Investing in continuous professional development is essential to support distributed leadership practices (Liu & Watson, 2023). Schools offer opportunities for skill development, leadership training, mentorship programs that empower individuals to take on leadership roles.

Professional growth enhances individuals' capacity to contribute effectively to collective leadership efforts (Fleming, 2019). Ongoing learning is very crucial for adapting to evolving challenges (Mifsud, 2024).

Open, transparent communication is fundamental to the success of distributed leadership (Zheng et al., 2021). Schools have to establish communication channels which facilitate the exchange of ideas, feedback, and information (Fleming, 2019). When all stakeholders are well informed, they actively participate in decision-making; contribute meaningfully to leadership discourse (Karakose et al., 2021a). The role of communication in fostering trust and shared understanding is crucial (Liu & Watson, 2023).

Acknowledging and/or celebrating contributions from stakeholders reinforce the principles of distributed leadership (Rodrigues & Ávila de Lima, 2024). Schools should create platforms to recognize and/or highlight efforts of teachers, students, and/or administrators who contribute to schools progress. Recognition motivates individuals and/or nurtures culture of shared leadership, role of appreciation in building collaborative leadership culture is important (Shen et al., 2020).

Distributed leadership necessitates adaptability to change contexts and/or needs (Torres, 2019). Schools should cultivate educational leaders who are flexible, responsive to evolving challenges (Leithwood et al., 2020). Adaptive leaders encourage experimentation, learn from failures and adjust strategies to meet emerging demands. Adaptive leadership highlights its role in navigating complex and uncertain situations.

The implementation of distributed leadership in educational settings transforms the traditional hierarchical practice into dynamic and collaborative process. By adopting strategies that promote a shared vision, clarify roles, empower stakeholders, and encourage continuous learning, schools can effectively harness collective expertise of their community members. Distributed leadership enhances decision-making, fosters innovation; creates a culture of shared ownership in pursuit of educational excellence (Karakose, et al., 2021b).

The purpose of this study is to address the gaps in existing empirical findings by exploring the complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges. This study expands on the previous efforts of quantitatively estimating the effects of leadership on student outcomes by considering the previously neglected leaderships: distributed leadership (Chen, 2020). Several studies specify educational leadership effects on students' outcomes. Non-academic writing and policymaking efforts have been intensified trying to link different types of leadership to student achievement. Therefore, the need for empirically investigation of leadership effects on teacher performance is warranted.

Considering the above, this study sees an urgent need to investigate complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges aiming to explore complex interplay between distributed

leadership and teacher performance in Oshana Region in Namibia.

The overarching primary research questions the study explored were:

- What complex interplay exists between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges in Oshana Region?
- Which leadership strategies do school leaders use in Oshana Region?
- Which existing leadership strategies that enhance teacher performance?
- What existing teacher performance which associates with leadership strategies?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Challenges associate with implementation of distributed leadership

While the potential benefits of distributed leadership in educational settings are substantial, it is important to acknowledge challenges and considerations which may arise during implementation process. One of the primary challenges in implementing distributed leadership is to overcome resistance to change (Printy & Liu, 2021). Traditional hierarchical structures may be deeply ingrained in school culture, making it difficult for individuals to embrace a more collaborative approach (Brezicha et al., 2019). In order to address this challenge, schools should engage in transparent communication about reasons for transitioning to a distributed leadership practice, emphasizing its potential benefits for all stakeholders (Karakose et al., 2021a).

The shift to distributed leadership can lead to ambiguity and role confusion among stakeholders (Frontiers et al., 2021). Without a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities, individuals may feel unsure about their contributions and/or accountabilities (Hickman, 2020). To mitigate this challenge, schools may invest in professional development programs that equip individuals with skills and knowledge necessary for their designated roles (Liu et al., 2021).

Distributed leadership thrives on trust, collaboration, but building these elements can be complex (Zheng et al., 2019a). Stakeholders might be skeptical about sharing decision-making authority, especially if they perceive a lack of transparency or unequal distribution of power (Karakose et al., 2022a). Schools can address this challenge by fostering a culture of open communication, where all voices are heard and decisions are made collectively (Glewwe et al., 2021).

Maintaining momentum and enthusiasm for distributed leadership over time can be a challenge. Initial excitement may wane if benefits of collaborative leadership are not consistently realized (Leithwood et al., 2020). Schools may establish mechanisms for ongoing evaluation, feedback to ensure that impact of distributed leadership is visible and celebrated (Zheng et al., 2019a).

Implementing distributed leadership requires an investment of time and resources (Liu., 2020), schools can allocate additional resources for professional development, training, and/or establish communication channels. Overcoming this challenge involves making a strong case for long-term benefits of shared leadership and/or securing the necessary support from administrators and policymakers (Mifsud, 2024; Robinson & Gray, 2019).

Cultural context of school community can influence adoption of distributed leadership (Nadeem, 2024). Different cultural norms and/or values impact how stakeholders perceive shared decision-making and/or collaboration (Pan & Chen, 2021). Schools may take cultural factors into account when designing their approach to distributed leadership and tailor strategies accordingly.

Adoption of distributed leadership can raise questions about how to balance individual autonomy with collective accountability (Kouzes & Posner, 2023). Schools may establish clear mechanisms for feedback and/or evaluation to ensure that distributed leadership does not lead to fragmented decision-making. This requires a delicate balance that values individual agency while upholding schools overall goals.

Equipping individuals with skills needed for distributed leadership may be challenging (Li, 2024); however schools may offer continuous leadership development opportunities which go beyond traditional management training (Liu et al., 2021). These programs may focus on fostering collaboration, communication, and adaptive skills which are very essential for effective distributed leadership.

2.2. Distributed leadership and school improvement

The effects of distributed leadership on school improvement are substantiated by a growing body of research and/or real-world examples. By leveraging the collective expertise of stakeholders, distributed leadership contributes to a more responsive, innovative, and/or equitable educational environment. Distributed leadership empowers teachers and/or recognizes their agency in shaping educational practices (Chen, 2020). Schools which embrace distributed leadership reported higher levels of teacher engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction. When teachers actively involved in decision-making and leadership processes, they feel greater sense of ownership over their work and contribute more effectively to student learning (Ma & Marion, 2021).

When teachers collaborate to analyses student data, design instructional strategies, and implement interventions, student achievement may rise (Rahman et al., 2023). This collaborative approach ensures that expertise of multiple educators is leveraged to effectively address students' diverse learning needs (Rahman et al., 2023).

Distributed leadership contributes to development of inclusive school culture that values diverse perspectives and promotes equity (Zheng et al., 2019b). When various

stakeholders are involved in decision-making, the needs of marginalized students are better considered, leading to more inclusive policies and/or practices (Frontiers et al., 2021). Distributed leadership positively impacts schools efforts to provide equitable opportunities for all students (Zhang et al., 2022).

Distributed leadership encourages innovative problem solving by bringing together a wide range of perspectives (Printy & Liu, 2021). Schools adopting distributed leadership are more likely to experiment with new teaching methods, integrate technology effectively, and adapt to changing educational landscapes (Cherrington & Thornton, 2019). Distributed leadership fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation (Usman, 2020).

Distributed leadership expands its reach beyond conventional boundaries of school leadership by integrating parents and community members (Leithwood et al., 2020). While acknowledging the beneficial outcomes of involving parents and/or communities in decision-making processes, it's crucial to delve deeper into transformative aspects underpinning distributed leadership practices (Liu, 2020). These inclusive approaches not only bolster schools with increased support and resources, but also contribute to broader positive outcomes. Schools that embrace distributed leadership involving parents and communities have reported tangible improvements in student attendance rates and/or elevated levels of community involvement (Karakose et al., 2023). However, more comprehensive exploration is warranted to delineate distinctiveness of practices within distributed leadership frameworks. Beyond the pragmatic benefits, the depth, authenticity of engagement with parents and communities in decision-making processes should be assessed. Such assessment contributes to a more nuanced understanding of distributed leadership practice, showcasing transformative potential in fostering a genuine collaborative decision-making among diverse stakeholders (Brezicha et al., 2019).

Distributed leadership practice equips school to respond effectively to changes in the educational landscape (Ma & Marion, 2021). When multiple stakeholders are engaged in decision-making, schools may be more adapt to new curriculum standards, educational policies, and technological advancements (Torres, 2019). Schools with distributed leadership practices demonstrate greater resilience and responsiveness to external challenges (Rodriguez & Ávila de Lima, 2024).

2.3. Distributed leadership and school success

Distributed leadership has garnered global attention for its innovative application of an effective leadership practices, collaboration, shared decision-making, and active involvement of teachers in shaping educational practices (Glewwe et al., 2021). This emphasis on distributed leadership has redefined educational landscape which contributes significantly to any country's educational achievements (Li, 2024; Yalçinkaya et al., 2021).

Distributed leadership extends beyond confines of administrative positions. It is recognised as a shared responsibility which permeates the entire educational ecosystem (Glewwe et al., 2021). It is embracing collaborative leadership approach where teachers are considered experts in their field, empowered to make curriculum decisions, and actively participate in shaping the school policies (Sahlberg, 2021). This ethos of a shared leadership has led to a high level of ownership amongst educators, fostering a culture of collective accountability for student learning outcomes.

Central to distributed leadership is trust placed in teachers' expertise and/or professionalism (Hickman). Teachers are given the autonomy to adapt their teaching methods, assess student progress, design interventions tailored to individual needs (Karakose et al., 2021b). This autonomy extends beyond classroom to curriculum development, enabling teachers to collaboratively shape students learning journey (Liu & Watson, 2023). This approach not only enhances quality of education but also promotes sense of empowerment among educators.

A crucial component of schools educational success is a shared vision for educational excellence which guides all stakeholders (Sahlberg, 2021). School educators, policymakers, and community members are united by common goal of providing high-quality education that focuses on holistic student development (Sahlberg, 2021). This shared vision serves as a compass, directing efforts of various stakeholders toward continuous improvement and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.

Distributed leadership has yielded remarkable outcomes in terms of the student achievement and well-being (Liu, 2020). Distributed leadership practices consistently ranks high in assessments of student performance, showcasing effectiveness of its educational practices (Karakose et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021). Interestingly, emphasis on well-being, holistic development; student agency has contributed to a positive learning environment and high levels of student engagement.

Distributed leadership practices provide valuable insights for educational systems worldwide. By applying distributed leadership, leaders demonstrate a culture of collaboration, shared decision-making, and trust in educators which lead to transformative outcomes. The emphasis on teacher autonomy, collective responsibility, and a shared vision for excellence has paved the way for an education system which is not only academically successful but also focused on the holistic development of students. An education system's success serves as a compelling example of the transformative potential of distributed leadership. Collaborative approach to leadership, teacher autonomy, shared vision, and focus on student well-being has contributed to education system's success. Distributed leadership underscores the effect of leadership on educational outcomes and offers valuable insights to enhance student learning, engagement, and overall well-being.

Distributed leadership presents a compelling framework for transforming educational practices and/or promoting collaborative decision-making. However, a comprehensive understanding of its implication requires critical reflection on both obstacles faced during the implementation and the potential avenues for future development.

2.4. Implications associate with implementation of distributed leadership

As educational institutions embrace distributed leadership, it is essential to delve further into the implications associate with implementation of distributed leadership. More profound exploration may offer insights into potential effects on overall success of collaborative leadership practices. Understanding underlying reasons behind resistance to change may shed light on strategies to address this issue. Likewise, ambiguity surrounding roles within distributed leadership context warrants closer examination, as it may influence clarity of responsibilities and effectiveness of collaborative efforts (Hickman, 2020; Shen et al., 2020).

Beyond the logistical and structural changes that distributed leadership entails, there is a human dimension which should be considered. The shift in leadership dynamics may evoke emotional responses among educators. These responses, like feelings of uncertainty or apprehension, may significantly impact their engagement and commitment to collaborative practices. It is crucial to reflect on strategies which not only address these emotional aspects but also foster a sense of ownership, belonging, and shared purpose among stakeholders (Li, 2024).

Distributed leadership has the potential to catalyse broader cultural shifts within an educational institution. Beyond the immediate implications for decision-making, this practice can reshape the overall school culture which can prompts educators to view themselves as active contributors to institutions mission and encourages creation of a more inclusive, collaborative, and empowering environment. Reflecting on multifaceted ways in which distributed leadership influences school culture may guide educators and leaders toward intentional and positive cultural transformation (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Critical reflection in distributed leadership is pertaining to equity and social justice implications. While collaborative practices have emphasised shared decision-making, it is essential to explore whether it effectively addresses and inadvertently exacerbates existing educational disparities. By examining ways in which distributed leadership can impact marginalised groups, educators better design strategies which ensuring practices equitable implementation. Reflecting on intersection of collaborative leadership practice and social justice may lead to more inclusive educational practice (Mincu, 2022).

Varying accounts have depicted distributed leadership practices differently. Some emphasise its democratic essence, others argue that democracy alone might not

fully encapsulate its essence. Specific points like crucial elements of epistemic justice emerge as focal area requires dedicated exploration. By addressing this dimension, scholars and practitioners may contribute to a more nuanced, exhaustive comprehension of distributed leadership in dynamic landscape of education.

Anomalies and/or obstacles of implementing distributed leadership are often concentrated around initial adoption, however sustained success hinges on the long-term sustainability and scalability. Delving into how distributed leadership practice can be effectively integrated into ongoing fabric of educational institution may provide valuable insights. Strategies for nurturing a collaborative culture, continuously developing leaders, maintaining stakeholder engagement may contribute to practice that endures beyond its introduction (Mincu et al., 2022).

While traditional metrics such as student learning outcomes are crucial, more nuanced approach to measure distributed leadership's impact is warranted. Educators and researchers can explore additional indicators like improved teacher job satisfaction, enhanced collaboration among staff, and/or increased community engagement. Developing comprehensive measures of success which capture holistic benefits of distributed leadership may provide a more accurate representation of its influence on educational ecosystem (Cherrington & Thornton, 2019; Rahman et al., 2023).

Integration of educational technology into distributed leadership practices is emerging area that deserves careful reflection. Exploring how digital tools facilitate collaboration, communication, and decision-making among stakeholders may open new avenues for engagement. Reflecting on potential of technology to amplify principles of distributed leadership may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how an education may adapt to the digital age while upholding collaborative values (Liu, 2020; Zheng et al., 2019b).

By reflecting on the broader implications of distributed leadership calls for the consideration of its integration into education policies and systemic reforms. Beyond the individual school level, examining how distributed leadership aligns with the larger education policy goals and systemic changes is crucial. Reflecting on the potential barriers, challenges, and opportunities for aligning policies with values and practices of collaborative leadership may inform broader transformation of education systems. As such, distributed leadership's potential effects go beyond immediate implementation challenges. Therefore, Critical reflections, considerations encompass emotional responses, cultural shifts, ethical dimensions, and future directions that may shape the evolution of collaborative leadership in education (Hickman, 2020; Robinson & Gray, 2019).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

Emanated from a constructivist, this study explores the complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges as applied to the learning theory in the interpretivist notion, represents untruth about ways individual learn (Sim et al., 2024). This study utilise case study to describe and clarify complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges (Dey, 2003). Case study was, therefore, used for in-depth exploration of an actual case (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and to explore the complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges in Oshana Region in Namibia.

3.2. Participants

Using Oshana directorate of education's latest statistics of 2025, a population of 20 educational leaders from 20 schools in junior/senior primary, junior and senior secondary schools in Oshana Region utilised. Based on Oshana regional directorate, many schools are poorly underperformed leading to poor school performance. Educational leaders were chosen for this study because they are the main pillars of school optimisation who are directly involved in organising, managing, and leading schools. They are held responsible for spearheading the schools. They appear to play integral and pivotal role in influencing delivery of quality education.

3.3. Sampling

Criterion purposeful sampling was used, based on the researcher exposure to, engagement of 20 leaders from 20 schools in Oshana Region. According to Oshana directorate of education's latest statistics of 2025, there are five Circuits in Oshana Region; they are Eheke, Oluno, Ompundja, Onamutai and Oshakati circuits. The researcher selected four educational leaders per Circuit.

3.4. Data collection

Data was collected through the interview schedule, field notes and open-ended questionnaire to find out the participants' views on the complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges in Oshana Region in Namibia. Data was collected using interview schedule in which the same interview schedule was used to find participants' views on complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges in Oshana Region in Namibia. The study used interview schedule with written list of questions which were covered during the interview sessions and administered to participants. The same interview schedule was used for participants. However indication showed whether answers were given by participants in junior/senior primary, junior/senior secondary to give another dimension to research, possible findings and recommendations. For this purpose, open-ended questionnaire was utilised in this regard. The more open-ended question, the better, as researcher listened

carefully to what participants said or did in their life settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Field notes were taken during interview sessions.

3.5. Procedure

After all the required permission were sought and granted, all instruments were pilot tested and re-adjusted. Participants were interviewed individually because they have come from different schools, and every participant is different.

3.6. Data analysis

In this study, data were analysed using thematic analysis, typological analysis, content analysis utilising Atlas.ti (Leedy & Ormrod, 2023). Categories pertaining to complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges in Oshana Region were used to create patterned and/or thematic meaning from qualitative data. Major themes were derived from questions of the study, and a description of each theme was done, analysed and interpreted critically and objectively.

3.7. Trustworthiness

Researcher used member checking to determine accuracy of qualitative findings through taking the themes back to participants and determining whether participants felt that they were accurate. This study was interpretive, the researcher was self-effective about his role in research, how he interpreted findings and how his background has shaped the interpretation of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Researcher triangulated different data sources of information from interview schedule, open-ended questionnaire and field notes to strengthen the depth of its findings as data from one source supported by data from another source. Researcher examined each information source and found evidence to support themes, ensured that study was accurate. The researcher checked transcripts to ensure they did not contain apparent mistakes made during transcriptions, compared data with codes as well as wrote memos about codes and their definitions.

3.8. Ethical consideration

After all the required permission were sought and granted, researcher sent a letter to participants informing them about the information concerning the study. This process was done to avoid the reality and/or the appearance of coercion. Confidentiality was maintained and participants were informed of the rationale, recording, transcriptions and/or safekeeping of audio-taped interviews. Ethical measures were done through making sure that participants have signed informed consent, ensuring privacy in subsequent interviews, guarding against manipulating the participants during data collection, reporting processes. Anonymity, confidentiality was observed when reporting on utterances, and/or narratives of participants. Participants' names were replaced by pseudonyms to protect participants' identity. Participation was voluntary.

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings on complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges. The section comprises views of 20 educational leaders who participated in this study. Some participant responses were summarised and/or presented in descriptive forms, others were reported verbatim and presented in italics.

4.1. Leadership strategies and teacher performance

The theme presented in this section is derived from the thematically analysed data obtained from the interviews, open-ended questionnaires and field notes, with 20 selected educational leaders from Oshana Region. The theme is on complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges. It is worth-noting that the theme relates to the manner in which the interplay between distributed leadership and measures of teacher performance could be constructed and developed to find interplay between them. In this study, researcher has to determine whether educational leaders understand interplay between them. This was done to respond to the question: What complex interplay exists between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges in Oshana Region? Participant responses showed that educational leaders play critical roles in leadership of the school. For example one educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"School leaders share vision, mission and purpose with all stakeholders."

Another educational leader at junior secondary phase said:

"School leaders engage in collaborative discussions, redefining compelling vision."

One educational leader at senior primary phase, when asked on the complex interplay between leadership practice and teacher performance, said:

"Educational leaders share decision-making process with all stakeholders."

Moreover, educational leaders said that the complex interplay between leadership practice and teacher performance affect the teaching and learning process.

One educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"School leaders define roles, responsibilities, distribute across multiple levels of organisation."

One educational leader at junior secondary phase said:

"Educational leaders foster and promote collaborative learning."

Another educational leader at senior primary phase, when asked on complex interplay between leadership practice and teacher performance, said:

"School leaders distribute roles and responsibilities to professional learning communities."

One educational leader at senior secondary phase expressed this view as follows:

"School leaders Invest in continuous professional development for staff members."

Another educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"School leadership acknowledge and celebrate contributions from stakeholders."

One educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"Educational leaders encourage experimentation, learning from failures, adjustment."

Another educational leader at senior primary phase said: *Educational leaders play role in determining students' academic performance*

One educational leader at junior secondary phase said:

Educational leaders create conducive environments for teaching and learning

Another educational leader at senior primary phase, when asked on complex interplay between leadership practices and teacher performance, said:

They share responsibilities across ranks, support inclusive school community

Moreover, educational leaders said that the complex interplay between leadership practices and teacher performance affect the teaching and learning process.

One educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

They motivate educators and students to do better

Another educational leader at junior secondary phase said:

They focus more on instructions to improve teaching, learning and curriculum delivery

One educational leader at junior primary phase said:

Leadership roles and responsibilities are spread across school members

4.2. Leadership strategies used by educational leaders in Oshana Region

In order to determine leadership strategies used by educational leaders, the researcher asked the question: Which leadership strategies do school leaders use in Oshana Region? The responses of educational leaders indicated that educational leaders use various leadership strategies to monitor school programs. One educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"They are used to foster a culture of open communication."

Moreover, educational leaders said that educational leaders use leadership strategies to monitor teachers to implement curriculum. One educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"They are used to allocate additional resources, establish communication channels."

Another educational leader at junior secondary phase, when asked on the prevailing leadership strategies, said:

"They are used to establish mechanisms for feedback and evaluation."

One educational leader at senior primary phase said:

"They are used to offer continuous leadership development opportunities."

Another educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"They are used to foster collaboration, communication, and adaptive skills."

One educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"They are used to devise best leadership practices."

Another educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"They are used to direct curriculum development, teaching quality and student outcomes."

One educational leader at junior secondary phase said:

"They are used to prioritise development of curriculum, continuous assessment."

Another educational leader at senior primary phase said:
"They are used to promote professional development for teachers"

4.3. Leadership strategies which enhance teacher performance

In order to determine existing leadership strategies that enhance school performance, researcher asked the question: Which existing leadership strategies that enhance teacher performance? The responses from educational leaders indicated that educational leaders use varieties of leadership strategies to monitor teaching and learning process and to ensure learners academic performance are taking care off. One educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"They are used to leverage collective expertise of stakeholders."

Another educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"They are used to empower teachers and recognise their agency."

Moreover, one educational leader at senior primary phase said:

"They are used to leverage multiple educators' collaborative approach."

Another educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"They are used to involve various stakeholders in decision-making process."

One educational leader at senior primary phase said:

"They are used to foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation."

Another educational leader at junior secondary phase said:

"They are used to adapt curriculum standards, educational policies."

One educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"They create a sense of shared responsibility and ownership over educational outcomes."

Moreover, one educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"They foster a collaborative environment, enhance professional development of teachers."

Another educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"They leverage technology, integrate leadership development into teacher training."

Moreover, one educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"They empower teachers and staff to take on leadership roles."

One educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"They promote greater collaboration and shared responsibility."

Another educational leader at junior primary phase, when asked on prevail leadership strategies, said:

"They give teachers autonomy to be involved in decision-making processes"

One educational leader at senior primary phase said:

"They empower teachers to commit to their roles"

4.4. Teacher performance which associates with leadership strategies

In order to establish existing school performance which associates with leadership strategies, the researcher asked question: What existing teacher performance which associates with leadership strategies? One educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"A shared leadership lead to high level of ownership amongst educators."

Another educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"Autonomy extends beyond classroom to curriculum development."

One educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"Shared vision serves as a compass, directing efforts of various stakeholders."

Another educational leader at senior primary phase said:

"Teacher autonomy, collective responsibility, and shared vision lead to excellence."

Moreover, one educational leader at junior secondary phase said:

"Valuable insights lead to student learning, engagement, and overall well-being."

One educational leader at senior primary phase said:

"Positive leadership effect is linked to teacher efficacy and student achievement."

Another educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"Inspired teachers fosters environment for collaboration and collective success."

One educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"Compelling vision motivates staff through individualised consideration."

Another educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"Innovative teaching practices create positive school climate."

Moreover, one educational leader at junior primary phase said:

"Teacher professional growths enhance and strengthen teaching quality."

One educational leader at junior secondary phase said:

"Managing job demands, providing adequate resources foster teaching quality."

Another educational leader at senior primary phase said:

"Positive organisational climate enhance employees' performance and well-being."

One educational leader at senior secondary phase said:

"High-performance work systems enhance employees' commitment and performance"

One educational leader at junior primary phase said:

Positive school culture create supportive environment that enhances both teacher motivation and student learning

5. MAJOR FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES

This section discusses findings on the complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges. Discussion is based on views of 20 educational leaders participated in this study.

5.1. Leadership strategies and teacher performance

This study explored the complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges in Oshana Region in Namibia. The main question answered by study was: What complex interplay exists between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges in Oshana Region? The paramount issues which emanated from the findings were that there is a complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges that have direct effects on schools performance, teachers' performance which could results in positive or negative student academic performance. Researchers have found that use of leadership strategies allow learning-focused process which foster improvement in learning and/or teaching. Studies have found that leadership role of educational leaders is very crucial in advancing student academic achievement (Liu, 2025).

Another crucial issue which emanated from findings were that leadership strategies promote and enhance teaching and learning. Studies have found that while some teachers enjoy teaching and learning process, others are frustrated due to insufficient preparation and/or training workshops, unclear procedures, poor academic literacy skills, lack of commitment shown by some students (Buyukgoze et al., 2024; Chen, 2020). All four leadership practices are associated with academic performance: defining school mission, managing of school instructional program, promoting a positive learning climate, advancing teachers' interests (Rahman et al., 2023).

5.2. Leadership strategies used by educational leaders in Oshana Region

In this study, the primary issue encompassing these findings is that this complex interplay is attributed to how leadership strategies are used to monitor the school programs, thus confirming similar findings of previous research study such as Buyukgoze et al. (2024). The sample of this study has revealed that educational leaders use leadership strategies to give command to school population. That said, it should be noted that concern in this study was on the complex interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges not vise-versa (cf. Methodology Section). However, a possible interpretation for this finding could be that there are arrangements on ministerial mission and/or vision statement within educational setting. As a

result of top-down cascades of ministerial mission, vision, and policies, many educational leaders may have difficulty to adapt or change status quo. However, anomalies like these should be addressed by involving various stakeholders in planning, implementation, and evaluation and reflection process.

5.3. Leadership strategies which enhance teacher performance

Another profound issue noteworthy from the study is that educational leaders use leadership strategies to monitor teaching and learning and to ensure that learner academic performance is taking care off. This finding is consistent with previous studies which assessed the usefulness of leadership which empower teachers, promote well-being, provide lifelong learning opportunities and improve quality of the students' learning (Zheng et al., 2023). Findings point that leadership foster a collaborative learning and/or continuous improvement. This finding correlates with study by Printy and Liu (2021) on importance of effective communication, cooperation and trust within group.

5.4. Teacher performance which associates with leadership strategies

Most obvious findings emerge from study is that this complex interplay is attributed to factors that determine choice of the leadership strategies. Studies indicate that educational leaders' roles play important part on school performance and organisational environment (Zhang et al., 2022). Leadership strategies positively correlate with welcome environments and culture of continuous improvement (Karakose et al., 2023). Several studies have found positive relationship between transformational, instructional, distributed leadership, and student performance and teaching and learning practices (Zheng et al., 2023).

This section discusses the interplay between distributed leadership, teacher performance and systemic challenges, gives insights into issues faced by educational leaders and seek potential solutions that could scaffold them in overcoming them. These leadership strategies tend to shape institutional culture, faculty morale; student outcomes, with context-specific implications on performance of schools in Oshana Region in Namibia.

In Namibian educational context, leadership strategies such as distributed leadership affect staff, and student performance, fosters educational environment which encourages collaboration, innovation, and/or shared responsibility, empower staff, support sense of community, and lead to positive outcomes in terms of student engagement and learning. Thus, school leaders should integrate elements of transformational, instructional, distributed leadership to support staff, enhance job satisfaction; promote student success. A more effective leadership practice should not be limited to one strategy, but rather a combination of strategy components which leverages strengths of each (Liu, 2025). In Namibia, an integrative leadership approach encompasses compassion of inclusivity of

transformational, instructional, distributed leadership, could best address current and emerging challenges faced by schools. These eclectic approaches align with nation's aspiration for a progressive, inclusive, and adaptable educational landscape that can thrive amidst rapid societal and digital changes (MoEAC, 2023).

6. CONCLUSION

Based on analysis of findings, and design used in this study, it can be concluded that leadership has effect on academic performance of teachers that affect the schools and teachers' performance which result in positive and negative student academic outcomes. It was evident from this study that educational leaders should take teachers academic performance very seriously.

7. SUGGESTIONS

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for practice: First, educational leaders should use leadership practice to improve and enhance performance, teacher academic performance and/or learner academic performance. Second, educational leaders should use leadership practice to strike the balance between leadership practices and avoid manipulation of one construct against other one. This in turn will help them to strike balance between authority of teacher expertise of curriculum and positional authority of educational leaders. Last, the study recommends an urgent need for educational leaders to study and learn application of leadership practices; apply them to optimise success and/or enhance teaching and learning which result on student academic outcomes.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORKS

This study has several limitations which should be taken into consideration. Only 20 educational leaders were selected for interview sessions and open-ended questionnaire in which complex the interplay between distributed leadership, and teacher performance was feature of interest. Researcher utilised criterion purposeful sampling technique and/or only educational leaders with seven years of experience and/or above in principalship were selected. This selection may have influenced response. Researcher attempted to explore complex interplay between transformational, instructional, distributed leadership, and student performance in which educational leaders were influential individuals in schools. Their responses might be affected by this. The sample size includes public school educational leaders who volunteered to participate in the study with exclusion of private educational leaders. Therefore, question of generalisability to private educational leaders is a limit. Its scope is confined to Oshana Region in Namibia which narrows generalisability of its findings thus limits broader applicability of its findings. However, the study applied multi method in which more than one data collection techniques and corresponding data analysis procedure utilised to strengthen analysis and possibly to enhance robustness of the findings. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for future research: First, future research should be undertaken to establish correlation between leadership practices and student performance since this was beyond the scope of this study. Second, future research should conduct longitudinal comparative studies across different regions and exploring the complex interplay between instructional leadership, and student performance.

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