

Principals' Instructional Leadership in Teacher Professional Development and its Relationship with Students' State Examinations Performance in Bururi Province Schools, Burundi

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Abstract

Purpose: Students who sit for the state examinations in Bururi Province have recently posted unsatisfactory performance. This poor performance could potentially have a severe impact on the educational system and the subsequent transfer from secondary schools to higher education if it is not addressed. The goal of the current research was to explore the principals' leadership in teacher professional development and its relationship with student's performance in the state examinations in secondary schools in Bururi Province.

Methods: The transformational leadership theory served as the foundation for the present study. The research design for this study was the correlational research design. The target population was public secondary schools in Bururi province and the study involved principals, teachers, and the provincial directors of education. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to select 11 boarding schools, all the principals, and the 6 provincial directors of education in the study while simple random sampling was adopted to identify teachers who participated in the study. Principals' and teachers' questionnaires, as well as interview guides for directors of education in Bururi province, were utilized for collecting data. For quantitative data, Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to identify correlations between the independent and dependent variables in this study. Qualitative data from the interview was analysed thematically.

Results: The findings indicated that coordination of teacher professional development had a positive and significant relationship with student performance in the state examination.

Conclusion: The study recommends that principals should strengthen activities related to instructional leadership in coordination with teacher professional development.

Keywords: *Instructional Leadership, teacher professional development, student performance*

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1. Introduction

Education is a significant component influencing many aspects of people's lives as well as the development of any country. It is administered in schools that are considered as any other organization where performance is very essential. Shaturaev (2021) states that education is dealt with in schools with the target of enhancing knowledge and improving the skills advantageous for students to enhance their personal lives and also as members of society as

well as the citizens of a nation. For any educational establishment to achieve the results that are hoped for, they must set their goals toward students' performance that can be attained through instructional leadership.

Among the key components that have the greatest impact on students' performance, instructional leadership is mentioned. What is instructional leadership? DeWitt (2020) argued that the leadership of instruction takes place when the leaders concentrate their efforts on implementing the attitudes that will positively affect student learning. In the same perspective, instructional leadership is understood as a form of leadership where the great focus of the educational institution leaders' effort is placed on instructing and learning as the foremost part of any decision-making of the school (Hallinger, 2015). The creation of education that improves students' performance serves as the inspiration for instructional leadership. According to Team (2020), Instructional leadership is frequently connected with school principals who are responsible for curriculum implementation, management of the budget and schedules, and who are in charge of each student to succeed in the institution. Instructional leadership entails setting understandable objectives, curriculum management, keeping an eye on the lesson plans, assigning resources as well as assessing teachers' work regularly to promote the learning and progress of the students (Room 241 Team, 2013). These responsibilities of a principal as a leader of instruction are crucial for any educational institution's success. Defining a principal's responsibilities as a leader of instruction and an improved understanding of instructional leadership practices can result in students' performance improvement.

Robinson (2011) found that leadership of instruction is the best type of leadership adequate for the improvement of student-learning achievement in a large number of international studies. Robinson also states that it has been proved that even after the assessment of other variables like the school context and the demography, the principal's leadership of instruction is crucial for the students to succeed. From this, we can understand that instructional leadership is most adequate in improving student performance. Successful instructional leaders are strongly involved in the challenges concerned with curriculums and instructions that directly influence students' attainment and teaching and learning have to be prioritized (Cotton, 2003, as referenced in Joyner (2015).

For students' performance to be effective, there is a need for instructional leaders who put their effort into teaching and learning resulting in student achievement. Liisa (2016) observed that the leadership of instruction is considered a school leadership type where principals are to work on the side of teachers to support and guide them in perfect teaching practices. Liisa also states that school leaders need to coach and mentor teachers who are in need but also they should provide teachers the opportunity to develop their profession to improve their teaching practices. A study by Robinson et al., (2008, as referenced in Liisa, 2016) stipulates that instructional leadership is an alleyway to set and communicate understandable objectives and visions for both instructors and learners but also to train and mentor teachers to improve their professionalism. School principals don't seem to know or comprehend the responsibilities of instructional leadership and relatively few principals are conceptually aware of what instructional leadership entails (Dongo, 2016). A school instructional leader is highly responsible for the students, their teachers, and parents as well as the whole community. In this perspective, it is essential to understand how principals deal with professional development and teacher support in relation to students' performance.

Sullivan (2018) states that a key element of student performance and the method of instruction and learning is the professional development of practitioners. Principals are key figures in the

educational process because they oversee professional development for teachers and act as coaches to help them achieve better results for their students. Given that the primary factor influencing students' academic achievement appears to be the quality of instructors, it is reasonable to assume that principals are to make efforts to make sure that teachers undergo professional development (Mwihaki et al., 2019). In addition to promoting retention of teachers, principals that truly advocate for staff development will increase credibility throughout the educational institution. Principals may support teachers by providing them with the opportunity for valuable professional development that is specific to their needs, issues, and interests. This involves planning conferences, workshops, as well as professional development seminars on relevant topics such as instructional strategies, management of classrooms, and technology for education. According to Walpole (2008), a system of professional development, that is systematic, continuous, and driven by purpose, helps instructors develop their knowledge, abilities, and mindsets so that they may enhance the performance of students. Professional development for educators promotes teachers to take an active role in their own learning experience in order to guarantee that both teachers and students are motivated to acquire knowledge.

It is unrealistic to expect pre-service education programs to adequately prepare teachers for every challenge they may encounter in their professional lives, no matter how wonderful the program may be. Thus, to preserve an excellent level of instruction and a talented teacher workforce, educational institutions aim to offer instructors possibilities for ongoing professional development (Chalikias, Raftopoulou, Sidiropoulos, & Grigorios, 2020). All educational opportunities that help teachers become more successful and adjust to changes in the educational system for the improvement of students' performance are included in teacher professional development. Principals are essential to the educational process since they are the leaders of the schools. To improve the performance of students, the principal is in charge of the professional development of teachers and of offering assistance in the form of coaching. Unfortunately, a study by Karacabey (2021) found that just 25.5% of head teachers adequately promoted teachers' professional development, despite the fact that they occasionally promoted teachers' professional development. However, in the study by Dangara (2016), it is observed that to help teachers stay up to date and improve their professional development, it is of the utmost importance that they take advantage of in-service training opportunities. This will help them stay productive in the classroom and accelerate the attainment of academic objectives. It is thus necessary to conduct a study to find out how principals' promotion of teachers' professional development is related to students' performance.

In Burundi, poor student performance is observed as in the example of the percentage past 2020. According to Akeza.Net (2020), in Burundi, out of a total number of 65085 candidates for the State Exam at the end of senior secondary school, in the year 2020, only 20626 candidates were graduated while 44459 failed. This means that they registered a percentage pass of 31.7%. In Burundi, students' academic performance in the state examination is taken into account to determine the relevance of education in schools (Ministry of Education, Guide to Secondary School Management, 2014). State examinations assess students' eligibility for higher education or to decide whether they have completed their current level of education. These examinations occur in the senior year of secondary school. The learners' academic performance in the majority of secondary schools in Burundi is below the average standard (Akeza.Net, Nov.2020). Despite all of the studies that have been undertaken thus far on issues related to instructional leadership in schools in relation to students' performance, not enough has been written on the situation in Burundi context. This is one of the reasons why the present study becomes necessary to fill that identified literature gap.

The study will be conducted in public boarding schools in Bururi province, one of the 18 provinces of Burundi. It counts 79 public secondary schools, which are divided into boarding schools and day schools. In this province, there are 11 boarding schools under different studying conditions comparing them to the 68-day schools. The situation of poor student performance affects not only the schools but also the children who lose their self-confidence and the parents who are stressed. Moreover, the government, which funds education, especially in boarding schools, suffers from this situation of the poor performance of the students where not even 50 percent of the students in the final years of secondary school can graduate.

1.1 Problem Statement

Students' academic performance is a matter that profoundly interests school leaders, teachers, parents, and students in any school seeking a name in the community. One of the key factors in raising educational quality is instructional leadership. Headteachers have the greatest duty to start and maintain high-quality education.

Burundi education transitional plan for 2018-2020 aims to address a number of issues such as quality education, supporting teachers in the improvement of their teaching and assessment, and improving supervision in the educational system. This was to call upon head teachers to be very careful as far as students' achievement is concerned. The educational Act focusses on accountability and ability of the principal to predict, organize, control, and coordinate all school activities. Despite the efforts of the government, poor academic performance among students has been observed these last years. However, there is a paucity of information about this situation in Burundi especially in relation to instructional leadership. If the poor performance is not addressed, it could potentially negatively affect the educational system and the subsequent transition from secondary schools to higher education.

Hence, this study intended to explore the principals' instructional leadership in teacher professional development and its relationship with students' state examination performance at public secondary schools in Bururi Province.

1.2 Research hypothesis

The study hypothesized that there is no relationship between principals' leadership in teacher professional development and students' performance in the state examination.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The transformational leadership theory guided this study. This theory was introduced by the leadership expert James MacGregor Burns in 1978. Mcclouskey (2016) defines transformational leadership as the process of developing, maintaining, and strengthening leader-follower, follower-leader, and leader-leader collaborations in the service of a shared vision, common values, and the community that leaders and followers work together to serve. Transformational leadership can be understood as a type of leadership where a head teacher mentors and inspires staff members to work together, communicates the school's objective and gives them the responsibility to realize the goals of the school. According to Anderson (2017), the majority of researchers believe that transformational leadership is the most suitable kind of leadership for the schools of today and this leadership is illustrated by a leader who collaborates with followers to determine what needs to change, develops a vision to inspire the change, and subsequently implements the transformation with devoted group members. Berkovich and Eyal (2017) assert that transformational leadership theory was instantly adopted as the best approach to school leadership due to its applicability to the current issues that principals encounter.

Ensuring that instructors remain committed is largely dependent on the transformational leadership role played by principals.

Anderson also contends that transformational leadership is best adapted to meet the needs of schools in the twenty-first century and has a good impact on school leadership's capacity to support change in activities related to school reorganization. Whenever a leader encourages people to go above and beyond their existing capacities to raise accomplishment and performance to reach further exceed their potential, transformational leadership converts their mindsets, convictions, and actions to a higher dimension of inspiration. The interactions developed amongst both leaders and followers are the subject of transformational theories. Kwan (2019) states that although some researchers see instructional and transformational leadership as different approaches, several more recent studies treat them as coexisting in nature. By assisting group members in seeing the significance and greater good of the job, transformational leaders inspire and encourage their followers.

Leadership expert James MacGregor Burns defines transformational leadership as "an interaction of reciprocal stimulation and advancement that transforms disciples towards leaders and could transform leaders into ethical actors (McCloskey, 2016). Transformational leadership's primary goals are to arouse improvement, boost loyalty, and inspire confidence in members of a team. This theory can help the school leaders to direct all the stakeholders toward the performance goal. The theory is helpful in the study in the sense that instead of principals asking teachers to endeavor, they will only need to lead them to the achievement of a common goal. Studies indicate that approaches to transformational leadership have a beneficial effect on commitment from teachers, performance, satisfaction with work, and other fields that support overall student achievement (Anderson, 2017). This is because transformational theory emphasizes the link that must exist between leaders and followers hence principals and teachers. Transformational leadership focuses on how the head teacher's leadership role affects the development of the school, the interaction among the instructors, and how the colleagues make decisions together (Chalikias, Raftopoulou, Sidiropoulos, Kyriakopoulos, et al., 2020). Principals will need to motivate and inspire teachers by assisting them to understand the higher good of their tasks as transformational leaders. Principals have many duties in a school, and one of them is to be instructional leader to support teachers in enhancing learning and classroom instruction. Considering that the work of a leader is transformational, a leader of a school shall use transformational leadership to engage himself with teachers by recognizing the school's needs as well as the teachers' needs. Instructional leadership will be easily applied when teachers are inspired and supported in becoming reflective practitioners who actively evaluate their work and how it relates to students' achievement. The fundamental component of transformational leadership in a school setting is the relationship between principals and teachers. This theory will help principals to inspire and active teachers in the instructions to perform and attain the important school objective, which is the student's performance.

2.2 Empirical Review

This part of the work being motivated by the objective of the present study, will thoroughly analyze pertinent works on the relationship between principals' leadership in teacher professional development and students' performance in the state examination.

The principal of the school organizes workshops, seminars, and training sessions while also conducting informal assessments of the teaching staff's skills. Furthermore, because of their distinctive attributes, school principals are in charge of establishing the parameters of the learning environment in their institutions for development as professionals (Chalikias et al.,

2020). Teacher professional development refers to any procedure or action aimed at enhancing teachers' skill sets, attributes, and teachers' performance. In a study conducted in Turkish primary schools on instructional leadership, Gumus and Akcaoglu (2013) assert that as teachers are the ones who carry out the curriculum in the school setting, principals must ensure classroom quality to be able to guide the instructors and support their professional growth. For educational institutions to make progress, the head of the institution, in their capacity as leaders of instruction, must ensure that training opportunities are undertaken by all teachers in the school. Principals employed a variety of strategies to support teachers' professional development, including placing a high priority on classroom instruction and educational studies, facilitating opportunities for teacher collaboration, developing coaching associations among teachers, encouraging and supporting program reorganization, applying adult learning principles, investing in staff development at all levels, and utilizing action research to inform teachers' instructional decision-making (Blase & Blase, 1999). If the advancement of the school depends on teacher professional development, then it is appropriate to say that the principal's primary responsibility is to create an atmosphere that supports teacher professional development and helps the school accomplish its objectives mainly the students' performance. Research indicates that there is little knowledge about alternative types of professional development because the majority of teachers only receive classic, workshop-based professional growth and more than 90% of instructors attend workshop-style sessions for training throughout an academic year (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). This shows that although teacher professional development is crucial, there isn't much research evidence to support what educational institutions should do to encourage teachers to participate in excellent, understandable, ongoing, agreed-upon, and informative professional development.

Extensive and intense professional development for educators appears to be associated with improvements in student performance, according to rigorous studies done in the USA (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). The same study established that a series of programs that provided an extensive number of hours of professional growth for teachers was determined to have a positive and statistically significant impact on performance among students. However, in a study conducted in Kenya by Mwihi et al. (2019), it was found that there was not a statistically significant relationship between the performance of students and principals' support of teachers' professional development. From the above, we notice that there is a necessity to continue the investigation for a better understanding of the relationship between teacher professional development and students' performance. In a study conducted by Omondi (2019) in Kenya, it was found that the majority of staff development is inconsistent, of poor quality, and unrelated to the demands of the teachers and since it is implemented in a top-down manner, this staff development is not always helpful for an instructor or a team of instructors in a particular setting. This situation shows that sometimes there is a problem in the organization of the teacher professional development because teachers are not involved in the process of letting them express their area of interest in the staff development. According to the Turkish education system's 2023 vision, professional development experiences should be designed and coordinated by school principals in accordance with the requirements of both teachers and students (Karacabey, 2021).

These studies were conducted in USA, Turkey, Kenya, and elsewhere but in Burundi, there is little in the area of principals' instructional leadership in teacher professional development and its relation with students' performance. Still, it is said that a significant obstacle to ongoing attendance at professional development programs is the abundance of underqualified instructors that exists in Burundi, where the emphasis on educational opportunities has changed in the past few years to access to high-quality learning and instruction (Appui à la

Professionalisation des Pratiques Enseignantes et au Développement de Ressources, 2022). The present study will investigate the principals' leadership in teacher professional development in relation to the students' performance in state examinations in Burundi.

3. Methodology

The mixed method approach was used to collect data for this study. It consisted of collecting quantitative data from principals and teachers while qualitative data was collected from the Directors of education in the province and communes. The quantitative data helped to establish relations between the variables and to describe trends. Qualitative data was organized into themes and analysed thematically to better understand the quantitative analysis. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The researcher examined the existence of a correlation between instructional leadership in teacher professional development and the student's performance in the state examinations. By exploring the relationship among variables, a correlational study helps in bringing out information about the relationship extent existing between the variables under study without manipulating them. A correlation shows how strongly and/or in which direction multiple variables are related to one another and the correlation may have a positive or negative direction. The adoption of a correlational research strategy was justified by the fact that it facilitates the identification of relationships between variables.

The independent variable was the instructional leadership of principals in teacher professional development. On the other hand, the dependent variable was the student's performance in the state examinations. The study was concerned with whether the principals' leadership in teacher professional development and the student's performance are correlated.

The research population of interest for this research study included teachers and principals from the 79 governmental secondary institutions in Bururi province. This population consisted of 880 individuals, comprising 795 teachers, 79 principals, and 6 provincial and communal directors of education in this province. The target population concerned 11 boarding schools. As such, 11 principals and 319 teachers. It also aimed at the 6 communal and provincial directors of education. Tools for gathering, measuring, and interpreting data relevant to a research project are known as instruments for research. In this study, questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

The study's demographic data on participants are significant since, under some circumstances, it is essential to identify the category of respondents who respond to the research questions. The data regarding demographics was gathered from a chosen set of characteristics, such as age, gender, educational qualifications, and teaching experience. Participant demographic data allowed it to be easier for the researcher to identify the categories of respondents who provided responses to the study questions and figure out the reliability of the data sources. Table 1 shows results on demographic characteristics of teachers and principals.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Teachers		Principals	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	83	89.2	10	100
	Female	10	10.8		
Age	26-35	14	15.1	1	10
	36-45	43	46.2	2	20
	45-55	27	29	6	60
	56 & above years	9	9.7	1	10
Educational Qualification	Master	5	5.4	1	10
	BA	70	75.3	9	90
	IP	13	14.0		
	D7	3	3.2		
	A1	2	2.2		
Teaching experience	Below 10 years	23	25	6	66.7
	11-20	56	60.9	1	11.1
	21-30	7	7.6	2	22.2
	Above 31 years	6	6.5		

In terms of gender, 89.2% of teachers were male compared to 10.8% female. This indicates a wide disparity in terms of teachers' composition, where male teachers were dominant. Furthermore, all the principals were male. The findings of this study contradicted the study by Verwimp & Van Bavel (2014) which posits that encountering violent conflicts decreased the educational disparity between genders.

In terms of age, the majority that is 46.2% of teachers were aged 36-45 years, 29% were aged 45-55 years, 15.1% were aged 26-35 years, and 9.7% were aged above 55 years. Results indicate that most teachers were middle-aged. Further, 60% of principals which is the majority, were 45-55 years, 20% were 36-45 years, and 10% were 26-35 years. This implies that majority of principals were also middle-aged. The ages of the Headteachers and teachers were significant for this research, given that age diversity was thought to be one of the key determinant factors of respondents' skills and understanding in applying instructional leadership.

In terms of education, 75.3% of teachers had bachelors, 14% had IP and 5.4% had masters. This suggests that majority of teachers had a bachelor's level of education and therefore able to understand the relationship between the instructional leadership of the principals and the students' performance. Similarly, 90% of principals had a bachelor's education while 10% had a master. This denotes that principal had necessary education level to understand the relationship between their instructional leadership and the student's performance. According to the study's findings, practically every participant had professional training. The study

findings are not in line with that of Kombo (2023) which found that in secondary educational institutions, Burundi lacks sufficient numbers of qualified educators.

The findings reveal that 60.9% of teachers had taught for 11-20 years, 25% had teaching experience of below 10 years, 7.6% were 21-30 years, and 6.5% had teaching experience of above 31 years. The results infer that teacher had adequate teaching experience and therefore able to provide reliable information on the relationship between the instructional leadership of the principals and the students' performance. Furthermore, 66.7% of principals had teaching experience of below 10 years as principals, 22.2% had 21-30 years, and 11.1% had 11-20 years of experience. As a result, respondents had enough time to see and assess different instructional leadership and their impact on students' performance. The outcome revealed that they were qualified to supply trustworthy data for the research.

Table 2: General Characteristics

Variable	Category	Teachers		Principals	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Awareness about the role of principals	Yes	85	91.4		
	No	8	8.6		
Number of years teaching in current school	Below 4 years			6	60
	5 – 10			2	20
	11-15			1	10
	Over 15 years			1	10
Training in instructional leadership	Yes			2	20
	No			8	80

The findings in Table 2 showed that 91.4% of teachers knew the role of the principal as an instructional leader, while 8.6% did not. Knowledge about principal role was key to teachers' ability to provide accurate information on the relationship between the instructional leadership of the principals and the performance.

Teachers who knew the role of the principal as an instructional leader were asked to specify those roles. According to teachers, principal is the supervisor of all school activities, organizes the activities following the school timetable, is responsible for all teaching activities, main manager of the school, manages staff and resources, transmission decisions taken by the ministry, coordinates all school activities, avail whatever is necessary for the smooth running of teaching activities to the staff and the students, and promotes quality education as well as collaborating with educational partners. This contradicted the study by Matebe (2014) which posits that teachers are not informed of all the duties that come under the responsibility of principals' instructional leadership.

Moreover, the teachers were asked to explain ways in which they were involved in instructional leadership in their school. The teachers highlighted several ways through which they are involved in instructional leadership including advice to help in students' supervision, being involved in all school activities, quality teaching delivery, preparation, delivery of lessons, and assessment of the students, properly delivering the lesson and ensuring discipline and orders in

the classroom, and facilitating learning for the students. This will help teachers to give insightful information about the relationship between principals’ instructional leadership and students’ performance in state examinations.

The principals (60%) indicated to have taught in their current school as principal for less than 4 years, 20% stated 5-10 years, 10% reported 11-15 years and over 15 years respectively. This means that majority of principals had not been in their current schools for long. When asked if they ever attended any training course in instructional leadership, 80% of principals had not attended, while 20% had attended. This raise concerns over a majority of principals’ competence in relation to instructional leadership. The study may confirm what one of the teachers revealed when he said that some principals do not delay this position because of political issues. It concurs with that of Matebe (2014) which indicated that there was a consensus that principals could face obstacles from the local political system.

4.2 Students’ Performance

The performance of schools in the last five years in terms of state examination mean scores is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Performance of school in the last five years

Period	Mean score	Std Dev
2019	69.46	13.06
2020	79.78	12.1
2021	80.82	22.81
2022	60.87	28.56
2023	59.21	24.5

Table 3 shows that the highest school performance of 80.82 was recorded in 2021, while the lowest performance of 59.21 was reported in 2023. According to this table, students’ performance in 2019 was average, with a mean score of 68.46. Over the five years, their performance improved steadily, reaching a peak score of 80.82 in 2021. Unfortunately, performance started to drop in 2022 and continued to do so in 2023, where we noticed the lowest mean score of 59.21. Although there was a high-performance peak in 2020 and 2021, the current pattern of dropping performance, suggests that it is challenging to sustain high levels of performance and consistency.

The Municipal Directors of Education were asked to explain the relationship which exists between the principals’ instructional leadership and the student’s performance in state examinations. According to the findings, there was general agreement among the respondents that principals’ instructional leadership is important in promotion of students’ performance. The respondents’ views are highlighted below.

“First of all, the results of the students partly come from good organization and initiatives from the principals, the collaboration between principals and teachers, and also the principals’ good supervision. You can understand that these elements are characteristics of a good leader. That is the reason why I said there is a relationship between principals’ instructional leadership and the students’ performance” (MDE1).

“As far as this first question is concerned, the principal’s instructional leadership has a great influence on students’ results. By instructional leadership we understand teaching support and educational guidance provided by principals to students and teachers. This activity has an

important influence in terms of students' results either negative or positive depending on the quality of the supervision. If the principals don't supervise students and teachers properly, the students' results will undoubtedly be mediocre''(MDE2).

‘The relationship which exists between the principals’ instructional leadership and the student’s results is that if a principal exercises proper leadership, the school will have satisfactory results’'(MDE3).

‘I compare principals to a vehicle engine since principals are considered to be the pillar of the school. At a certain moment, I made this comparison since if the engine is not in order, the vehicle is also out of function. In the same way, if a principal fails to act, the school generally does not move forward in terms of results. We have already noticed that if a principal does not master teachers and students, it will be the same for the results. That is the reason why I have made the comparison, principals must make instructional and administrative supervision to improve school performance. In conclusion, the student’s results in state examination depend on the principal’s ‘supervision’’ (MDE4).

‘I would say that there is a relationship between the principals’ instructional leadership and the students’ results since if the instructional leadership is well applied it helps to improve students’ results. If a principal has well-supported teachers instructional and administratively, students result become positive’’ (MDE5).

In addition, the Provincial Directors of Education (PDE) stated that a School Principal is the image of his school! A school where there is a laissez-faire attitude cannot be expected to produce satisfactory results. An instructional leader promotes school success.

From the interviews made with the municipal directors of education and some teachers, it has been understood that some issues with principals' instructional leadership can handicap the students' performance. One of these issues is the autonomy of the teachers which was neglected and limited. This is due to some of the principals who are excessively authoritarian and demanding which makes teachers feel less motivated to make sound decisions because they feel underappreciated. The other issues were linked to the poor leadership of some principals who have weak instructional skills or adopt a bad leadership style which affects both teacher effectiveness and students' performance. Principals' instructional leadership should prioritize cooperation and support over control, for more functional school dynamics.

4.3 Principals’ leadership in teacher professional development and students’ performance

The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between principals' leadership in teacher professional development and students' performance in the state examination. The respondents were asked to rate statements aimed at reflecting principals' efforts in promoting teacher professional development. A Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was used to measure the extent to which, respondents agreed with the statements. The results are tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4: Respondents’ responses on Teacher professional development

Teacher professional development	Principals		Teachers	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Teachers get sponsored for in-service training.	3.9	1.37	3.44	1.25
The use of acquired skills from the training is supported.	4.4	0.84	3.74	1.17
Involvement of teachers in teacher development initiatives.	4.8	0.42	4	1.19
Reservation of time to exchange ideas.	4.7	0.48	4.4	1
Teachers are encouraged to learn new competencies.	4.1	1.2	3.63	1.24
Collection of data for teacher professional development.	4.2	0.79	3.59	1.19
Alignment of professional development to performance.	4.1	1.1	3.94	1.07
Recognition of teacher’s strengths and weaknesses.	4.3	0.82	3.66	1.18

Based on the findings, principals agreed that they support teachers' enrollment in training courses and make sure that the activities teachers attend align with the objectives of the school (Mean=3.9, SD=1.37) whereas teachers (Mean=3.44, SD=1.25) said that their principals usually do what is in this statement. Further, principals agreed on their active support for using skills learned from in-service, conferences, and workshop sessions in classrooms (Mean=4.4, SD=0.84) while teachers (Mean=3.74, SD=1.17) agreed with the same statement.

The study also found that principals strongly agreed that they make sure every teacher attended and was involved in the design of significant activities related to teacher professional development (mean=4.8, SD=0.42) whereas teachers (Mean=4.0, SD=1.2) agreed with this statement. In addition, principals strongly agreed that during meetings, they allocate time for teachers to exchange ideas or knowledge related to professional development (Mean=4.7, SD=0.48), and teachers (Mean=4.4, SD=1.0) agreed on the same.

The study additionally demonstrated that principals agreed that they inspire teachers to pursue further studies, learn new skills, and connect their professional development to the teaching and learning objectives (Mean=4.1, SD=1.2) whereas teachers (Mean=3.63, SD=1.24) agreed with the same statement. In the same perspective, principals agreed that they set up systems to collect data on the effects of programs for teacher professional development and develop an environment that supports teachers' professional development (Mean=4.2, SD=0.79) and teachers (Mean=3.59, SD=1.2) agreed with the same statement.

The results further revealed that principals (Mean=4.1, SD=1.1) and teachers (Mean=3.94, SD=1.07) agreed on the statement that they create a connection between professional development and learning objectives in schools. Finally, about the principals’ leadership in teacher professional development and student performance, the study found that principals (Mean=4.3, SD=0.82) and teachers (Mean=3.66, SD=1.18) agreed with the statement that there is an acknowledgment of each teacher's weakness and strength and give frequent appreciation for effort and achievement.

From the findings, it is indicated that even if principals assume they are doing their best to promote professional development of the teachers, on their side, teachers are not all experiencing the same beneficial impact and tend to suggest aspects that need improvement. These aspects are the teachers' initiatives' actual implications, communication, and support. The above table shows that principals overrate the components of the teacher's professional development. For example, if we look at the involvement in teacher professional development, we can notice that principals rate it at a mean score of 4.8 while teachers give it a mean score of 4. This may imply that teachers may not consider themselves as involved in it as they should, while principals think they are more involved in helping teachers to develop professionally. The mean score for the encouragement to learn new skills was rated 4.1 by principals compared to 3.63 by teachers; this implies that teachers might not feel as being urged and motivated to acquire new skills as the principals assume. Principals and teachers gave a mean score of 3.9 and 3.44 respectively for the item 'sponsored for in-service training' which is the lowest mean score. This indicates that both of them accept that opportunities in professional development especially for in-service training are not properly promoted. Even by considering the standard deviation for both principals (1.37) and teachers (1.25) we notice they are the highest and imply that a number of teachers might benefit from the training while others might not access it. Considering the component 'reservation of time to exchange ideas', we can notice a gap in communication and a lack of opportunities to collaborate. Some interviewed teachers revealed that principals do not have time to discuss with them about diverse issues. Here the results show a slight difference in mean score, 4.7 for principals and 4.4 for teachers. However, if we consider the standard deviation which is 0.48 for principals and 1.0 for teachers, it demonstrates that the accessibility for teachers to collaboration time is less consistent and may not be accessible to all. This may refer to a disparity in the reported opportunities for teachers to communicate, exchange ideas, and participate in significant discussions with each other. A number of teachers assume they lack sufficient opportunities for their professional development. Some teachers also mentioned that their strengths and weaknesses are undervalued. A lower mean score of 3.66 was given by teachers against 4.3 by principals on the 'recognition of teachers' strengths and weaknesses. This means that teachers may not believe their distinctive abilities are fully appreciated or acknowledged. Teachers who fail to get enough feedback get frustrated and dissatisfied, as demonstrated in the standard deviation of 1.18 for teachers showing that not every teacher experiences proper acknowledgement.

In light of the results, we noticed some potential downsides or issues highlighted while analysing the table and they balance the principals' and teachers' opinions regarding teacher professional development. This can be the reason behind the poor performance of the students that has been observed. The principals' leadership in teacher professional development is likely to enhance students' performance in state examinations. The findings of this study contradicted the one conducted by Omondi (2019) which found that the majority of staff development is inconsistent, of poor quality, and unrelated to the demands of the teachers.

The principals were further asked to state other teacher development activities they involve teachers in. According to the principals, teachers are also involved in capacity building on new teaching methodology in relation to integration pedagogy, training on information technology tools, supervision of the educational clubs, seminars to share experience, self-assessment meetings on pupils' academic results, and self-training sessions, especially in the integration pedagogy.

The Municipal Directors of Education were asked to explain how principals as instructional leaders promote teacher professional development. The directors agreed that indeed principals promote the teachers' professional development.

One respondent cited that *“Principals organize pedagogical activities where teachers are involved and they make different presentations.”* (MDE1).

Another respondent stated that *“As instructional leaders, principals must create a climate of understanding and cooperation among the staff. They create opportunities for dialogue and discussion on an issue that could handicap professional development or the flourishing of the school. Hence, the problem solving, the experience sharing, different meetings, clubs, and school networks allow the teacher professional development”* (MDE2).

One participant observed that *“Principals as leaders, help in teacher promotion. First of all, principals must make regular classroom visits and secondly; by doing remediation with the visited teacher, the teachers would notice his/her weaknesses where improvement is needed”*(MDE3).

Another participant noted that *“In terms of teacher professional development, a principal is considered to be a pillar of the school as I have already said it. That is the one who must look for the school textbooks, and organize teacher training, when I talk about teacher training, I even mean that after classroom observation, principals may sit with teachers and direct them on what to do, he/she should not behave as a police-man but must be a mentor to teachers. That is the reason why in teacher professional development, principals must discuss with teachers to develop the sense of their professional development.”* (MDE4).

Further, the Provincial Directors of Education (PDE) noted that the school principal must help teachers develop their professional skills through regular classroom visits. They can also do this during pedagogical meetings organized by the head teacher, by encouraging teachers to carry out research, organizing training courses in the school, organizing pedagogical days, etc.

When the Municipal Directors of Education were asked how teacher professional development contributes to better students' academic performance, they highlighted various ways in which principals' instructional leadership in teacher professional development has enhanced students' performance.

One respondent noted, *“First of all, those pedagogical activities help in mastering the content of the course, and the lesson will be well delivered. This means that teachers are at ease when they are teaching and during the pedagogical activities, a teacher prepares a lesson and others will follow him while teaching. In this way, teachers will help each other and this will help some teachers with difficulties in mastering the content of the lesson. From this, we can get good results.”*(MDE1).

“In my point of view, after the discussion between the principal and the visited teacher in the classroom, the teacher himself/herself will know the proper approaches he/she would use for the improvement of student results.” (MDE3).

“If the principal has well-supported teachers instructional and administratively, teachers must adopt new methods in case there are issues in his pedagogical approaches and this will lead to good results.” (MDE4).

During the interview with the municipal directors of education, they highlighted the significant role of principals in their schools in terms of teacher professional development, especially regarding the organisation of resources, mentoring, and guiding teachers. And they said this can lead to students' performance. Despite this, some of the teachers interviewed, have

mentioned that there are issues that they are still encountering in this area. According to them, despite the highlights of the principal’s leadership status, the situation makes them the main driving force underlying teacher professional development. And it might end up in an over-reliance dependence upon a single individual regarding professional development. A number of these teachers informed that they have ineffective and not enough skilled principals, and this causes the risk that teachers will not receive sufficient support for their professional development which hinders students’ performance. Another raised issue is that of the time and ability limitation for principals. In addition to their usual excessive administrative responsibilities, principals do not have enough time to dedicate to the mentoring of all teachers. Consequently, some teachers consider themselves underappreciated and not well supported in their professional development resulting in students’ poor performance.

4.4 Correlation Analysis

This section presents correlation analysis results on the relationship between coordination of teacher professional development and student performance in the state examination.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Results

		Student Performance	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Student Performance	Pearson Correlation	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)									
Teachers get sponsored for in-service training.	Pearson Correlation	.299**	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004								
The use of acquired skills from the training is supported.	Pearson Correlation	0.151	.579*	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.149	0.000							
Involvement of teachers in teacher development initiatives.	Pearson Correlation	.268**	.543*	.46	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	0.000	0.000	0.0					
Reservation of time to exchange ideas.	Pearson Correlation	.216*	.494*	.59	.57	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.038	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0				
Teachers encourage them to learn new competencies.	Pearson Correlation	0.182	.562*	.53	.54	.58	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.081	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0			
Collection of data for teacher professional development.	Pearson Correlation	.260*	.540*	.45	.62	.42	.58	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.012	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0		
Alignment of professional development to performance.	Pearson Correlation	.270**	.575*	.53	.64	.65	.48	.57	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
Recognition of teacher’s strengths and weaknesses.	Pearson Correlation	.306**	.531*	.49	.65	.52	.52	.60	.67	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003	0.000	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

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

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The findings in Table 5 revealed that several statements relating to coordination of teacher professional development had a positive and significant relationship with student performance.

In particular, teachers get sponsored for in-service training ($r=0.299$, $p=0.004$); involvement of teachers in teacher development initiatives ($r=0.268$, $p=0.009$); reservation of time to exchange ideas ($r=0.216$, $p=0.038$); collection of data for teacher professional development ($r=0.260$, $p=0.012$); alignment of professional development to performance ($r=0.270$, $p=0.009$); and recognition of teacher's strengths and weaknesses ($r=0.306$, $p=0.003$).

The results denote that improvement in principals' leadership in coordination of teacher professional development would positively enhance students' performance in state examinations. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between principals' leadership in teacher professional development and students' performance in the state examination was rejected. This means that principals' leadership in teacher professional development is significantly related to students' performance. In the same way, the provincial director of education further observed that principals' instructional leadership encouraged teachers to train themselves, gain experience, teach the courses they have prepared, share their experience, and receive training from their peers and the principals provide guidance, monitoring, and control. It didn't take long for the results to appear.

The finding agrees with Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) study that established that a series of programs that provided an extensive number of hours of professional growth for teachers was determined to have a positive and statistically significant impact on performance among students. However, the results are inconsistent with those of Mwhaki et al., (2019) who found that there was not a statistically significant relationship between the performance of students and principals' support of teachers' professional development.

4.5 Summary of the Findings

Principals play a critical role in determining students' academic progress, particularly in the context of public secondary schools where leadership has a big influence on student learning.

The study objective was to determine the relationship between principals' leadership in teacher professional development and students' performance in the state examinations. Effective instructional leadership relies on teacher professional development. Principals can improve student learning and performance by providing teachers with up-to-date pedagogical knowledge and skills with a focus on continuing professional improvement.

In light of the results, we noticed some potential downsides or issues highlighted while analysing the table, and they balance the principals' and teachers' opinions regarding teacher professional development. This can be the reason behind the poor performance of the students that has been observed. Whereas principals assume they are doing everything in their ability to support teachers' professional development, not all teachers are benefiting fairly from this, and they commonly point out areas that require improvement. These areas comprise communication, support, and the real implications of the teachers' initiatives. Also, a number of teachers informed that they have ineffective principals and not enough skilled and this causes the risk that teachers will not receive sufficient support for their professional development which hinders students' performance.

Correlation analysis results indicated that coordination of teacher professional development had a positive and significant relationship with student performance in the state examinations. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between principals' leadership in teacher professional development and students' performance in the state examinations was rejected.

5. Conclusion

The study established a significant positive relationship between coordination of teacher professional development and students' performance in state examinations. Enhancing teachers' expertise on how to teach particular types of content to learners and participate in specific pedagogical skills is a goal of professional development that is related to their theoretical understanding since academic skills raise students' accomplishment. From the findings, it is indicated that even if principals assume they are doing their best to promote professional development of the teachers, on their side, teachers are not all experiencing the same beneficial impact and tend to suggest aspects that need improvement. These aspects are the teachers' initiatives' actual implications, communication and support, and the in-service training which is not properly promoted. This can be the reason behind the poor performance of the students that has been observed. The study, therefore, concluded that coordination of teacher professional development is critical in enhancing students' performance.

6. Recommendations

To the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research to make sure principals are provided with more proficient instructional leadership by organising frequent training sessions or seminars for them.

The principals should strengthen activities relating to coordination of teacher professional development. In particular, development activities should be professional, involving teachers and utilization of acquired skills.

The study relied on boarding public secondary schools only. Future studies could consider incorporating day secondary schools to enhance the generalizability.

This research dealt with principals' instructional leadership in teacher professional development and its relationship with students' state examination performance in Bururi province. The findings can only be generalized in this province. Thereby, it turns out essential to carry out identical research throughout the whole country. The results will serve to give an in-depth overview concerning the way principals, across Burundi, are engaged in instructional leadership.

The study employed correlation analysis to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Future studies can also consider regression analysis, which is crucial in determining the causal-effect relationship between variables. Regression analysis is also important in making predictions.

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