

ENHANCING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE THROUGH PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING: INSIGHTS FROM PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MOROGORO MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the enhancement of School governance through participatory decision-making insight from public Secondary School in Morogoro Municipality, The study examined current participatory decision-Making practices, education Stakeholders perceptions and barriers to effective participatory decision-making. The study was guided by pragmatist philosophy and utilized a mixed approach. The study applied a convergent design. There were 261 participants, made up of teachers, school heads, chairpersons of the school board, student leaders, parents, and the Municipality of Secondary Education Officer. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings indicate that participatory decision-making practices are generally applied, with teachers actively involved in academic, administrative, and disciplinary decisions through meetings and committees. Education Stakeholders such as teachers, student leaders, parents, and administrators hold positive perceptions of participation, supported by school leaders who inclusiveness and empowerment in line with Participatory Governance Theory and Transformation Leadership Theory. However, ineffective communication, inadequate time due to heavy workloads, cultural norms discouraging open dialogue, fear of conflict, and infrequent stakeholder meetings were identified as major barriers limit full participation. The study concludes that participatory decision-making strengthens transparency, accountability, shared responsibility, and overall school performance, but its impact is reduced by communication and structural constraints. The study recommends strengthening policies that promote participatory governance, heads of school should improve communication systems, conducting regular stakeholder forums, providing transformational leadership training for school heads, reviewing teacher workloads, and enhancing student involvement. These measures will help deepen participatory governance and improve educational outcomes in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality's

Keywords: Participatory decision making, School Governance, Public Secondary Schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Participatory decision-making has, therefore, become an indispensable aspect of efficient school governance in educational reforms that require inclusiveness, transparency, and shared leadership. The introduction of teachers' participation in school governance mechanisms has been cited by various studies as integral to operational effectiveness, considering their positions as frontline stakeholders with comprehensive knowledge about schools' academic, disciplinary, and

administrative needs. Nonetheless, the literature review exposes a significant knowledge gap regarding the conduct of participatory leadership within public secondary schools, especially in different administrative contexts such as Morogoro Municipality.

While Jamil and Muhammad (2024) placed emphasis on inclusive leadership for primary schools in Punjab, their work failed to address collective decision-making structures at the secondary level. Besides, Khan et al., (2021) related PLCs to teacher development in Malaysia without researching their impact on governance frameworks. Saleem (2020) identified directive leadership to be more influential than participative styles of leadership in private schools in Hong Kong, casting doubt on the contextual relevance of participatory governance in public institutions. Other studies, such as those conducted by Abakah and Ameyaw (2022) and Kosgei and Edabu (2023), focused on professional development and job satisfaction, respectively, without directly examining decision-making mechanisms.

In addition, studies done in African contexts, like Buthelezi and Ajani 2023, in South Africa, and Masanyiwa 2023, in Tanzania, have featured participative management and school committees. However, they have been limited either by geographic scope, stakeholder representation, or the focus being on primary education. The role of civic education in fostering public participation, as noted by Thelma 2024, has not been well explored for school governance.

2.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Participatory decision-making is highly acknowledged to be a crucial determinant in enhancing the efficacy and efficiency of schools Baines 2024. It deals with active involvement by key Education stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and even government officials, in making decisions on school-related issues Bergmann 2024. Such active involvement gives stakeholders a sense of ownership as well as mutual responsibility while limiting the possibility of being excluded from governance.

In the contemporary learning atmosphere, participatory decision-making is crucial in creating an environment that fosters both academic achievement and student development as a whole. According to Yulianti, et al., (2022), parents and teachers are traditionally engaged in governance in public schools in meetings and committees. Based on these concluded benefits, existing literature primarily highlights the imperative for participatory decision-making in the abstract but provides little empirical research on its actual effect in improving governance approaches at the school level in public secondary school in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania.

This study, therefore, sought to investigate Enhancement of School Governance through Participatory decision making: insights from Public Secondary School in Morogoro Municipality.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To examine the current participatory decision-making –practices in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality.
- ii. To examine the perceptions of education stakeholders on participatory decision-making in enhancing school governance in public secondary school in Morogoro Municipality.
- iii. To identify barriers towards effective participatory decision-making in enhancing school governance in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality.

3.2 Research Questions

- i. What are the current participatory decision-making practices in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality?
- ii. What are the perceptions of education stakeholders on participatory decision-making in enhancing school governance in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality?
- iii. What are the barriers towards effective participatory decision-making in enhancing school governance in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality?

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Transformational Leadership Theory and Participatory Governance Theory. According to the Transformational Leadership Theory by James MacGregor Burns in 1978, which was later expounded by Bass (1985), leaders inspire and motivate followers beyond expectation through fostering innovation, aligning organizational goals with personal values, and building a shared vision. In a school context, transformational leaders act as role models, provide individualized support, and create collaborative environments that enhance teacher morale, job satisfaction, and better institutional performance, as would be seen by Kipasika (2024) and Virgiawan et al., (2021). This is an important theory to apply to schools because change are dynamic, and stakeholder involvement increases the possibility of success.

Complementing this is, the Participatory Governance Theory, espoused by John Gaventa in 2006, which fosters active stakeholder engagement of teachers, parents, students, and community members in decision-making processes. It emphasizes inclusivity, transparency, and democratic engagement to make sure that governance reflects the needs and perspectives of all actors in the same way that Rijal (2023) and Timidi (2024) have mentioned. Participatory governance builds trust and accountability but also presents challenges such as time consuming consultation and potential stakeholders in conflict, Lim (2022) and Bongo et al. (2024). Based on these theoretical postulates, the studies have developed a robust framework in which, within public secondary schools, leadership styles and governance structures shape teacher participation in decision-making. These will help in shedding light on strengths, along with the barriers that exist in current practice, in order to guide the researcher in assessing institutional dynamics and proposing strategies for more inclusive and effective school leadership.

5. REVIEWS OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

5.1 Participatory Decision-Making Practices in Schools

Jamil and Muhammad (2024) conducted a study on leadership practices from a teacher's perspective. The results indicated that head teachers in public schools in Punjab were perceived to be positively inclined towards policy coordination, resource support, and emotional encouragement. These aspects are in line with principles of participatory decision making in school governance, hence indicating the level of inclusiveness of the leadership. However, the study was within the primary schools in Punjab and did not cover aspects at the secondary level or across different cultural settings. Even though it tackled the emotional and structural dimensions of leadership, it barely touched on the processes through which collective decisions are made within the institution's governance. This constitutes a research gap in trying to find out how participatory leadership is exercised at the secondary school level in various administrative regions such as Morogoro Municipality.

Khan et al., (2021) utilized quantitative research to explore the relationship between Professional Learning Community, trust, and professional development of teachers among secondary school teachers in Malaysia. Their findings revealed that a high level of PLC develops the dimension of trust and had positively influenced teacher development, which is befitting for the need of collaborative nature in participatory decision-making. One of the essential limitations was its reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires, which may encompass bias or limit the level of comprehension. Moreover, although it associated PLCs with professional growth, it did not examine their impact on governance structures or decision-making processes. Hence, there remains a gap in defining professional collaboration's direct connection to participatory governance outcomes, particularly within the Tanzanian public school system.

The most influential factor on teacher job choice and motive to a specific professional are job security, passion and leadership (Mwakalinga, 2025; Saleem, 2020). Although it used rigorous statistical techniques such as structural equation modeling, since the study's location is not in private institutions where the outcome is performance, its results might not be generalized to participative leadership within private schools.

Abakah and Ameyaw (2022) conducted the study to research Continuing Professional Development (CPD) practice among basic school teachers in Ghana's Central Region. A descriptive survey study design was employed to assess teachers' participation in CPD practice. The approaches employed were quantitative approach, questionnaires were employed as data collection instruments. Sample was 303 basic school teachers. Respondents were selected by simple random sampling approach. Teachers participated in various CPD activities like workshops, in-service, and seminars. Teachers recognized the importance of CPD in promoting their teaching skills and keeping abreast with education trends. This research illuminates one on the necessity of implementing effective CPD within Ghana's education system in order to enable teachers to keep improving and learning strategies in light of new challenges faced in the classroom.

Buthelezi and Ajani (2023) investigated the impact of participative management on the change in schools within South Africa by surveying 25 principals in the King Cetshwayo district. The results provided proof that participative management practices play a crucial role in ensuring the efficient change of schools. Implications for the development of inclusive leadership models within the improvement of school governance were suggested. However, this research was restricted to a single district, which blemishes its generalizability. Although the self-reported data obtained were quite useful, it introduced response bias. The research did not cover the perceptions held by teachers and other stakeholders, hence indicating a gap in research regarding multistakeholder involvement in participatory decision-making within Public secondary school contexts, including those found in Morogoro, Tanzania.

Thelma, in 2024, examined the impact of civic education on public participation in Lusaka District, Zambia, using a heterogeneous sample of 95 respondents. It was noted that civic education creates avenues for citizens to participate in local governance by helping in knowledge dissemination, an abiding factor in participatory school governance. The sample size utilized was relatively small and very specific in context, which may have implications on the generalizability of the findings. It has also focused more on general civic participation rather than on the specific agencies of the school governance machinery. This provides a niche for research in bridging civic education and participatory decision-making at the school level, particularly secondary schools in Tanzanian urban areas.

Instead of limiting themselves to school governance, Kosgei and Edabu (2023) related participative leadership styles to the satisfaction of teachers' jobs in Baringo sub-county, Kenya, through a large sample involving 1,250 teachers and 127 head teachers. The results indicated that participatory leadership enhances the morale and satisfaction of teachers, hence the need for incorporating participatory management practices within schools, which falls directly under the improvement of school governance. The limitation of this study is that it has focused on primary education, which may not be directly applicable to secondary school dynamics. Additionally, the study has focused more on the outcomes for the teachers rather than decision-making structures or processes. This leaves a gap in the research on how participative leadership shapes the governance frameworks in secondary schools, with specific attention to policy implementation by municipalities in Tanzania.

A study on experiences and community members' role in the management of public secondary schools in Morogoro Region by Hamidu (2021) discovered community participation is still passive and restricted by insufficient influence, lack of trust, and weak government support despite it having a positive effect on school management and social cohesion. Moreover, while examining decision-making and leadership practice in Morogoro Municipality, Aron and Amos (2024) tested the effectiveness of instructional leadership and collaborative decision-making via comparative design that combined qualitative and quantitative methods. From their research, they illustrated that schools with participatory structures and strong leadership had improved academic outcomes and teacher morale, though hierarchical leadership and training impacted full participation. Masanyiwa (2023) focused on the participation of school committees in monitoring projects in 17 primary schools in Nyang'hwale District, Tanzania, through interviews, questionnaires, and document reviews.

This study is relevant because it provides a Tanzanian context that explains how local school governance involves committees in decision-making. However, this study had a limitation in that it focuses on primary schools and the committees' involvement in infrastructure projects, thus reducing the level of its applicability to broader aspects of governance. Even though the research employed various means of collecting data, the voice of the students or teachers in decision-making was not adequately reflecting.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Philosophy and Approach

The philosophy used in this study was pragmatism, which basically guides on the use of methods that are best to solve the research problem with an openness to blend both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to gain useful and concrete results. A pragmatism research philosophy, which emphasizes the practical application of theories to solve real-world problems (Elgeddawy & Abouraia, 2024; Ormerod, 2021).

Research Approach

This study utilized a mixed-method approach that integrated the quantitative and qualitative approaches in developing an integrated picture of improving school governance through participatory decision-making. This was important because it allowed the researchers to combine numeric data for statistical comparison with in-depth qualitative data regarding stakeholders' perspectives. According to Matović and Ovesni, (2023) the researchers was choosed the mixed-

method approach so as to make use of the strength of quantitative data on quantitative trends and qualitative data on contextual insights to make comprehensive findings.

Research Design

The study was used a convergent design under the mixed-method. Under the convergent design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and separately analyzed before they were merged so that an overall understanding of the research problem was established (Hazari, 2024). The convergent design permitted triangulation of results to be performed, making the research more valid and reliable through cross-verifying results from different data sources (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Population

The study targeted major education stakeholders with the mandate for school governance in public secondary schools within the Morogoro Municipality. Target population was: Teachers: As key players in school decision-making. Heads of School (HoS): As top administrators with the mandate to provide leadership and governance. Chairpersons of School Boards: As representatives of the governance and policy-making organs. Student Leaders: As representatives of student interests in governance. Parents: As community stakeholders with participation in school activities. Municipal of Secondary Education Officer (MSEO): Municipal of education authority representative. He was selected since he is directly involved in participatory decision-making and receives information on school governance.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

The study was done in ten randomly nominated public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality to ensure representativeness. The study employed random Sampling to select ten public secondary schools to prevent bias and had a representative sample also teachers were selected by using this technique. Purposive Sampling was used to select specific stakeholder groups school heads, chairperson of the school board, student leaders, parents, and Municipal of Secondary Education officer (MSEO) based on their direct participation in school decision-making and school governance (Cresswell, 2025).

Sample Size

The total sample size was 261 respondents, which were spread as: 130 Teachers: Since they constitute the largest category in the middle of school administration. 100 Student Leaders: Added to capture student voices. 10 Heads of School: One representative from every chosen school to capture administrative leadership. 10 Chairpersons of School Boards: One representative from every school to capture governance oversight. 10 Parents: Selected to provide community voices. 1 Municipal Secondary Education Officer (MSEO): Included to offer the municipal education authority's view.

Data Collection Tools

The tools that were used in this study for data collection include several instruments that were employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data suitable for the diverse stakeholder groups. Self-completion questionnaires were used for teachers to capture data on their engagement

in academic, disciplinary, and administrative governance aspects. Interview guides that were used during the in-depth interviews with school heads, parents, and the MSEO made a detailed exploration of governance practices possible in relation to the experiences of stakeholders. FGD guides drew on group discussions among student leaders in order to obtain qualitative insights into their perceptions and involvement in school governance. These varied tools fit nicely with mixed methods research principles, which emphasize flexible and multi-dimensional approaches in collecting data to capture complex perspectives, and validate findings by triangulation of data (Dawadi, 2019).

Reliability and Validity of Tools and Data Analysis

Several steps were taken to ensure that the tools of data collection were valid and of quality. The internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaires were ascertained through Cronbach's Alpha ($r = 0.846$), indicating high reliability and internal consistency in measuring participatory decision-making practices (Ahmad, 2024). Expert scrutiny for content validity was performed by distributing the instruments to peers and the research supervisor. Their feedback indicated that questionnaires, interview guides, and FGD guides were appropriately developed to translate the research questions and ensure validity in tapping into stakeholders' perceptions. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed in SPSS to generate descriptive statistics to show frequencies and percentages Standard deviation and mean scores of participatory decision-making practices. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were analyzed thematically. Recurring themes on participatory governance, stakeholder involvement, and leadership practice were coded and allowed an in-depth contextual exploration. The convergent design allowed for an integrated interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data. This approach complemented the mixed-method approach (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Dawadi, 2019).

7. STUDY FINDINGS

Table:1 summarizes teachers' responses to statements regarding participatory decision making practiced in school governance.

Table 1: Participatory Decision-Making Practices in Public Secondary school.

STATEMENTS	SD (F(%))	D (F%)	U(F, %)	A (F, %)	SA (F,%)	MEAN	SD
1. Teachers are actively involved in decision-making processes in school governance	6 (4.6)	10 (7.7)	3 (2.3)	80(61.5)	31(23.8)	3.92	0.99 3
2. Staff meetings provide opportunities for teachers to voice their opinions	5 (3.8)	4(3.1)	2 (1.5)	66(50.8)	53(40.8)	4.22	0.92 3
3. Teachers participate in committees that influence school	5 (3.8)	2 (1.5)	6 (4.6)	62(47.7)	55(42.3)	4.23	0.91 1

governance

4.	The school management considers teachers' suggestions before making final decisions	5 (3.8)	12 (9.2)	7 (5.4)	68(52.3)	38(29.2)	3.94	0.032
5.	There are regular meetings for stakeholders to discuss school policies	3 (2.3)	18(13.8)	13 (10)	64(49.2)	32(24.6)	3.80	1.037

KEY: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; UN = Undecided; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree; f = Frequency; % = Percentage

Source: Field Data (2025)

7.1.1 Active Involvement of Teachers in Decision-Making Processes

Data in Table:1 indicates that the majority of the teachers view themselves as actively involved in decision-making processes regarding school governance, since 61.5% agreed and 23.8% strongly agreed. On the other hand, 4.6% strongly disagreed and 7.7% disagreed. The undecided was 2.3%. The strong positive response of 61.5% indicates that schools have benefited from more inclusion's practices promoting further commitment and accountability from the teaching staff.

The results are consistent with the Participatory Governance Theory, which requires stakeholder participation to ensure transparency, accountability, and mutual responsibility. Overall, teachers' participation strengthens both school management and their professional training, and that results in greater levels of quality of education. This finding was in line with Kosgei and Edabu (2023), who found that participative leadership positively correlated with teachers' job satisfaction. When involved in decision-making processes, teachers build ownership of the tasks and become more motivated. This perspective was echoed by various school leaders during the semi structured interview. One of the HoS A, stated:

"We hold regular staff meetings where every teacher is given time to present views or suggestions. It has helped us resolve issues quickly."

These finding attests that the majority of school heads make a conscious effort to involve teachers in decision-making in school administration. It suggests that contemporary school leaders have an understanding of the significance of involving teachers as a means of generating new ideas and new ideas for how to address academic and disciplinary problems.

7.1.2 Staff Meetings Provide Opportunities for Teachers to Voice their Opinions

According to Table1, staff meetings are viewed as vital platforms for teachers to express their views. About 50.8% agreed and 40.8% strongly agreed that these meetings provide opportunities for teachers' voices to be heard. Conversely, 3.1% disagreed and 3.8% strongly disagreed, with only 1.5% undecided under the mean score of 4.22. Although most teachers feel that staff meetings encourage participation, the sizable disagreement suggests that the quality or inclusivity of these

meetings might vary between schools. Ensuring consistent, open forums for dialogue could further enhance participatory governance. This finding was supported by the information collected from the head of schools during a semi structured interview; one of HoS C, pointed out that. *"In our school, we have a staff meeting every week on Friday to get a report on all the week's different school issues."*

Khan et al. (2021) report that professional learning communities thrive when PLC teachers perceive high levels of trust and collaboration, which staff meetings can help to structure inclusively. Masanyiwa (2023) observed that participation in meetings often depends on members' willingness to speak up, indicating that passive involvement is persistent without deliberate efforts to encourage engagement. It was found that indeed, there are several meetings within the school setting, availing the various educational stakeholders with an opportunity for their input and decision-making.

7.1.3 Teacher Participation in Committees Influencing School Governance

According to the information from Table1, in general, the participation in governance committees, such as disciplinary, academic and development committees is high. 47.7 agreed or 42.3 strongly agreed, while only 1.5% disagreed or 3.8% strongly disagreed, and 4.6 % undecided. Such a high level of participation depicts a structural avenue through which teachers can have an influence on the decisions about governance directly. The active participation of committee involvement likely encourages a sense of ownership and enhances decision quality through the incorporation of diverse perspectives. This is evidenced in the information from MSEO during the semi-structured interview, said that *"The opinions from the teachers are very helpfully, actually a difficult problem can just be solved by collecting the opinions of teachers."*

This is similar to the findings of Jamil and Muhammad (2024), who found that distributed leadership strengthens policy implementation and relationship-building when responsibilities are shared across committees. Hamidu (2021) also echoed that meaningful participation in such school management structures like committees reduces mistrust and promotes collective ownership.

7.1.4 Consideration of Teachers' Suggestions by School Management

Table1 indicates that 52.3% agreed, while 29.2% strongly agreed, that school management considers teachers' suggestions before the final decisions are made. Nevertheless, 9.2% of the respondents disagreed and 3.8% strongly disagreed, while 5.4% remained undecided. This means that they have a positive attitude toward the responsiveness of the management, but a fair minority of the teachers feels that their suggestions go unnoticed. Improvement in feedback mechanisms would help in building up trust and strengthening participatory governance practices. For instance, this finding is supported through information collected from the head of school in a semi-structured interview, wherein one of the HoS (B) said, *"I do consider all the teachers' suggestions in use them to make some changes and improvement in management issues and all school activities"*.

This is corroborated by the study of Saleem (2020), who established that while participative leadership significantly impacts job performance, its effectiveness depends on management's actual consideration of teacher input. Thelma (2024) reiterated this, showing that through empowering inclusive decision-making, there comes a building of trust and accountability.

7.1.5 Regular Stakeholder Meetings for Discussing School Policies

Table1 shows that 49.2% of the teachers agreed, while 24.6% strongly agreed that there are regular meetings involving stakeholders to discuss school policies. However, 13.8% of the respondents

disagreed, and 2.3% strongly disagreed, while 10% were undecided. This points to moderately established forums for stakeholder engagement in policy discussions, though inconsistencies may exist. Regular, inclusive stakeholder meetings are critical for transparent governance and collective decision-making. This finding line up with information from MSEO during the semi-structured interview. Said that.

I am greatly committed to regular consultation with our stakeholders in education, where regular meetings shall take place. In this way, we get an opportunity to discuss and form school policy matters together. Such an arrangement makes sure that teachers, parents, and community members have their say in making policies that address the diverse needs of our students.

Hamidu (2021), in his briefing, elucidated that passive participation within the community about the management of schools was a result of weak strategies for engaging the community and reinforced the idea of structured stakeholder forums. Mpangala and Urrio (2024) stated that regular seminars would institutionalize participatory practices that would ensure all stakeholders, including teachers and parents, are consistently involved.

Perceptions of Education Stakeholders on Participatory Decision-Making in Enhancing School Governance.

Table 2: Perceptions of Education Stakeholders on Participatory Decision-Making Enhancing School Governance in Public Secondary School in Morogoro Municipal

STATEMENTS	SD (f, %)	D (f, %)	UN (f, %)	A (f, %)	SA (f, %)	Mean	SD
1. The head of school encourages participatory decision-making among teachers	3(2.3)	7(5.4)	7(5.4)	76(58.5)	37(28.55)	4.05	.874
2. Students' views are valued and considered in school governance.	3(2.3)	8(6.2)	5(3.8)	84(64.6)	30(23.1)	4.00	.854
3. Collaboration among teachers, parents, and administrators is encouraged in Decision-making.	2(1.5)	5(3.8)	9(6.9)	63(48.5)	51(39)	4.20	.848
4. I believe that all stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and students, have equal opportunities to Contribute to Decision-making.	8(6.2)	13(10.)	7(5.4)	66(58.8)	36(27.7)	3.84	1.12

5. Teachers support Student involvement in school governance	1(8)	11(8.5)	4(3.1)	64(49.2)	50(38.5)	4.15	.893
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NB: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; UN = Undecided; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree; f = Frequency; and % = Percentage

Source: Field Data (2025)

7.2.1 Head of School Encouragement of Participatory Decision-Making among Teachers

From the statistics presented in Table 2, the majority of teachers acknowledged that heads of schools encourage participatory decision-making. Specifically, 58.5% of the respondents agreed and 28.5% strongly agreed, resulting in a cumulative 87% positive response rate. In contrast, only 2.3% strongly disagreed and 5.4% disagreed, while another 5.4% remained undecided. Further reinforces the conclusion that school leaders are generally perceived as promoting inclusive governance by including teachers in key decision-making processes. This finding is supported by information from the Head of School; one of the Head of School D, highlighted that.

The Head of School actively encourages participatory decision-making among teachers. By creating an inclusive environment in which teachers are empowered to share their ideas and suggestions, we cultivate a spirit of collaboration. This approach recognizes the experience of our staff while strengthening our decisions.

The high percentage of agreement among teachers signifies that decision-making structures within schools are not merely hierarchical or top-down but rather include the involvement of the teaching staff. This is echoed by Supriadi et al. (2021), who highlighted that participation was one of the principles underlying good school governance, stressing the fact that shared decision-making improves the quality of leadership decisions.

7.2.2 Value and Consideration of Students' Views in School Governance

Observations derived from Table 2 show that 64.6% of the respondents agreed and 23.1% strongly agreed that students' opinions are considered in school management. Conversely, 6.8% disagreed, 2.3% strongly disagreed, and 3.8% remained undecided. With a mean rating of 4.00, findings mean that student opinion is being considered in most schools. This interaction promotes democratic participation and helps to develop leadership skills among students as well as an enhanced sense of belonging and responsibility within the school community. Afzal & Wali (2020) confirm this finding by revealing that principals apply various strategies to encourage student participation, though there are imbalances between belief and practice. The findings in their paper highlight concerns such as resistance from entrenched power bases, which may limit meaningful student participation.

7.2.3 Collaboration among Teachers, Parents, and Administrators in Decision-Making.

Table 2 shows that participatory approaches in decision-making are widely accepted among the stakeholders of the school; 48.5% agree, 39.25% strongly agreed that participatory approaches are practiced, while 3.8% disagreed, 1.5% strongly disagreed, and 6.9% undecided. The findings revealed that teachers, administrators, and parents participate actively in joint processes of decision-making, which can be a source of collective responsibility and reinforcement of coherence in school policies. During the Semi-structured interview, one of the head of school B, said that

Parent, teacher, and administrative input are actively solicited in our decision-making. In this way, bringing these stakeholders together allows us to gain a well-rounded perspective of the needs and aspirations of our school community. We share ideas and information through open communication in regular meetings, workshops, and forums.

The findings resonate with the Participatory Governance Theory, which emphasizes inclusive stakeholder involvement in decision-making. Thus, through participative leadership practice, the schools generate a shared responsibility and collaboration culture and exercise governance in a democratic manner. Additionally, teamwork encourages collectivism among staff members, where Musengamana et al. (2024) further note, improving motivation and institutional performance.

7.2.4 Equal Opportunities for Stakeholder Contribution to Decision-Making

Results in Table 2: show that 58.8% agreed, while 27.7% strongly agreed that all stakeholders have equal chances in participating in decision-making. Conversely, 10% disagreed and 6.2% strongly disagreed while 5.4% were undecided. This finding is line up with the information collected during a semi-structured interview; one of the head of school G, said that

As head of school, I believe it is essential that all the stakeholders involved-teachers, parents, and students-have an equal opportunity in contributing to decision-making because inclusion creates a collaborative culture that ultimately benefits all of our school community.

These findings align with Participatory Governance Theory, emphasizing inclusiveness in decision-making and equal involvement of all relevant actors, and also Transformational Leadership Theory, which advocate for leaders to foster empowerment and equitable engagement of the followers. Similar to Mwaibingila and Mwakalinga, (2022) opinion that challenges arise over cultural norms of ignoring some groups, especially the marginalized group, in decision making. The findings also agreed with Hamidu's (2021) observation that due to power imbalance, usually the marginalized groups do not have any influence in decision making.

7.2.5 Teacher Support for Student Involvement in School Governance.

The findings in Table 2 indicate that teachers recognize the importance of student participation and actively encourage it in school governance. Specifically, 49.2% of teachers agreed and 38.5% strongly agreed that students should be involved, whereas 8.5% disagreed, 8% strongly disagreed, and 3.1% were undecided. This finding, suggested that most respondents consistently value student participation. This finding was supported by the information from FGDs; one of Students leader identified that,

Teachers provide the portal through which students are engaged in school decision-making. Not only do they advocate for student voices, but also instruct and mentor students by learning about the governance process. Through the process of establishing a comfortable environment in which students feel free to speak and provide input into decisions, teachers create responsible, active, and future leaders

The results also have a meeting ground with Transformational Leadership Theory, as school leaders who are leaders for student participation create a culture of responsibility, develop leadership, and actively engage in the shaping process for the school. Overall, these findings suggest that student participation is not just common but an important feature of school life in

supporting democratic values and participatory leadership. Afzal and Wali (2020) discussed how principals act to facilitate student participation, but they also found discrepancies between beliefs and practices. Their study sheds light on intentional efforts to involve students in governance structures

Barriers toward Effective Participatory Decision-Making in Enhancing School governance in Public Secondary Schools

Table 3: illustrates the frequency and level of agreement with various statements describing the obstacles to enable easily the determination of the hindrances faced when developing participatory governance in schools.

Table 3: Barriers toward Effective Participatory Decision-Making in Enhancing School Governance in Public Secondary Schools.

STATEMENTS	SD (F, %)	D (F, %)	UN (F, %)	A (F, %)	SA (F, %)	MEAN	SD
1. Poor communication channels lead to misunderstandings or a lack of awareness about opportunities for participation.	9 (6.9)	21(16.2)	14(10.8)	47(36.2)	39(30.0)	3.66	1.255
2. Time constraints hinder teacher involvement in decision-making.	12 (9.2)	29(22.3)	21(16.2)	58(44.6)	10 (7.7)	3.19	1.149
3. Cultural norms discourage open discussions in school settings.	16(12.3)	23(17.7)	23(17.7)	46(35.4)	22(16.9)	3.27	1.281
4. Fear of conflict prevents stakeholders from sharing honest opinions.	11 (8.5)	17(13.1)	24(18.5)	52(40.0)	26(20.0)	3.50	1.196
5 Stakeholder meetings are held irregularly or not at all.	9 (6.9)	23(17.7)	24(18.5)	52(40.0)	22(16.9)	3.42	1.167

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; UN = Undecided; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree; f = Frequency; % = Percentage

Source: Field Data (2025)

7.3.1 Communication Challenges Leading to Limited Participation

As illustrated in Table 3, a combined 66.2% of teachers either agreed (36.2%) or strongly agreed (30.0%) that poor communication channels lead to misunderstandings or lack of awareness about participation opportunities. In comparison, 10.8% were undecided, 16.8% disagreed, and 6.9% strongly disagreed. The data indicates that ineffective communication systems are very serious barriers to participation. If teachers are not adequately informed with regard to forums or processes for involvement, they are less inclined, despite willingness, to make a contribution. This challenge affects coordination, inclusiveness, and transparency and hence weakens participatory governance in schools. This finding was aligned with the information given by school board members during the administration of a structured interview, one of them being the chairperson of the School Board, who said,

Bad communication channels could definitely be a cause of misunderstandings, coupled with a lack of awareness of opportunities to take part on the part of teachers and other stakeholders. It is important that we have open and clear lines of communication to keep everyone updated and involved.

Khasawneh and Alodwan (2024) included the institutional and cultural participation barriers, referencing that poor communication increases exclusion. Their findings suggested more teacher training and technology use in service of increasing the information flow.

7.3.2 Time Constraints Limiting Teacher Involvement

Based on the results shown in Table 3, 44.6% of the teachers agreed and 7.7% strongly agreed that time constraint hinders their involvement in decision-making. On the contrary, 16.2% did not know, 22.3% disagreed, and 9.2% strongly disagreed. These results indicate that teaching schedules, workload, and administrative activities may limit the access of teachers to contribute significantly to governance matters. Unless there is deliberate scheduling and structural changes, time will remain a major stumbling block excluding even volunteer teachers from decision-making processes. This fact was supported by the testimony presented by CBS in a semi-structured interview; one of school board member's chairpersons asserted that:

Time constraints are one of the most important barriers to teachers' involvement in making decisions. Under the pressure of routine teaching duties and administrative functions, time to devote to collaborative processes becomes hard to find. It is up to school leadership to recognize these pressures and to work to create structured blocks of time for teacher participation without clogging schedules.

This is attested to by Aron and Amos (2024), who established that inadequate workload and lack of time were some of the major deterrents to teachers' involvement in school governance that translated into miss-allocation of school funds and corruption. In the same light, Elisado (2022) noted that proper planning and coordination in school are what would give room for effective participation of teachers in governance matters beyond teaching.

7.3.3 Cultural Norms Discouraging Open Discussions

Findings summarized in Table 3 show that 35.4% of teachers agreed and 16.9% strongly agreed that cultural norms discourage open discussions in schools. Another 17.7% were undecided, with 17.7% disagreeing and 12.3% strongly disagreeing. These results point out that cultural factors

such as respect for authority or the fear of expressing disagreement could be holding back open dialogue. This finding is consistent with the information given during the structured interview by school board members; one of the chairpersons of the school board said that,

Social norms that discourage free speech in school can really hamper collaboration and creativity. We are supposed to ensure we have an environment where respectful conversations are welcomed and valued. By having an open culture that creates trust, all stakeholders could be allowed to express themselves freely without the fear of judgment: teachers, parents, and students alike.

Cultural norms have been major obstacles to participatory governance, according to Khasawneh & Alodwan (2024), especially where dominance is high. In turn, it supports the argument presented by Mpangala (2024) that institutional cultural transformation requires intentional efforts to model and reinforce openness in communication, and to deal with power imbalances that silence some voices.

7.3.4 Fear of Conflict Limiting Honest Contributions

As evidenced in Table 3, 40.0% of the teachers concurred and 20.0% strongly concurred that fear of tension stifles stakeholders from providing open-minded views. Some 18.5% were on the fence, while 13.1% disagreed and 8.5% strongly disagreed. These figures indicate that fear of tension or conflict can be a huge dampener of free discussion. In environments where conflict is punished or not managed properly, individuals may rather keep quiet than get entangled. This was a discovery confirming data offered by student leaders using FGDs, one of the Students leaders said,

Fear of disagreements can also be an intense obstacle in letting students provide open-ended opinions. When a person fears potential disagreements or even repercussions, a person can restrain oneself from valuable comments. It is therefore extremely important to establish a friendly and non-judgmental environment where various opinions are valued and constructive discussions encouraged.

Chacha et al. (2023) set out that lack of good relations among stakeholders and transparency have a tendency to create environments where educators are fearful of telling the truth in fear of reactions. Elisado (2022) suggested measures like ensuring transparency and improving avenues of communication for safer spaces of constructive disagreement and diverse viewpoints in school administration.

7.3.5 Irregular or Infrequent Stakeholder Meetings

Table 3 revealed that 40.0% agreed and 16.9 % strongly agreed that the stakeholder meetings were not held or held rarely, 18.5% remained undecided, 17.7% of the respondents also disagreed, and 6.9% strongly disagreed. These responses indicate that inadequate meeting organization restricts the possibility for stakeholder involvement. This finding was further confirmed by data provided by Parent during the selective interview; one of the parents expressed that,

Without regular or irregular meetings with stakeholders, one's scope for collaboration and input is seriously curtailed. In order to have a more democratic environment, we must put in place a regular schedule for such meetings so that all stakeholders can always have an opportunity to give their inputs. Making these meetings a priority will afford us a forum for open communication, feedback, and joint decision-making, and subsequently strengthen the bonding in our school community while improving our efforts collectively.

Azlan et al. (2024) also noted that strategic problem-solving requires frequent forums for discourse and suggested that institutionalizing stakeholders' regular meeting is vital to successful school governance. The findings of the study reveal a largely optimistic disposition toward participatory decision-making in public secondary schools in conformity with both Transformational Leadership Theory and Participatory Governance Theory.

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study investigates enhancement of school governance through participatory decision-making: insight from public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, aiming to examine participatory decision-making practices, education stakeholder perception and barriers to effective participation. The results indicate that participatory decision-making is widely practiced, with many teachers actively involved in academic, disciplinary, and administrative governance through staff meetings and committees which reflects the principles of inclusiveness, transparency, trust, and shared responsibility highlighted by Participatory Governance Theory. Additionally, evidence supportive of Transformational Leadership Theory can also be echoed through the school leaders' empowerment of teachers, thereby facilitating professional commitment and further enhancing overall school performance.

Education stakeholder hold positive perceptions of participatory decision making. Head of schools actively encouraged participatory decision-making among teachers, parents, and administrators. The student's views were considered within school governance processes, and all stakeholder were given equal opportunities to participate in decision making, students were supported by teachers in involving in school governance, which cultivates a culture of responsibility and democratic engagement within the school community.

Despite the positive perceptions, the study identifies several berries that limit effective participatory decision-making. Infective communication channels create misunderstandings and reduce awareness of participation opportunities. Time limitations associated with teaching responsibilities limit teacher involvement in governance. Cultural norms present challenges by discouraging open dialogue, although fear of conflict more inhibit honest contributions from stakeholders. Furthermore, infrequent stakeholder meetings constraints for opportunity of stakeholder engagement.

9. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that participatory decision-making is one of the pillars of effective governance in public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, based on Participatory Governance Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. Teachers are directly involved in academic, disciplinary, and administrative decisions through organized mechanisms like staff meetings and committees that enhance transparency, accountability, and collective responsibility. Education stakeholder generally hold positive perceptions of participatory decision-making with Head of school encourage participatory decision with teachers, parents' students and administrators. Also the study found robust support for participatory decision-making from education stakeholders. Expanding inclusiveness enable schools to increase accountability, ownership, and improvement of the institution in the long run through adherence to the concepts of empowerment and shared vision embedded in the theories of transformational educational governance.

However, the effectiveness of participatory decision -making is constrained by challenges like ineffective communication channels, limited time due teaching responsibilities, cultural norms

which discourage open dialogue, fear of conflict and infrequent stakeholder meetings. In conclusively participatory decision-making is deeply rooted and positively influences school governance in Morogoro Public Secondary School in Morogoro Municipality. Addressing these barriers is important for further strengthening participatory governance and democratic involvement in schools.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends policymakers and Municipal Education Officers (MEOs) should strengthen and enforce policies that require all heads of schools to adopt and prioritize participatory decision making in academic, administrative and disciplinary matters. Head of schools should organize monthly inclusive stakeholder forums involving teachers, students, parents and schoolboard members to enhance transparency, break culture barriers and promote open dialogue. Education authorities should also improve communication through systems by establishing reliable channels such as notice boards, SMS platforms, and school website to ensure that timely and accurate information reaches all stakeholders, in so doing reducing misunderstandings and increasing participation. Furthermore, Regional and Education offices in collaboration with teachers unions, should fund and provide transformation leadership training to all heads of schools to equip them with skills in empowerment, collaboration, and conflict management in line with Transformation leadership theory. To address workload related barriers, schoolboards and education authorities should review teacher workload and responsibilities to create adequate time for meaningful participation in governance activities, schools continue strengthening student involvement in governance through active student councils, supporting a culture of responsibility and democratic engagement. Collectively, these actions will institutionalize participatory governance, empower teachers and enhance education outcomes through Public Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

I hereby declare that no generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, et) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations adopted in the study include the fact that participation in this research was voluntary. In respect of confidentiality, the responses of the Respondents were treated as confidential, anonymizing data to ensure protection of their identity. All participants gave informed consent after being fully informed about the purpose, procedure, and rights of the research. The study gained the necessary permission from relevant school authorities and institutions in Morogoro Municipality in order to fulfill local laws and ethical expectations.

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