



Classroom Supervision Under Increased Student Enrolment in Public Secondary Schools in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract: Rapid enrolment growth in Tanzania's urban public secondary schools has enlarged classes, intensified teacher workloads, and strained instructional supervision. The study aimed to identify strategies used by administrators to enhance classroom-supervision quality in Ilala Municipality. It sought context-specific evidence to strengthen supervisory practice in expanding urban secondary schools. The dissertation adopted a qualitative approach and descriptive design, integrating questionnaire summaries with interview and observation evidence. The overall sample comprised 172 participants drawn from four public secondary schools: four heads of school, four academic teachers, four class coordinators, four class teachers, and 160 students; the objective-specific questionnaire table reported responses from 100 teachers. Simple random and purposive sampling procedures selected participants from four public secondary schools. Data were collected using structured five-point Likert questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and an observation checklist. After clearances, the researcher administered questionnaires, conducted private interviews, and recorded observations during three months of school visits. Questionnaire data were analysed in SPSS version 26 using frequencies, percentages, and means, while interview and observation data underwent thematic analysis and triangulation. Content and construct validity were supported through objective alignment, review by two experts, and piloting outside the study schools. Questionnaire reliability reached Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$; standardized protocols, independent coding, and record keeping strengthened qualitative dependability. Ethical safeguards included informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, secure data handling, non-maleficence, and formal clearance. Findings showed strong endorsement of alternative supervision strategies and professional support (both $M = 4.14$), departmental meetings ($M = 4.11$), peer observation ($M = 4.09$), and continued effectiveness despite large enrolments ($M = 4.05$). Interviews and records confirmed mentoring, collaborative observation, scheduled follow-up, and departmental problem-solving. The study concludes that distributed, developmental supervision can preserve instructional oversight under enrolment pressure. It recommends institutionalized peer observation, protected departmental review time, documented feedback, supervisor training, and additional staffing and resources.

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INTRODUCTION

Expansion of access to secondary education is a major policy achievement, yet enrolment growth can exceed the supervisory capacity of schools. In urban settings, rising student numbers enlarge classes, increase teachers' marking and classroom-management duties, and redirect school leaders toward urgent administrative problems. Instructional supervision is intended to improve teaching through observation, feedback, professional dialogue, and follow-up rather than through compliance checking alone (Glickman et al., 2020; Zepeda, 2025). When supervisors must oversee more classes and teachers without proportional increases in staffing and facilities, those developmental functions become difficult to sustain.

The challenge is particularly salient in Tanzania, where fee-free education and urban population growth have expanded participation in public secondary schools. Research cited in the dissertation links enrolment surges with irregular observation, limited teacher support, infrastructure pressure, and weaker quality-assurance routines (Kalemba, 2022; Mbawala & Hermanto, 2023; Mwalongo, 2023). Ilala Municipality represents an important case because its schools serve dense and rapidly growing communities. The resulting tension is practical: school leaders must maintain oversight and instructional quality while teachers manage heavy workloads and heterogeneous, crowded classrooms.

School administrators may respond by distributing supervisory work and building collaborative routines. Departmental meetings, peer observation, mentoring, coaching, and carefully scheduled follow-up can broaden the sources of professional support and reduce dependence on a single head of school. Distributed leadership locates leadership practice across people and interactions, whereas developmental supervision emphasizes teacher growth, reflection, and context-sensitive assistance (Spillane, 2021; Widatin et al., 2025). Against this background, the present article draws on one objective of the dissertation: to identify the strategies used by school administrators to enhance the quality of classroom supervision in public secondary schools in Ilala Municipality.

Literature Review

1. Theoretical Review

General Systems Theory provides the broad conceptual foundation for understanding supervision under enrolment pressure. A school is an open system in which students, teachers, leadership, infrastructure, and instructional resources interact to produce educational outcomes (Bertalanffy, 1968; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2021). An increase in one input—student enrolment—changes workloads, space use, communication, and monitoring demands across the system. Supervisory problems therefore cannot be treated as isolated shortcomings of individual leaders; they are system responses to altered inputs and constrained transformation processes. Adaptive strategies should coordinate people, schedules, information, and resources rather than merely increase inspection.

Distributed leadership theory explains why delegation and collegial routines can be effective adaptations. Leadership practice is stretched over leaders, followers, and the situations in which they interact; expertise can therefore be mobilized through department heads, academic teachers, coordinators, and experienced peers (Spillane, 2021). Under high enrolment, distribution can narrow supervisory spans of control and create more frequent

professional contact. Peer observation and departmental meetings are consistent with this proposition because they embed supervision within subject departments and teacher networks. Distribution, however, requires role clarity, trust, common standards, and accountability so that delegation does not become abandonment by formal leaders.

Organizational readiness and developmental supervision add motivational and pedagogical dimensions. Schools are more likely to implement change when members share commitment and confidence in their collective ability to act (Weiner, 2020). Developmental and coaching models similarly frame supervision as differentiated assistance that promotes reflection, professional autonomy, and improvement (Glickman et al., 2020; Widatin et al., 2025; Zepeda, 2025). Together, these perspectives predict that administrators can protect supervision quality by combining shared responsibility with supportive feedback, mentoring, and follow-up. The relevant criterion is not simply whether observations occur, but whether the resulting professional learning improves instructional practice.

2. Empirical review

Evidence from expanding African school systems indicates that enrolment growth often reduces supervisory intensity. The dissertation reports that Olorunsola (2024) found fewer classroom observations and weaker instructional support in Nigerian secondary schools when enrolment expanded without corresponding supervisory investment. Mensah et al. (2024) similarly associated high enrolment and student–teacher ratios in Ghana with delayed feedback and greater administrative demands on school heads. These studies indicate that conventional head-led observation cycles become difficult to maintain as supervisory workloads rise, supporting the search for differentiated and distributed approaches.

Tanzanian studies cited in the dissertation describe comparable pressures. Kalembe (2022) linked overcrowding with teacher burnout, disciplinary demands, and reduced pedagogical support, while Mbawala and Hermanto (2023) reported limited individual assistance and a shift from instructional to administrative supervision in urban districts. Mwalongo (2023) found that enrolment growth outpaced supervisory capacity in Dar es Salaam, contributing to irregular schedules and constrained feedback. Collectively, these studies establish the problem but provide less municipality-specific evidence about the concrete routines administrators use to preserve supervision quality.

Research on adaptive responses points toward collaborative mechanisms. Sembiring and Tisow (2025) identified peer supervision and department-level instructional meetings as coping strategies in resource-constrained schools. Widatin et al. (2025) reported that coaching-oriented supervision can promote reflective practice and teacher autonomy, and Mwila and Ali (2025) identified delegation, prioritization, and community resource mobilization in the Ilala context. The empirical gap concerns how strongly school personnel endorse particular strategies and whether interview and documentary evidence corroborate their use. The present analysis addresses that gap using teacher ratings, head-of-school accounts, and observations from four public secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

The dissertation characterized the study as qualitative and used a descriptive research design to examine supervision practices in their natural school settings. In implementation, it

also generated quantitative questionnaire summaries; the evidence base is therefore presented here as a qualitatively oriented descriptive study with an embedded descriptive-quantitative component. The study was conducted in four public secondary schools in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam. Its stated overall sample was 172 participants: four heads of school, four academic teachers, four class coordinators, four class teachers, and 160 students. The objective-specific strategy table, however, contains 100 teacher responses; because the dissertation does not reconcile this analytic count with the overall sample composition, the article reports the two figures separately and does not infer an unreported response rate. Schools and students were selected through simple random sampling, with 10 students selected from each of Forms I–IV in each school. Heads of school, academic teachers, and class coordinators were selected purposively because their positions gave them direct knowledge of instructional supervision. Data collection instruments comprised a structured questionnaire with five-point Likert items, a semi-structured interview guide for school leaders, and an observation checklist covering facilities, instructional resources, classroom conditions, lesson-observation records, supervision schedules, feedback records, and departmental minutes. Following authorization from St. Augustine University of Tanzania and relevant regional, district, municipal, ward, and school authorities, the researcher introduced the study, scheduled school visits, administered questionnaires at convenient times, conducted private interviews, and completed observations over three months. Quantitative data were coded, cleaned, and analysed using SPSS version 26; frequencies, percentages, and mean scores are emphasized because these are the statistics reported for the selected objective. Interview recordings were transcribed, repeatedly read, open-coded, grouped into categories, and refined into themes. Observation evidence and illustrative interview accounts were triangulated with questionnaire patterns. Content validity was strengthened by aligning items with the objectives, review by two educational-management and research-methodology experts, and piloting in one non-sample public secondary school; construct validity was addressed through operational alignment with the conceptual framework. The questionnaire attained Cronbach's alpha of .70, which the dissertation treated as acceptable. Standardized interview protocols, detailed records, and independent coding of a transcript sample supported qualitative dependability. Ethical safeguards included institutional clearance (SAUT/VC/RCP/035/229, dated May 19, 2026), administrative permissions, informed consent, voluntariness and withdrawal rights, anonymity, confidentiality, secure and restricted data access, avoidance of harm or coercion, and honest reporting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The selected objective sought to identify strategies used by school administrators to enhance classroom supervision amid increased student enrolment. The questionnaire results showed consistently positive ratings across all five statements. Agreement (strongly agree plus agree) ranged from 82% to 84%, and mean scores ranged from 4.05 to 4.14 on the five-point scale. Table 1 reproduces the objective-specific results reported in the dissertation.

Table 1.**Teacher Ratings of Administrator Strategies for Enhancing Classroom Supervision**

Strategy statement	SA, n (%)	A, n (%)	N, n (%)	D, n (%)	SD, n (%)	Mean
Alternative strategies are used to manage supervision challenges	43 (43)	40 (40)	8 (8)	6 (6)	3 (3)	4.14
Teachers receive professional support despite enrolment pressure	45 (45)	39 (39)	7 (7)	6 (6)	3 (3)	4.14
Supervision remains effective with large student numbers	38 (38)	44 (44)	9 (9)	6 (6)	3 (3)	4.05
Peer observation helps maintain instructional quality	41 (41)	42 (42)	8 (8)	6 (6)	3 (3)	4.09
Departmental meetings address supervision challenges	40 (40)	43 (43)	8 (8)	6 (6)	3 (3)	4.11

Note. SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neutral; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree. The table reports 100 teacher responses. Source: Field data (2026), adapted from the dissertation.

Alternative Strategies and Professional Support

The two highest-rated items shared a mean of 4.14. Eighty-three percent of teachers agreed that administrators used alternative strategies to manage supervision challenges, and 84% agreed that professional support continued despite enrolment pressure. These ratings suggest that the schools did not rely exclusively on formal observation by the head of school. Instead, administrators diversified supervisory practice and preserved guidance, mentoring, and follow-up. Head-of-school accounts reinforced this interpretation: leaders described the need to become more innovative, support teachers facing heavy workloads, and maintain continuous professional assistance.

The pattern is consistent with organizational readiness theory: collective commitment and perceived capability enable schools to respond purposefully to environmental pressure (Weiner, 2020). It also aligns with developmental supervision, in which assistance is adapted to teachers' needs and directed toward improvement rather than surveillance (Glickman et al., 2020; Zepeda, 2025). The practical implication is that flexibility should be structured. Alternative strategies require explicit responsibilities, supervision standards, and documentation; otherwise, innovation may produce uneven coverage or make accountability difficult to trace.

Departmental Meetings as Supervisory Infrastructure

Departmental meetings achieved a mean of 4.11, with 83% agreement. Interviews characterized the meetings as forums in which teachers discussed classroom challenges and shared practical solutions. Observation corroborated this account: departmental meeting minutes were available in all four schools. This convergence among perception, leader testimony, and documentary evidence makes departmental meetings one of the most firmly supported strategies in the study.

Departmental routines distribute instructional leadership close to subject-specific practice. They can support review of schemes of work, lesson progress, assessment difficulties, learner participation, and follow-up actions without requiring the head of school to manage every interaction. This finding supports distributed leadership theory (Spillane, 2021) and resembles the department-level responses identified under resource constraints by Sembiring and Tisow (2025). Yet meetings become supervisory only when they lead to decisions, assigned actions, and later review. The universal presence of minutes is promising, but the dissertation does not measure the quality or implementation rate of those actions.

Peer Observation and Collaborative Learning

Peer observation was endorsed by 83% of respondents ($M = 4.09$). A head of school explained that teachers observed colleagues and discussed strengths and areas for improvement. This strategy expands the number of instructional interactions available in a high-enrolment school and positions teachers as sources of expertise. It is especially useful when formal supervisors have limited time, because observation and dialogue can occur within departments and alongside ordinary teaching schedules.

The result fits distributed and coaching-oriented conceptions of supervision. Peer observation can strengthen reflection, normalize professional dialogue, and reduce the evaluative anxiety associated with inspection (Spillane, 2021; Widatin et al., 2025). However, its effectiveness depends on preparation: observers need shared criteria, feedback skills, confidentiality norms, and a clear separation between developmental learning and punitive appraisal. The study establishes perceived usefulness, not causal effects on teaching or student outcomes, so future evaluation should examine observation quality and resulting changes in practice.

Sustained Supervision Despite Large Enrolments

The lowest mean was still positive: 82% agreed that supervision remained effective with large student numbers ($M = 4.05$). Observation records help explain this resilience. Lesson-observation records and departmental minutes were present in all four schools, while supervision schedules and teacher-feedback records were present in three. These institutional traces indicate that supervision was planned and documented even though overcrowding was observed in three schools and high teacher workload in all four.

The finding should be interpreted cautiously. Strong agreement indicates perceived continuity, not proof that supervision fully offset the effects of enrolment growth. The missing schedule and feedback evidence in one school suggests inconsistency in follow-through, and the small number of observed schools limits generalization. Nevertheless, triangulation supports a credible conclusion: collaborative routines, professional support, and documented scheduling helped schools preserve supervisory activity under pressure. This complements Tanzanian studies that emphasize how enrolment and overcrowding constrain conventional supervision (Kalemba, 2022; Mbawala & Hermanto, 2023; Mwalongo, 2023) by showing the adaptive mechanisms used within schools.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that public secondary schools in Ilala Municipality used a distributed and developmental set of strategies to sustain classroom supervision as enrolment increased. Teachers strongly endorsed alternative supervision arrangements, professional support, departmental meetings, and peer observation. Interviews supplied plausible mechanisms-mentoring, collaborative lesson review, scheduled observation, and practical problem-solving-while documentary observations confirmed that lesson-observation records and departmental minutes were institutionalized. The evidence therefore indicates that supervision quality can be protected when leadership is shared and feedback remains supportive. At the same time, the findings do not show that school-level adaptation eliminates structural pressure: overcrowding and heavy workloads remained visible, and one school lacked some schedule or feedback documentation.

Schools should institutionalize peer observation through agreed observation criteria, short pre- and post-observation conversations, confidentiality safeguards, and termly review of follow-up actions. Departmental meetings should include a standing instructional-supervision agenda, assign responsibilities, and track unresolved classroom problems in subsequent minutes. Heads of school and academic teachers should protect time for developmental feedback and maintain complete schedules and feedback records in every school. Municipal education authorities should train department heads and experienced teachers in coaching, observation, and constructive feedback so that distributed supervision retains consistent standards. They should also match enrolment growth with additional teachers, supervisory personnel, classrooms, teaching materials, and specialized facilities; collaborative supervision is an adaptation, not a substitute for adequate capacity. Future studies should reconcile participant and response counts explicitly, employ larger and more diverse samples, and assess whether these strategies improve observation frequency, teacher practice, and student learning over time.

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