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### Promotion of Shared Leadership in Technical Institutes in Uganda: Case of Eastern Uganda

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This article investigates the current state and practices of shared leadership within Public Technical Institutes in Eastern Uganda. Drawing on qualitative data, the study explores the perceived adoption of shared leadership, the variations in its implementation, and the role of instructor collaboration. The study employed purposive sampling for Principals and convenient sampling for instructors and Heads of Department. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, participant observations and document analysis for purposes of triangulation and credibility. Findings reveal a growing, albeit inconsistently applied, recognition of shared leadership, influenced by global educational trends and local pragmatic needs. While collaboration among instructors is evident, the transition from traditional hierarchical structures to genuinely shared leadership models faces significant challenges, including deeply ingrained cultural norms, limited instructor involvement, and implementation inconsistencies. The study underscores the critical importance of fostering a more inclusive and collaborative leadership environment to enhance instructor effectiveness and the overall quality of technical education in Uganda.

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## INTRODUCTION

The imperative to cultivate a skilled workforce capable of driving national economic transformation has placed Technical Institutes at the forefront of Uganda's educational agenda (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019; Uganda National Bureau of Statistics, 2019; UNESCO, 2020). These institutions are tasked with equipping learners with practical skills, professional knowledge, and relevant attitudes crucial for a dynamic global economy (Maruyama, 2020; Maswanku, 2022; Russon & Wedekind, 2023). The success of this mission hinges significantly on the effectiveness of instructors, who are pivotal in shaping learner competencies needed in the labour market (Maruyama, 2020; Maswanku, 2022; Russon & Wedekind, 2023). However, instructor effectiveness in Ugandan Technical Institutes has been reportedly constrained by various systemic and institutional factors, including pervasive resource limitations, challenges related to instructor morale, and, critically, the prevailing leadership structures (Eton et al., 2019; Okware & Ngaka, 2017). The historically centralized, top-down leadership system prevalent in Uganda's education sector has often curtailed the autonomy of instructors, thereby potentially impeding their capacity for meaningful participative decision-making, effective learner guidance, and proactive engagement in the strategic planning processes within their institutions (Agole et al., 2022; Maswanku, 2022; Maya, 2023; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019). This context raises an empirical question regarding the most effective strategies Technical Institutes can employ to enhance instructor effectiveness and, by extension, the quality of vocational education.

In response to these challenges and in alignment with global educational trends, the concept of shared leadership emerges as a promising paradigm.

Shared leadership, characterised by its participative and collaborative nature, offers a potential solution to address the limitations posed by traditional hierarchical models. It provides a robust platform for instructors to contribute meaningfully to the educational process through distributed decision-making, equitable role allocation, and mutual influence among team members (Bouwman et al., 2021; Tuominen, 2022; Wu & Cormican, 2021). This approach fosters a more inclusive and participatory environment, which is theorised to lead to heightened motivation, increased job satisfaction, stronger commitment, greater institutional ownership, and enhanced professional development among instructors by empowering them and fostering collective ownership of institutional goals (Abahumna, 2018; Arifin & Rasdi, 2017; Eicker et al., 2016; Hippach-Schneider & Rieder, 2021; Sarikaya & Yildirim, 2019). The shift towards shared leadership is not merely a theoretical exercise but a pragmatic response to the complexities of modern education, where diverse expertise and collective problem-solving are paramount.

Despite its recognised potential benefits and increasing global advocacy, there remains a notable paucity of empirical research specifically exploring the promotion and individual instructors' experiences of shared leadership within Technical Institutes in Uganda. Existing literature often focuses on general educational contexts or developed nations, leaving a significant gap in understanding the unique manifestations and challenges of shared leadership in the Ugandan vocational education landscape. This article aims to bridge this critical research gap by rigorously examining how shared leadership is being promoted in Public Technical Institutes in Eastern Uganda. By doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of its status quo, the factors

influencing its implementation, and its implications for instructor effectiveness within this vital sector. The findings are expected to inform policy development, guide institutional leadership practices, and enhance the overall quality and relevance of technical education in Uganda.

### Research Questions

To establish the promotion of shared leadership in Technical Institutes in Uganda, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- To what extent is shared leadership perceived as increasingly adopted within Technical Institutes in Uganda, and what are the driving forces behind this perceived adoption?
- What are the observed variations and limitations in the implementation of shared leadership practices across different levels (e.g., administrative vs. instructor-level) within Technical Institutes in Uganda?
- How is instructor collaboration manifested within Technical Institutes in Uganda, and how does it contribute to or hinder the overall promotion of shared leadership?

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a concise yet critical review of existing literature on shared leadership, specifically examining its relevance to instructor effectiveness within Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. It establishes the theoretical foundation of the study, traces the historical evolution of leadership in Ugandan TVET, explores global and regional practices of promoting shared leadership, and synthesises instructors' experiences. Crucially, this review identifies key research gaps that underscore the necessity and unique contribution of the current inquiry.

#### Theoretical Foundations of Shared Leadership

This study is fundamentally anchored in the **Shared Leadership Theory**, primarily articulated by Pearce and Conger (2003). This theory posits that leadership is not exclusively vested in a single individual, but rather emerges as a "dynamic, interactive, influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals" (Martin et al., 2018; Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. 1). It emphasises that leadership can be distributed, leveraging the collective expertise and influence of multiple team members. Key tenets include mutual influence, active collaboration, collegiality, participative decision-making, distributed roles, and a supportive organisational culture (Martin et al., 2018; Schein, 2016).

For this inquiry into Technical Institutes in Uganda, shared leadership is conceptualised through two primary constructs: **spontaneous collaboration** and **group culture** (Agole et al., 2022). Spontaneous collaboration denotes informal yet purposeful interactions among instructors, characterised by common consensus, participative decision-making, and equitable role distribution (Jamal, 2018; Martin et al., 2020). Group culture, conversely, encompasses the shared values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours that shape instructor interactions, fostering an environment conducive to effectiveness. Critical dimensions of group culture supporting shared leadership include instructor involvement, innovation, effective communication, and collegiality (Arifin, 2017; Callie, 2018; Juan & Marina, 2020).

While robust, Shared Leadership Theory has faced criticism for potential definitional ambiguity (Bergman et al., 2012) and concerns about negative impacts such as power struggles, role stress, and slower decision-making due to consensus-seeking (Chen & Zhang, 2022). Some scholars also question its universal applicability, suggesting hierarchical models may be more effective in certain contexts (Lindstrom, 2008). Despite these critiques, the theory remains highly relevant, demonstrating

significant impact on educator effectiveness across various educational sectors (Mokoena, 2017; Sarikaya & Yildrimi, 2019). This study aims to mitigate some potential negative impacts by offering a clear conceptualisation of shared leadership within the specific Ugandan context and implicitly advocating for skill development to manage distributed roles (Bouwman et al., 2021).

### **Historical and Contextual Evolution of Leadership in Ugandan TVET**

The evolution of leadership in vocational education globally reflects a gradual shift from centralised models towards more distributed forms, driven by imperatives for efficiency and effectiveness. Historically, ancient societies and early industrialisation showcased elements of shared responsibilities (Sally, 2002; Rakesh, 2019), with educational institutions later adopting collaborative and distributive leadership models from the late 19th century onwards in Western nations (Grollmann, 2015; Kocolowski, 2010; Lightbody, 2010).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, including Uganda, formal technical education emerged under colonial administrations with a top-down leadership structure, primarily focused on training skilled labourers (Kate, 2021; Okello, 2014). The post-independence era (1960s-1980s) saw a gradual shift towards pedagogical skills, but the Ugandan education sector, including TVET, largely maintained a centralised, national-level decision-making system (Maya, 2023; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2019). This historical legacy has often limited instructor autonomy and contributed to a "one-man-show" mentality among leaders and passive acceptance among staff (Zainab, 2020). While a shift towards team-based governance and participative decision-making began in African technical schools by the late 20th century (Abahumna, 2018; Njenga, 2018), challenges persist.

The Uganda Vision 2040 emphasises strengthening TVET for national economic transformation, necessitating enhanced instructor effectiveness through collaboration and innovativeness (Bouwman et al., 2021). However, persistent infrastructural deficiencies in regions like Eastern Uganda, including inadequately equipped workshops, continue to impede instructional effectiveness and morale (Maswanku, 2022; Wanda & Etoru, 2024). This historical and contextual overview underscores a critical research gap: understanding how these entrenched legacies and current realities uniquely shape the implementation and experiences of shared leadership within Ugandan TVET, and how it can effectively address enduring challenges.

### **Promotion of Shared Leadership in Technical Institutes: Global and Regional Perspectives**

Globally, the promotion of shared leadership in Technical Institutes indicates a growing recognition and implementation, particularly in Western countries. Institutions in Europe, the USA, and Canada have increasingly embraced this approach, acknowledging its benefits for creating more inclusive educational environments and enhancing teacher effectiveness (Haassler, 2020; Ward & Graham-Brown, 2018). Collaboration among team members is consistently highlighted as a cornerstone, with studies from China and international forums emphasising its role in sharing experiences and promoting shared roles (World Bank, 2018; Wu & Cormican, 2021).

Despite this growing advocacy, significant implementation variability characterises the promotion of shared leadership. Cultural norms and regional contexts play a crucial role, with many Sub-Saharan African countries, historically rooted in top-down leadership, facing challenges in transitioning to genuinely distributed models compared to their Western counterparts (Jamal, 2018; Zainab, 2020). Institutional autonomy is also key, as organisations like UNESCO (2015, 2020) advocate for greater autonomy for TVET

institutions to foster collaboration and empowerment. This global landscape underscores a significant research gap: the need for localised, in-depth research to understand the specific manifestations, challenges, and successful adaptation strategies of shared leadership within the particular socio-cultural and educational environment of Ugandan TVET.

### Instructors' Experience of Shared Leadership in Technical Institutes

Instructors' experiences with shared leadership encompass their reflections on its dynamics, successes, and challenges (Aymn, 2018; Fong et al., 2020). Positively, instructors frequently report increased collaboration, which facilitates joint lesson preparation, instruction, and assessment, leading to effective learner outcomes (Grollmann, 2015; Haassler, 2020; World Bank, 2018). Equitable distribution of responsibilities, based on expertise, has been linked to increased job satisfaction, reduced staff turnover, and enhanced creativity (Forh, 2014; Hippach-Schneider & Rieder, 2021). Instructor empowerment, manifested through participative decision-making, fosters a heightened sense of ownership, increased morale, and concerted efforts towards institutional goals (Abahumna, 2018; Sarıkaya & Yıldırım, 2019). Opportunities for professional development, including leadership training and knowledge sharing, are also reported as direct outcomes of shared leadership (Eicker et al., 2016). Ultimately, these positive experiences often translate to a noticeable positive impact on the teaching-learning process, improved staff morale, and enhanced learner performance (Arifin & Rasdi, 2017; Kreysing, 2018).

However, instructors also report significant challenges. A prevalent **culture of resistance to change** from hierarchical structures to shared leadership is noted, driven by leaders' fear of losing control and subordinates' accustomedness to being directed (UNESCO, 2020; Zainab, 2020). **Inadequate resources**, including instructional

equipment, funds, and appropriate facilities, often hamper effective implementation, leading to increased workload, burnout, and reduced participation in collaborative efforts (McInnis, 2019; Okoye & Arimonu, 2016). Furthermore, a fundamental **failure to fully understand shared leadership concepts** often results in role ambiguity, hesitation, duplication of efforts, and reduced job satisfaction (Chen & Zhang, 2022). While these experiences provide valuable insights, there remains a critical gap in understanding the specific nature and interplay of these challenges and facilitators within the unique context of Ugandan TVET, particularly from the instructors' own lived experiences.

### Enhanced Shared Leadership Practices in Instructor Effectiveness in Technical Institutes

Enhanced Shared Leadership, conceptualised as advanced and effective implementation of shared leadership, comprises spontaneous collaboration and robust group culture (Caramel, 2018). Research consistently shows that these practices, by emphasising knowledge sharing, role distribution, and mutual support, promote instructor effectiveness (Cormican, 2021; World Bank, 2018).

Within spontaneous collaboration, **common consensus** facilitates joint instruction and skill sharing, leading to quality graduates (Kreysing, 2018; Sarıkaya & Yıldırım, 2019). However, these studies are primarily from developed countries, where democratic tendencies in decision-making may differ from the Ugandan context, highlighting a contextual gap that this study addresses. **Participative decision-making** fosters joint ownership, mutual support, and confidence among instructors (Abahumna, 2018; Arifin & Rasdi, 2017). Yet, existing research often uses quantitative methods or has cultural limitations, necessitating a qualitative approach in Uganda for deeper insights. **Role distribution** based on expertise enhances instructor focus, creativity, and problem-solving, contributing to job satisfaction (Forh, 2014; Hippach-Schneider & Rieder, 2021; World Bank,



2018). The practical implementation and challenges of such distribution in Ugandan TVET, however, require specific empirical focus.

Regarding group culture, **instructor involvement** in activities beyond teaching, such as curriculum development and discipline, facilitates collective policy development and enhances effectiveness (Callie, 2018; Eicker et al., 2016). However, existing studies have broad regional or contextual limitations that necessitate a specific focus on Ugandan TVET. A culture of **instructor innovativeness** is crucial for curriculum relevance and learner performance (Hippach-Schneider & Rieder, 2021; UNESCO, 2020), but the specific drivers and barriers to innovation in Ugandan TVET remain underexplored. Similarly, **effective communication** and **collegiality** are vital for cohesion, trust, and mutual support (Anchal, 2015; Wu & Cormican, 2021). While universally recognised, their effective cultivation and impact on instructor effectiveness within the specific socio-cultural and resource-constrained realities of Ugandan TVET institutions warrant dedicated investigation. This study aims to provide precise empirical data on how these enhanced shared leadership practices influence instructor effectiveness within this under-researched context, thereby filling critical gaps in the literature.

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study adopted an **interpretivist philosophical orientation**, positing that reality is subjective and best understood through the lived experiences of individuals (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This approach is ideally suited for exploring complex social phenomena like shared leadership, emphasising unique participant perspectives. A **descriptive phenomenological research design** was employed to deeply explore how instructors, Heads of Department, and Principals understand and describe their experience of shared leadership in its natural setting, yielding rich, detailed data on lived experiences (Mckoy & Boyd, 2022).

The **study population** comprised subject instructors, HODs, and Principals from four selected Public Technical Institutes in Eastern Uganda. This region was chosen due to reported infrastructural deficiencies (Maswanku, 2022; Wanda & Etoru, 2024), which could impact leadership dynamics. A total **sample size of 30 respondents** was utilised: 4 Principals, 6 HODs, and 20 Subject Instructors. The inclusion criteria for any respondent was based on being a full-time instructor in public technical institutes with at least two years of teaching experience, and willingness to provide informed consent. Instructors short of the above criteria were deemed unsuitable for participation in the study and hence, left out. While convenient sampling for HODs and instructors may limit generalizability, this sample size is considered sufficient for qualitative research to achieve data saturation and in-depth understanding (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

**Data were primarily collected** through semi-structured interviews, lasting between forty and fifty minutes, depending on the depth of participant responses and flow of discussion for in-depth insights (Abawi, 2017). This was supplemented by **participant observations**, conducted in multiple sessions, each ranging from sixty to ninety minutes, over the course of several. Observations were basically during classroom instructions, interpersonal interactions, decision-making process in meetings, collaboration and teamwork, and institutional communication patterns. **Document analysis** (e.g., meeting minutes, responsibility schedules) were also employed to triangulate data and enhance credibility. Document analysis was guided by defining the purpose of the study, selecting documents relevant to the study purpose, establishing the authenticity of the document, reviewing the document, and comparing its findings with those of other instruments used for the study.

**Thematic analysis** was employed for data analysis (Caulfield, 2023; Villegas, 2023), following five systematic stages: (1) familiarization through

transcription and repeated reading; (2) initial coding for recurring ideas; (3) searching for themes by grouping related codes; (4) reviewing themes against the dataset for accuracy; and (5) defining and naming themes with in-depth descriptions. NVivo software facilitated the organisation, coding, and analysis of the qualitative dataset.

**Ethical considerations** were strictly adhered to, including informed consent, confidentiality through anonymisation, and the consistent use of pseudonyms for all participants and institutions to guarantee anonymity. To mitigate potential power dynamics, especially during interviews between instructors and their superiors, interviews were conducted in private settings, away from superiors' presence, and participants were assured of voluntary participation and their right to withdraw, fostering an environment where genuine perceptions could be shared without fear of reprisal.

## PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The qualitative data analysis, conducted through systematic thematic analysis, revealed three prominent and interconnected themes regarding the promotion of shared leadership in Technical Institutes in Uganda. These themes directly address the study's research questions and illuminate the evolving dynamics, challenges, and manifestations of shared leadership within these institutions. The findings are presented with rich, illustrative participant excerpts to authentically represent the lived experiences and perceptions of instructors, Heads of Department, and Principals.

### Growing Adoption of Shared Leadership: A response to global influence and pragmatic needs

The findings consistently indicated a strong and widespread perception among all respondent categories, Subject Instructors, Heads of Department, and Principals that shared leadership is increasingly being adopted and promoted in Technical Institutes across Uganda. This trend was frequently contrasted with the more autocratic and

centralised leadership styles that characterised educational institutions in the past. Participants often attributed this shift to a dual influence: external pressures from international bodies and a growing internal recognition of the practical benefits and efficiencies offered by distributed authority.

A seasoned instructor articulated this evolving landscape, highlighting the pervasive influence of global organisations:

*"Unlike in the past, today technical institutes are seemingly adopting a shared leadership approach due to continuous pressure and influence from global organisations like UNESCO and the World Bank that are advocating for the integration of shared leadership in technical institutes. This practice is a good development, making work less burdensome not only to our leaders but also among us instructors due to role sharing ", (Instructor 12, Interview, April 14, 2025)*

This statement underscores the significant role of international advocacy in pushing for a departure from traditional models towards more inclusive governance. This excerpt is crucial as it suggests that the adoption of shared leadership is perceived not merely as a theoretical concept or an imposed policy but as a practical approach that directly alleviates workload and fosters professional growth through distributed responsibilities. This aligns with the theoretical construct of **spontaneous collaboration** (Caulfield, 2023), where **role distribution** contributes to a more efficient and less burdensome work environment, thereby enhancing instructor effectiveness. The perceived reduction in burden and increased opportunities for sharing responsibilities demonstrate a move towards mutual influence and collective effort, which are hallmarks of effective shared leadership. Principals corroborated this growing trend, acknowledging the shift in institutional governance:

*"Today the trend has changed in that TVET guidelines in general call upon us leaders to bring on board various categories of persons in running school affairs." (Principal 1, Interview, April 16, 2025)*

Another Principal further elaborated on the historical shift from a centralised model:

*"Before I rose to the level of Principal, leadership in technical institutes was a one-man show, whereby the Principals gave the directives and the rest of the staff had to follow suit... Today, the trend is changing in that we are directed to adopt a leadership approach whereby every stakeholder, including students, has something to contribute to the day-to-day operations of the institute." (Principal 3, Interview, April 16, 2025)*

These compelling excerpts collectively illustrate a widespread acknowledgement of shared leadership's growing presence in Ugandan Technical Institutes. This adoption is driven by a confluence of external mandates, an internal recognition of its practical benefits (such as reduced administrative burden and enhanced efficiency), and a philosophical shift towards more inclusive governance that values the input of all stakeholders, including students. This perceived movement towards shared leadership also implicitly contributes to the development of a more positive **group culture** (Caulfield, 2023) by fostering a sense of collective responsibility and **instructor involvement**, moving away from a passive, directive-following environment. The increasing emphasis on involving various stakeholders reflects a nascent form of **participative decision-making**, even if not yet fully formalised, indicating a departure from purely autocratic styles.

### **Implementation Variability in Shared Leadership: The gap between rhetoric and reality**

Despite the widespread perception of growing adoption, a significant and pervasive theme that

emerged from the data was the considerable variability and perceived limitations in the actual implementation of shared leadership. Participants across all levels expressed that shared leadership was not consistently applied or fully inclusive, often remaining concentrated at higher administrative echelons, thereby creating a discernible gap between policy rhetoric and on-the-ground reality. This directly addresses the second research question, highlighting the inconsistencies in practice.

An instructor vividly highlighted this disparity, pointing to a form of selective delegation that falls short of genuine shared leadership:

*"Among our bosses, there is a growing promotion of shared leadership to some extent, though not fully. I have occasionally observed my boss delegating his Deputies and sometimes the Heads of departments to handle some administrative roles. Unfortunately, Principals hardly involve instructors in various administrative roles or even day-to-day activities of the institutes. We have also opted to remain as observers while doing our bare minimum of instructions." (Instructor 9, Interview, April 15, 2025)*

This quotation reveals a critical perception: while delegation occurs, it often stops short of genuinely involving frontline instructors in broader institutional governance. This limits the practical manifestation of **participative decision-making** and comprehensive **role distribution** (Chen et al., 2022) at the instructor level, hindering their ability to contribute to **common consensus** beyond their immediate teaching tasks. The instructors' decision to "remain as observers" indicates a lack of genuine **instructor involvement** and a passive acceptance of their limited roles within the existing **group culture**. Another instructor expressed profound scepticism about the practical reality of shared leadership, suggesting it was more symbolic than substantive:



*"Growth of shared leadership in our Ugandan Technical Institutes is simply on paper and calls by international organisations like UNESCO, but not in practice." (Instructor 8, Interview, April 15, 2025)*

This sentiment underscores a significant disconnect between external advocacy and internal operationalisation, indicating a failure to fully integrate shared leadership into the **group culture** (Chen et al., 2022) through genuine **instructor involvement** and **effective communication**. Furthermore, some instructors noted that even when delegation occurred, it was often reactive and driven by necessity rather than a proactive commitment to shared leadership principles:

*"We sometimes observe our Principal implementing role sharing only at higher levels with his Deputies while leaving out the lower subordinates. Even then, he only delegates administrative roles when moving out of the school or when completely caught up with other demanding roles. Even where there is so-called delegation or role sharing, it is implemented with reservation and a lot of suspicion." (Instructor 7, Interview, April 15, 2025)*

This reactive delegation, coupled with "reservation and a lot of suspicion," directly impedes the development of a trusting and open **group culture** (Eicker et al, 2016), particularly in terms of **effective communication** and genuine **collegiality**. It also suggests a lack of systematic **role distribution** that is proactive and based on a shared vision. Heads of Department also acknowledged this variability, often linking it to deeply ingrained institutional culture and power dynamics:

*"In high power institutes like my own here, the Principals and other administrators are seen as sole decision makers, unlike in low power institutes, which provide room for participative decision making and collaboration." (HOD 4, Interview, April 9, 2025)*

This indicates that the prevailing cultural context of an institute significantly influences the extent to which shared leadership is genuinely embraced and enacted. Principals, too, recognised this challenge, often observing a deeply embedded expectation of hierarchical control among subordinates, a legacy of Uganda's colonial administrative history (Maya, 2023):

*"I have realised in my new place here that subordinates have a feeling that the boss is always right, knows it all and does it all. This is a general feeling in almost all educational institutions around here. They seem to be used to being commanded and to performing the bare minimum expected of them." (Principal 4, Interview, April 18, 2025).*

This "one-man-show" mentality, rooted in historical top-down leadership structures, creates a systemic inertia against the full adoption of shared leadership. It manifests as a reluctance from some administrators to genuinely devolve power and a corresponding passivity from some instructors who are accustomed to being commanded rather than actively participating in leadership roles (Zainab, 2020). This deeply ingrained cultural norm, a vestige of colonial administrative practices (Maya, 2023), contributes significantly to the resistance to change and the perceived undermining of traditional authority when shared leadership is introduced (Zainab, 2020). This theme profoundly underscores that while the concept of shared leadership is gaining traction, its full and consistent implementation is severely hampered by deeply entrenched hierarchical norms, a pervasive lack of comprehensive instructor involvement in broader decision-making, and varying institutional cultures that resist genuine power distribution. This creates a significant challenge for fostering a truly collaborative and empowering environment that embraces **spontaneous collaboration** and a robust **group culture**.

**Instructor Collaboration: A foundational yet challenged contribution to Shared Leadership**

The study identified instructor collaboration as a significant and emerging aspect of shared leadership promotion within Technical Institutes, directly addressing the third research question. Participants noted that collaboration, though sometimes informal or primarily departmental, contributed substantively to a more distributed approach to responsibilities and collective problem-solving. This theme highlights both the inherent capacity for collaboration among instructors and the persistent "hiccups" that impede its full realisation.

An instructor highlighted the practical manifestation of collaboration, particularly in critical areas of institutional function:

*"Collaboration among instructors is specifically evident in managing learner discipline and in departmental affairs such as drawing curriculum and joint instruction in order to facilitate the realisation of the institute's mission." (Instructor 3, Interview, April 15, 2025)*

This illustrates how instructors engage in **spontaneous collaboration** (Eicker et al., 2016) by working together on core pedagogical and administrative tasks. This involves elements of **common consensus** in decision-making and **role distribution** within the departmental context, demonstrating a practical application of shared responsibilities. Another instructor emphasised the enhanced sense of ownership derived from collaborative disciplinary efforts, linking it directly to the benefits of **participative decision-making** and **instructor involvement** (Eton et al., 2019):

*"When instructors plan and work together in disciplinary decision making, there is a likelihood of a greater sense of ownership and consistency in enforcing behavioural change expectations rather than when left to the hierarchy. We feel respected and energised when the administration works together with us in handling serious cases of indiscipline among*

*students." (Instructor 8, Interview, April 15, 2025)*

This quote powerfully demonstrates how collaboration fosters a sense of respect and empowerment, contributing to a more positive **group culture** characterised by increased **instructor involvement** and **collegiality**. Heads of Department further elaborated on the prevalence of collaboration, particularly at the departmental level, often driven by a desire for collective achievement and internal incentives:

*"Collaboration seems higher at departmental levels because we work together to emerge as the best department of the year, because the school administration always rewards the best department." (HOD 2, Interview, April 15, 2025)*

This suggests that even within existing structures, pragmatic incentives can foster collaborative practices, even if they are not explicitly framed as overarching shared leadership initiatives. This form of collaboration, while beneficial, can sometimes lead to interdepartmental competition, which can be a "hiccup" to broader institutional cohesion. Principals also acknowledged the tangible value of instructor collaboration, recognising its crucial role in fostering trust and accountability within the institution:

*"We have realised that instructor collaboration in planning meetings, learner discipline management, and budgeting decisions creates a culture of trust and accountability among instructors." (Principal 3, Interview, April 16, 2025)*

This underscores how collaboration, when effectively implemented, can build a strong foundation for a positive **group culture** characterised by **collegiality** and **effective communication** (Eton et al., 2019), promoting a sense of shared responsibility and mutual support. However, participants also candidly acknowledged

"hiccups" in collaboration, which impede its full potential. These included:

*"Interdepartmental competitions and the desire to emerge as the best performing department" (HOD 6, Interview, April 16, 2025), "Personality traits such as selfishness, individualism, and being reserved" (HOD 8, Interview, April 16, 2025)*

These challenges indicate that while collaboration is undeniably present and contributes significantly to shared leadership, it is not without its internal friction points. These "hiccups" can hinder the seamless flow of **spontaneous collaboration** and the full development of a cohesive **group culture**, particularly impacting **collegiality** and **effective communication**, necessitating continuous effort to foster a more universally collaborative and less competitive environment. The presence of these challenges highlights the need for deliberate interventions to nurture a culture where individualistic tendencies are balanced with collective goals, ensuring that collaboration genuinely contributes to the overall promotion of shared leadership.

## DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The findings of this study offer a nuanced and critical perspective on the promotion of shared leadership within Technical Institutes in Uganda, revealing a complex interplay between global influences, deeply ingrained institutional realities, and the individual perceptions and agency of educators. This discussion will elaborate on these findings, aligning them with the study's guiding research questions.

### Extent of perceived adoption and driving forces of Shared Leadership

The study reveals a widespread acknowledgement of a "growing adoption" of shared leadership within Technical Institutes in Uganda. Participant accounts consistently indicated a perceived shift towards more collaborative and inclusive leadership models.

This perceived adoption aligns with contemporary educational reforms in Uganda, particularly the shift to competency-based curricula (Wambi et al., 2024), which inherently demand more collaborative and learner-centred pedagogical approaches.

Driving forces behind this perceived adoption include the recognition of tangible benefits directly linked to shared leadership, such as **reduced workload** for individuals and **enhanced professional development** opportunities for educators. These pragmatic advantages echo those frequently cited in the broader literature on distributed leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Furthermore, the pervasive influence of international organisations like UNESCO and the World Bank in advocating for these models significantly underscores the global interconnectedness of educational reform. This international advocacy, trickling down into national policies and institutional practices, acts as a strong external driver. The growing adoption, even if nascent, signifies a positive movement towards fostering elements of spontaneous collaboration and a more inclusive group culture within Ugandan TVET, as conceptualised by Fong-Yi (2020), by encouraging mutual influence and shared responsibilities. Findings suggest an increasing recognition of the value of participative decision-making and role distribution, indicating a gradual but significant shift from purely autocratic leadership models.

### Observed variations and limitations in the implementation of Shared Leadership practices

Despite the perceived adoption, the study highlights a critical and persistent challenge: "implementation variability." A consistent observation was that shared leadership primarily operates at higher administrative levels, with **limited genuine involvement of frontline instructors**. This reveals a significant disconnect between the espoused theory of shared leadership and its enacted practice within these institutions. This mirrors broader systemic issues observed in the Ugandan education

system, where curriculum reforms have led to teachers experiencing "cultural shock" and challenged "authority and autonomy," often exacerbated by insufficient training and resources (Wambi et al., 2024).

A significant limitation stems from the reluctance of some administrators to fully embrace shared leadership. This reluctance is often driven by a potential "fear for loss of control" or a deeply ingrained "one-man-show" mentality. This "one-man-show" mentality is deeply rooted in Uganda's colonial history, where administrative structures fostered centralised control, leading to a culture where subordinates were accustomed to being directed rather than actively participating in decision-making (Maya, 2023). This historical legacy contributes to systemic inertia against the full adoption of shared leadership, manifesting as resistance from administrators to genuinely devolve power and a corresponding passivity from some instructors (Zainab, 2020). This resonates with criticisms of shared leadership theory regarding potential power struggles and resistance from traditional leaders (Chen & Zhang, 2022; Lindstrom, 2008). The powerful sentiment that shared leadership exists "simply on papers and calls... but not in practice" underscores the need for more than just policy directives; it requires concerted efforts to transform deeply embedded institutional cultures and genuinely empower all stakeholders. This variability directly impedes the full manifestation of participative decision-making and instructor involvement, which are core tenets of spontaneous collaboration and group culture, respectively (Fong-Yi, 2020). Furthermore, the pervasive infrastructural deficiencies in Eastern Uganda (Maswanku, 2022; Wanda & Etoru, 2024) may exacerbate this variability by constraining practical opportunities for shared leadership activities and limiting time for collaborative endeavours, thereby hindering the development of a robust group culture and spontaneous collaboration.

### **Manifestation of instructor collaboration and its contribution to Shared Leadership**

Despite the significant implementation challenges, the study found that "instructor collaboration" emerges as a foundational and resilient element contributing to shared leadership within Technical Institutes in Uganda. Even if sometimes informal or driven by departmental competition, this collaboration demonstrates that instructors are actively engaging in distributed responsibilities. This is particularly evident in crucial areas such as **curriculum implementation, learner discipline management, and joint instruction**. This aligns robustly with the social constructivist view that learning and professional development occur most effectively through social interaction and mutual assistance (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Wambi et al., 2024).

This informal collaboration directly reflects elements of spontaneous collaboration (Haassler, 2020), particularly in terms of achieving common consensus on practical issues and engaging in role distribution within their immediate departmental contexts. However, the study also observed "hiccups" in collaboration, such as interdepartmental competition and individualistic tendencies, which hinder its full potential. These challenges highlight the need for targeted interventions, perhaps through structured professional development focusing on team-building and conflict resolution, to further strengthen collective efforts and foster a more cohesive collegiality (Haassler, 2020). These challenges also underscore the need for improved effective communication to bridge departmental silos and foster a more unified group culture. The ability of instructors to improvise and collaborate, even in resource-constrained environments, suggests an inherent resilience and capacity that shared leadership can effectively harness and formalise. This informal collaboration, therefore, serves as a crucial, albeit sometimes fragile, precursor to a fully realised shared leadership



model, embodying elements of spontaneous collaboration and contributing to a nascent group culture (Jamal, 2018).

In essence, the promotion of shared leadership in Technical Institutes in Uganda is situated within a complex and dynamic transitional phase. While there is a clear and growing movement towards more inclusive leadership models, influenced by global best practices and national development aspirations, the journey is marked by significant hurdles in achieving consistent implementation and profound cultural transformation. Overcoming these challenges requires a deliberate and sustained effort to bridge the gap between policy aspirations and practical realities, ensuring that all instructors are genuinely empowered, adequately resourced, and actively supported to contribute to the collective leadership and pedagogical excellence of their institutions. The findings underscore that simply advocating for shared leadership is insufficient; a deeper understanding of contextual factors, cultural norms, and the specific mechanisms of collaboration is essential for its successful integration and impact on instructor effectiveness in the Ugandan TVET sector.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive qualitative account of the promotion of shared leadership within Public Technical Institutes in Eastern Uganda. It concludes that while there is a growing awareness and perceived adoption of shared leadership models, significantly influenced by global trends and the pragmatic needs of vocational education, their implementation remains highly variable and often limited to higher administrative echelons. A significant and encouraging finding is the pervasive presence of active, albeit sometimes informal, instructor collaboration, which serves as a vital, organic component of distributed leadership within these institutions. However, the transition from deeply entrenched hierarchical structures to genuinely shared leadership faces persistent and formidable challenges. Cultural barriers, such as

resistance to change, coupled with structural barriers, especially hierarchical leadership and limited understanding of the concept of shared leadership, hindered the full promotion of shared leadership. Relatedly, a perceived lack of full instructor involvement in broader institutional decision-making, interdepartmental competitions and individualistic tendencies, and internal friction are operational barriers to the promotion of shared leadership.

The findings underscore the critical need for a deliberate, strategic, and contextually sensitive approach to institutionalising shared leadership in Ugandan Technical Institutes.

## Recommendations

To foster a more robust and effective promotion of shared leadership, the following recommendations are put forth:

### *Systemic Empowerment and Targeted Training*

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and relevant bodies like the Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Board (UBTEB) should develop and implement comprehensive policies and provide targeted professional development programs. These initiatives must explicitly empower instructors at all levels to engage meaningfully in shared leadership, addressing both the theoretical underpinnings and the practical skills required for effective collaboration, participative decision-making, and distributed responsibilities. Training should also equip administrators with strategies to mitigate resistance to change and foster a more inclusive leadership style.

### *Cultural Transformation Initiatives*

Institute leadership (Principals and Heads of Department) must actively champion and model shared leadership behaviours. This involves fostering a transparent and trusting culture through open communication channels, regular forums for collective input, and visible commitment to shared governance. Initiatives aimed at breaking down

deeply ingrained hierarchical barriers and genuinely encouraging bottom-up contributions from all staff should be prioritised, recognising that cultural change is a long-term process.

### ***Facilitating Structured Collaboration and Resource Allocation***

Beyond informal interactions, Technical Institutes should establish formal mechanisms and allocate dedicated time and financial resources to facilitate structured inter-departmental and cross-functional collaboration among instructors. This could include regular joint planning sessions, peer mentorship programs, collaborative curriculum development workshops, and problem-solving forums. Adequate resources, including up-to-date instructional materials, technology, and appropriate staffing levels, are crucial to support these collaborative endeavours and enhance instructors' capacity.

### ***Promoting Clear Role Definition and Accountability***

To mitigate issues of role ambiguity and potential power struggles, clear guidelines and frameworks such as task-based and expertise-based role distribution within a shared leadership model should be developed. This includes defining responsibilities, decision-making authority, and accountability mechanisms for all involved, ensuring that shared leadership translates into effective and efficient operations.

### **Further Research**

Further research is highly recommended to quantitatively assess the long-term impact of specific shared leadership interventions on instructor effectiveness, learner outcomes, and institutional performance in Ugandan Technical Institutes. Longitudinal studies could also provide deeper insights into the sustainability and evolution of shared leadership practices within this unique educational context, identifying best practices and adaptable models. Comparative and mixed studies across different regions or types of TVET institutions in Uganda could further enrich the

understanding of contextual factors influencing shared leadership. Such rigorous research would be instrumental in informing evidence-based policy and practice, thereby contributing significantly to the continuous improvement and relevance of technical education in Uganda.

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