Management Approach to Leadership and Teachers Commitment in Secondary Schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division, South West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract: The effectiveness of an educational system heavily relies on teachers' commitment. In Cameroon, despite government efforts, concerns about teacher engagement persist. This study, based on Meyer and Allen's Organisational Commitment Model, examined how leadership approaches influence teacher commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division. The research focused on democratic, transformational, and transactional leadership styles. Using a survey design with concurrent triangulation, data were collected from 248 teachers and 354 students across six government schools. Teachers completed the "Teacher Insights on Management Approach to Leadership Questionnaire" (TIMAL-Q), while students used the "Student Perception of Educator Commitment Questionnaire" (SPEC-Q). Semi-structured interviews with principals and vice principals supplemented the data. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequency counts, proportions, and Pearson Correlation, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. Findings revealed strong positive correlations between democratic ($r=.980$, $p=.028$) and transformational ($r=.980$, $p=.028$) leadership styles and teacher commitment, suggesting these approaches significantly enhance engagement. The transactional style also showed a positive correlation ($r=.800$, $p=.014$), though to a lesser extent. Qualitative data highlighted practices aligning with these leadership styles. The study underscores the importance of democratic and transformational leadership in fostering teacher commitment, especially in challenging environments. Recommendations include integrating these approaches to improve teacher engagement in quantitative and affective domains, leveraging transactional leadership for short-term goals, and providing targeted leadership training for school managers. This comprehensive strategy aims to boost teacher commitment and performance despite infrastructural constraints.

Keywords: *Democratic leadership, management approach to leadership, teacher commitment, transformational leadership, transactional leadership.*

Introduction

The success of an educational system in any society largely depends on a pool of teachers who possess a deep sense of commitment towards their work. A committed teacher is one who is highly motivated, strongly engaged with his professional duties, and align his actions with school's mission and values. Teacher commitment has been shown to affect the implementation of innovative teaching practices and the capacity for collaborative professional development, both of which are critical for institutional advancement (Altun, 2017). Schools characterised by high levels of teacher commitment exhibit stronger performance metrics, including higher student achievement scores and improved teacher retention rates. In Cameroon, teachers are generally regarded as the principal guarantors of quality education, as captured in Article 37 of Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998 to lay down guidelines for education in Cameroon (Republic of Cameroon, 1998).

In secondary schools where educators play a pivotal role in shaping students' lives, the leadership approach adopted by educational managers can significantly impact teachers' engagement and commitment to their roles. Prior research highlights that leadership effectiveness is often context-dependent, and strategies that bring about desired outcomes in one region may need adaptation to address the local conditions of another (Leithwood et al., 2019). In the context of

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schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division, the effectiveness of management approaches to leadership in enhancing staff commitment has yet to be empirically established.

This study contributes to the broader discourse on educational leadership and teacher commitment by providing a comprehensive analysis of how management approaches to leadership influence teachers' commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division. Leadership models can yield varying outcomes depending on the particular circumstance or environment, underscoring the importance of considering diverse leadership approaches. This study focused on three key leadership approaches—democratic, transformational, and transactional—chosen for their established relevance and effectiveness in educational settings, particularly those constrained by resources. Specifically, the democratic approach to leadership stimulates interest and a sense of belonging and collaboration among organisational members (Woods, 2019); transformational approach addresses intrinsic motivators in resource-constrained and uncertain environments (Bass & Riggio, 2006); and transactional leadership ensures accountability while achieving immediate objectives (Singh & Kumar, 2023). The rationale for this focus was to identify best practices within these approaches that enhance teachers' commitment and consequently contribute to improved educational outcomes. The study offers practical recommendations for educational managers and policymakers, addressing both the universal principles of effective leadership and the specific needs of the local educational context.

Background

The evolution of management approach to educational leadership in Cameroon illustrates a shift from colonial control, characterised primarily by a transactional approach focused on compliance and administrative efficiency, to more decentralised and participatory practices. This transition has embraced democratic and transformational approaches, reflecting a growing recognition of the need for leadership that inspires and motivates teachers, encourages professional growth, and supports a collaborative school culture. Similarly, teacher commitment has evolved from a focus on adherence to colonial directives and external expectations to a greater sense of ownership, professionalism, and active involvement in developing local educational strategies and reforms.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Cameroon was a German colony, and after the First World War, it became a French and British mandate. The education system established during the colonial period was primarily focus on providing individuals with basic skills and vocational training that prepared them for administrative and clerical roles within the colonial administration, with purpose to satisfy the economic ambitions of the colonialists. The educational curriculum emphasised colonial languages and subjects, often neglecting local languages and cultural contexts. Management approach to educational leadership at this time was basically top-down, with colonial administrators and expatriate teachers holding significant control over educational policies and practices, and enforcing compliance through the use of rewards and punishments. The focus was on producing a small educated elite to assist in administering the colony rather than on broad-based educational development (Fonkeng, 2010).

Following the complete decolonisation of Cameroon in 1961, the newly established government initially struggled to overhaul the colonial education system to render it more inclusive and relevant to the needs of the new sovereign nation (Tambo, 2003). Attempts were made to integrate local languages and cultural contexts into the education system, but the remnants of colonial management approaches persisted, including centralised control and a lack of significant local input in educational management (Tosam Ful, 1988). To tailor educational objectives and enhance the achievement of national development goals, the government introduced a number of reforms. Among these, the most significant in the curricular domain was the creation of the Rural Institute for Applied Pedagogy (Institut de Pédagogie Appliquée à Vocation Rurale – IPAR) in Yaoundé in 1969 and in Buea in 1974. IPAR was given the overarching mandate to develop new primary school syllabi to improve the integration and adaptation of school leavers into their communities. The institute was also tasked with preparing and producing instructional materials for both teacher training and primary schools (Ndille, 2015).

While these reforms were often promising, their implementation was frequently obstructed by a number of obstacles, such as limited resources, continuous dependence on European assistance and programmes, cultural inertias and resistance from entrenched bureaucratic structures (Fonkeng, 2010). These challenges did not spare the teaching profession; teachers suffered from low salaries, inadequate teaching materials, poor working conditions and a lack of professional development opportunities, leading to a sense of dissatisfaction among teachers and significantly affecting their commitment to work. The global economic recession that started in the early 1980s brought about a drop in overall income, prompting the government to opt for structural adjustment programmes with assistance from the international financial community such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Thenceforth, the State acted as regulator while the strategic role of growth was conferred on the private sector (Republic of Cameroon, 2009). This situation brought about budget cuts in public services, including education, exacerbating the challenges faced by teachers and leading to strikes and protests as teachers demanded better working conditions and remuneration.

The many problems that characterised the education system—such as excessive centralisation in administrative, pedagogical, and financial management of schools; poor-quality teaching and irrelevant curriculum content relative to the geo-socio-historical context; the lack of a reliable status for teachers and the then Ministry of National Education personnel, which greatly affected their motivation and commitment; an overabundance of unqualified teachers; and

poor management of educational resources—prompted the government to organise a National Education Forum in May 1995 in Yaounde. The forum was also prompted by the need to align with global educational trends of the 1990s, such as the push for more democratic governance and participatory management in education, the adoption of the "Education for All" (EFA) framework, and a focus on quality education and equitable access. The 1995 forum convened education stakeholders and partners from various sectors to discuss educational issues in Cameroon and chart a way forward. The outcome of the forum was a set of significant recommendations that have inspired new policy options within the Cameroonian education system, including decentralisation, accountability, and community involvement in school management. These directions are outlined in Law No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998, which established guidelines for education in Cameroon (Republic of Cameroon, 1998).

The 1998 education law, which serves as the principal legislative document governing education in Cameroon outlines the structure and goals of the educational system, with a strong emphasis on decentralising educational management. Part IV of the law focuses on the concept of an educational community, which includes the authorities, administrative and support staff, teachers, parents, pupils, students, members of socio-professional circles, and regional and local authorities. All these stakeholders contribute to the functioning, development, and prestige of the school (Section 32). The law mandates them to be involved in the consultative and management bodies established at the educational level, as well as at each level of the decentralised territorial authorities, or within the national educational framework (Section 33). It designates teachers as the principal guarantors of educational quality. Consequently, teachers are required to teach, educate, provide educational guidance, promote scientific inquiry, conduct assessments, uphold moral integrity and respect for the rights and dignity of students. They must also adhere to all legal instruments relevant to their profession, including the internal rules and regulations of the schools where they teach (Section 39).

In recent decades, Cameroon has made several efforts to address issues affecting educational management and teacher commitment. The Education and Training Sector Strategy 2013-2020 (Republic of Cameroon, 2013) was one of the key initiatives aimed at improving the quality of education through increased investment in educational resources. Of the key objectives, the plan sought to create a motivated and committed pool of teachers through various measures, some of which are also echoed in the National Development Strategy 2020-2030 (Republic of Cameroon, 2020). These measures include:

- Providing professional development to enhance teachers' qualifications;

- Improving working conditions;

- Better remuneration for teachers, including formalising the contracts of those previously funded by Parents/Teachers Associations (PTAs), as began in 2006;

- Enhancing the status of teachers in accordance with the provisions of the special rules and regulations of civil servants of the corps of national education (Republic of Cameroon, 2000), through academic awards, compliance with career profiles, increased allowances and benefits, the effectiveness of academic exemptions, and the introduction of health insurance;

- Offering incentives to retain teachers in underprivileged and remote areas;

- Constructing residential quarters for teachers in challenging zones;

- Upgrading schools; and

- Implementing policies to support educational development in both urban and rural areas, among others.

Regarding the management of educational institutions, the plan emphasised the importance of results-oriented practices and stipulated that transparency and efficiency in managing educational resources should become core principles. It called for active involvement from various stakeholders, including PTAs, village development committees, elite associations, teachers' unions, local and regional authorities, businesses, and NGOs, to ensure participatory school management (Republic of Cameroon, 2013).

Today, the decentralisation of educational administration represents a significant advancement, facilitating more localised management of schools and enabling tailored responses to regional educational needs (Mekolle, 2024). Concurrently, managers of educational institutions are increasingly adopting democratic, transformational, and distributed approaches to leadership, aligning with global educational reforms that advocate for more participatory and supportive practices. These shifts aim to address systemic issues and enhance the overall effectiveness of the education system. However, achieving a higher level of commitment among Cameroonian teachers remains a challenge. Teachers continue to exhibit irregular attendance and occasionally abandon their posts, underscoring the need for ongoing exploration of solutions to address this issue.

Statement of the Problem

As individuals who play a crucial role in shaping the future of societies, teachers must embody a deep commitment to their work, reflecting positive values such as dedication, empathy, and resilience. This commitment goes beyond merely

fulfilling job responsibilities; it involves a genuine investment in students' growth and success, a willingness to adapt and innovate, and an unwavering belief in the potential of each learner. Their passion and perseverance, along with their efforts to nurture a supportive and inspiring classroom environment not only enhance the educational experience but also model the importance of dedication and integrity for their students. In this light, Cameroonian educational legislation describes teachers as the principal guarantors of the quality of education (Republic of Cameroon, 1998). It is for this reason that the government has implemented the foregoing measures to improve the working conditions and well-being of teachers.

However, despite policy efforts and resources allocated to bolster the educational system nationwide, there are persistent concerns regarding the level of teachers' commitment and engagement. This is the case with schools in the Kupe-Muanenguba Division where there remains a notable gap in teachers' commitment and engagement. Observations made in this division indicates that many educators are struggling with issues such as inadequate facilities, low morale, and a lack of community support. These challenges often lead to high levels of absenteeism, reduced instructional time, and a general disengagement from the educational process. As a result, the anticipated improvements in teaching quality and student outcomes have been slow to materialise, particularly in government-owned secondary schools, which continue to demonstrate unsatisfactory performances, particularly in the General Certificate of Education Examinations.

In a context challenged by geographic isolation, limited access to resources, and socio-economic barriers, several in-school factors have the potential to influence the level of teachers' commitment. These factors include the management approach to leadership, the availability and condition of educational resources, and the overall working environment within schools. To effectively address the persistent issues affecting teachers' commitment and engagement in this division, a thorough investigation of these factors is essential. Effective management approach to leadership can play a crucial role in mitigating problems such as inadequate facilities, low morale, and lack of community support by cultivating a more organised and responsive administrative framework. A look at how different management approaches to leadership impact teacher commitment was hoped would provide valuable insights for designing targeted policy interventions.

Aim

To determine the extent to which management approach to leadership enhance teacher commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division in the South West Region of Cameroon.

Study Objectives

This study was guided by three specific research objectives as follows:

1. Investigate the extent to which management's use of democratic approach to leadership enhance teacher commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division.

2. Assess the degree to which management's use of transformational approach to leadership influence teacher commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division.

3. Measure the scale at which management's use of transactional approach to leadership impact teacher commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division.

Hypotheses

The study was substantiated by three research hypotheses.

1. There is no significant association between management's use of democratic approach to leadership and the level of teacher commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division.

2. Management's adoption of transformational approach to leadership does not have a significant effect on teacher commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division.

3. There is no significant impact of management's transactional leadership approach on teacher commitment within secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division.

Rationale

Cameroon has a long-term development vision of becoming an emerging, democratic, and united country in diversity by the year 2035. A medium-term objective of this vision is to eradicate poverty, which constitutes a significant barrier to sustainable economic growth and social stability (Republic of Cameroon, 2009). Achieving this vision and objective requires an education system characterised by inclusivity, quality, and relevance. Secondary education, in particular, has been shown to contribute significantly to economic growth and poverty reduction, improvements in health and living conditions, achievement of national and international development agendas, reduction of income inequalities,

realisation of democracy and peaceful societies, and the enhancement of primary and tertiary education (Lewin, 2008; Lewin & Caillods, 2001; Verspoor, 2008; World Bank, 2005).

Goldin (1999), for instance demonstrates the economic importance of the expansion of secondary schools in the United States between 1910 and 1940—a transformation that gave the United States a half-century lead over European countries that were still lagging behind in terms of secondary education development. Also, analysis of a panel of about 100 countries observed between 1960 and 1995 showed that economic growth is positively related to the starting level of average years of adult male school attainment at secondary and higher levels, but is insignificantly related to years of primary attainment (Barro, 1999).

For secondary education to effectively contribute to the realisation of national development goals, it is essential that personnel teaching at this level adhere to high standards of pedagogy and professional expectations. However, recent trends indicate a concerning pattern among Cameroonian secondary education teachers, characterised by high levels of demotivation and laxity. Irregularity in attendance, absenteeism, incomplete coverage of syllabus, and abandonment of duty is the order of the day. Cameroon Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC) Communiqué No. 104/23 of 23 October 2023, which summoned a total of 1,571 government teachers reported to have abandoned their posts and left the country highlights this situation. Often, these teachers, despite not contributing to training and human capital development, remain on the government payroll, leading to wastage of vital educational resources. The long-term effect is the erosion of educational quality and the accumulation of graduates who are ill-prepared to contribute meaningfully to the betterment of their lives and the society in which they live.

In recent years, the Cameroonian government has introduced several measures aimed at checking irregularities among teachers and increasing their commitment to their roles. These measures include intensifying workplace censuses, suspending salaries for irregular attendance, terminating contracts for prolonged absence, offering financial incentives, and making performance-based appointments and promotions. This study supports government's efforts to boost teacher commitment. In Kupe-Muanenguba Division where educational resources and infrastructure are particularly limited, understanding and optimising management approaches to leadership could lead to more efficient use of existing resources, improved teacher commitment, and better student outcomes. These enhancements can contribute to a more skilled and productive workforce, thereby stimulating economic growth and development.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

The conceptual review section of this study explored the key concepts related to management approach to leadership and its impact on teacher commitment within secondary schools. It delved into various leadership models, such as democratic, transformational, transactional and distributed leadership, examining how these approaches influence teacher engagement, motivation, overall commitment and school dynamics. This foundational analysis set the stage for evaluating the relevance and effectiveness of these leadership approaches in enhancing teacher commitment in the area studied.

Management Approach to Leadership in Focus

As schools evolve to meet the changing needs of society, and as contextual realities vary from one situation to another, so too must the approach to educational management adapt and innovate. Educational management can be viewed as the strategic and innovative process of leading and overseeing educational institutions to effectively meet the evolving needs and expectations of stakeholders while adapting to technological imperatives and increasing competition. Management approach to leadership involves the techniques and styles that school leaders employ in shaping school environments and influencing teaching staff and other members of the school community towards the achievement of specific goals and objectives. These approaches include democratic, transformational, transactional, authoritarian and distributed leadership styles, each contributing uniquely to overall educational effectiveness.

Democratic or participative leadership in education focuses on strengthening collaboration, shared decision-making, and collective input from educators and stakeholders. This approach creates a more inclusive and engaging environment by recognising the valuable contributions of teachers, students, and parents. It boosts teacher motivation and job satisfaction by instilling a sense of ownership and accountability for school initiatives (Day et al., 2011). For instance, when school leaders implement democratic practices, they often establish structures like school management boards, class councils, and disciplinary councils, which incorporate a range of perspectives and lead to more innovative and effective educational strategies. Democratic leadership style supports modern educational values by promoting equity and a student-centered approach, empowering all participants to be involved in the educational process. Nonetheless, it is crucial to balance democratic methods with well-defined administrative structures to ensure that decisions are both efficient and effective.

Transformational leadership is a widely recognised approach in education that emphasises inspiring and motivating staff and students to achieve beyond their usual capacities. Leaders who adopt this style focus on creating a compelling vision, an environment characterised by of trust, collaboration, and testing of new idea and innovations.

Transformational leaders engage in practices such as individualised consideration—where they attend to the needs and development of each member of their team, and intellectual stimulation—where they challenge existing assumptions and encourage creative problem-solving. Transformational leadership, it has been shown is positively correlated with increased teacher satisfaction and student achievement, as it promotes a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement (Day, 2004).

In education, transactional leadership focuses on routine, structure, and performance management through a system of rewards and penalties. This style is marked by clear expectations and a strong emphasis on achieving specific goals. Transactional leaders use contingent rewards to recognise and reinforce desirable performance, while addressing deviations from expected outcomes with corrective measures. Although this approach can drive efficient operations and help meet immediate objectives, it might not always promote long-term commitment or a deep sense of purpose among staff (Bass, 1990). Nevertheless, it proves effective in scenarios that require strict adherence to policies and procedures, and is useful for maintaining order and achieving short-term targets.

When management leads the teaching process and offers guidance and support to teachers with the aim of enhancing the teaching and learning experience to achieve instructional goals, they are employing an instructional leadership approach. Instructional leaders concentrate on improving classroom instruction, establishing high academic standards, and providing necessary resources and support for teachers. This approach encompasses activities such as evaluating and refining instructional practices, setting goals for student achievement, and ensuring that teachers have access to essential tools and professional development opportunities. Research indicates that instructional leadership is vital for improving educational outcomes, as it directly affects the quality of teaching and learning by emphasising pedagogical improvements and aligning school practices with student needs (Leithwood et al., 2019).

Distributed leadership, an increasingly popular approach, emphasises the shared responsibility for leadership across various members of the school community rather than concentrating it in a single individual (Spillane, 2006). This model encourages collaboration and leverages the diverse expertise and perspectives of teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders to drive school improvement. Educational managers who use this approach to leadership grow in schools a sense of collective ownership and enhance capacity for implementing innovative practices. The literature presents evidence which shows that distributed leadership can lead to more effective problem-solving and a more inclusive and supportive school culture, as it empowers various stakeholders to contribute to the school's vision and goals (Spillane & Diamond, 2007).

Various traditional and emerging management approaches to leadership are well-documented in the literature, each offering unique advantages and applicability depending on the educational context. For example, the democratic leadership approach is particularly effective in situations where all stakeholders possess a thorough understanding of the issue at hand, allowing for informed decision-making. On the other hand, when a school undertakes significant changes that involve a cultural or procedural shift—such as implementing a new instructional model or integrating advanced technology—the transformational leadership approach is most appropriate, as it helps to inspire and guide staff through the transition. Distributed leadership on its part is well-suited for diverse school environments where teachers have the capacity to manage various roles and where there is a need to oversee complex initiatives. Here the strengths and expertise of multiple individuals are leveraged to effectively handle the challenges and responsibilities within the school. Effective school managers are ones who possess the technical expertise to discern how and when each management approach is best suited, which is central to what is known as the eclectic approach to educational management. This approach involves blending various leadership styles—such as democratic, transformational, and distributed—based on the specific needs and context of the school.

Teacher Commitment in Education

Teacher commitment is a critical factor influencing the effectiveness and overall success of educational institutions. It encompasses a teacher's dedication to their profession, their willingness to invest time and effort, and their emotional attachment to their role within the immediate and the broader school community. High levels of teacher commitment are associated with improved student outcomes, increased job satisfaction, and lower rates of teacher turnover (Meyer & Allen, 1991). School managers and administrators frequently face the challenge of accurately evaluating the commitment of individual teachers under their leadership. To make an informed judgment, it is important to recognise that commitment is not solely reflected in classroom performance but also in overall contributions to the school community. This means that there are both qualitative and quantitative aspects of teacher dedication and performance. This section highlights these important dimensions of teacher commitment.

Quantitative indicators of teacher commitment are measurable data-points that reflect a teacher's dedication and involvement. They provide objective evidence of a teacher's commitment through observable and countable aspects of their professional behaviour and engagement. The following metrics fits in this category:

Attendance and punctuality: Regular attendance and punctuality are fundamental indicators of a teacher's dedication. Consistent presence of a teacher in the classroom ensures stability and reliability for students and demonstrates commitment to a teacher's role.

Participation in professional development: The frequency and type of professional development activities a teacher engages in reflect their commitment to the profession and to ongoing improvement. Teachers who actively seek out workshops, seminars, and courses are often more invested in enhancing their skills and knowledge.

Involvement in school-wide activities: Participation in co-curricular activities, committees, associations like PTAs and school-wide initiatives beyond regular teaching duties is another quantitative measure. Higher involvement indicates a deeper commitment to the school community.

Qualitative indicators on the other hand are non-numeric, subjective measures that reflect a teacher's dedication and engagement. They provide insights into the teacher's enthusiasm, relational dynamics, and overall impact on the school environment, capturing aspects of commitment that are not easily quantified. These include:

Classroom engagement: Observations of classroom interactions can reveal a teacher's dedication. This can be seen in their enthusiasm for the subject, the quality of their interactions with students, and their ability to engage and motivate learners. Enthusiastic and interactive teaching methods often reflect a teacher's commitment to student success.

Emotional attachment and job satisfaction: Teachers who exhibit a strong emotional connection to their work and demonstrate high levels of job satisfaction are likely to be more committed. This emotional investment can be observed through their positive relationships with students, colleagues, and their overall demeanor in the school environment (Watt & Richardson, 2008).

Feedback from students and colleagues: Feedback from students and peers can provide valuable insights into a teacher's commitment. Positive feedback is a likely reflection of a teacher's dedication and effectiveness in their role, while constructive criticism can offer opportunities for growth and development.

Adaptability and problem-solving: A teacher's ability to adapt to challenges and solve problems creatively within the classroom and school setting indicates a high level of commitment. Teachers who are willing to adjust their methods and address diverse student needs demonstrate a profound dedication to their profession (Fullan, 2001).

The parameters highlighted above provide objective evidence of a teacher's commitment to their professional roles. Educational institutions worldwide seek to cultivate and nurture a pool of teachers who are passionate, proactive, and impactful in their classrooms. To do so requires that management have a full grasp of the determinants of teacher commitment so as to implement effective strategies and support systems that enhance and sustain this commitment.

Aside management approach to leadership which constitutes the focal variable of this study, several external and internal factors interact to shape teacher dedication to the profession. One significant determinant is job satisfaction, shown to have a positive and significant impact on teacher organisational commitment and job performance (Nanci & Velmurugan, 2022; Werang & Agung, 2017). Also, teacher self-efficacy plays a crucial role. Bandura (1997) suggests that teachers who believe in their own ability to influence student outcomes are more motivated and committed. Self-efficacy can enhance teachers' resilience and persistence, influencing their overall dedication and willingness to invest effort into their work.

Workload and work-life balance of a teacher greatly enhance their commitment to work. High levels of workload and stress can negatively impact teacher commitment by leading to burnout and decreased job satisfaction. Teachers who struggle to balance their professional responsibilities with personal life often find it challenging to maintain high levels of commitment. Moreover, organisational support and opportunity for professional development and career growth are essential determinants. A supportive and collaborative school culture where teachers feel valued and respected is essential for realising high levels of commitment. Research indicates that teachers who work in schools with a strong sense of community and shared purpose are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). When teachers perceive that their contributions are recognised and valued, they are more likely to demonstrate increased dedication and engagement in their roles. Finally, the broader educational context and societal expectations also impact teacher commitment. External factors in the form of policy changes, accountability measures, and societal attitudes toward education affect teacher sense of efficacy and commitment to their profession (Fullan, 2001).

Theoretical Framework

This study utilised Meyer and Allen's (1991) Organisational Commitment Model which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how employees, including teachers, can be committed to their organisations. The model identifies three distinct components of organisational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment and identification an employee has with their organisation. Continuance commitment relates to the perceived costs associated with leaving the organisation, including financial or career-related sacrifices. Normative commitment involves a sense of obligation to stay with the organisation due to moral or ethical reasons (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In the context of education, these components can profoundly impact teacher commitment and effectiveness.
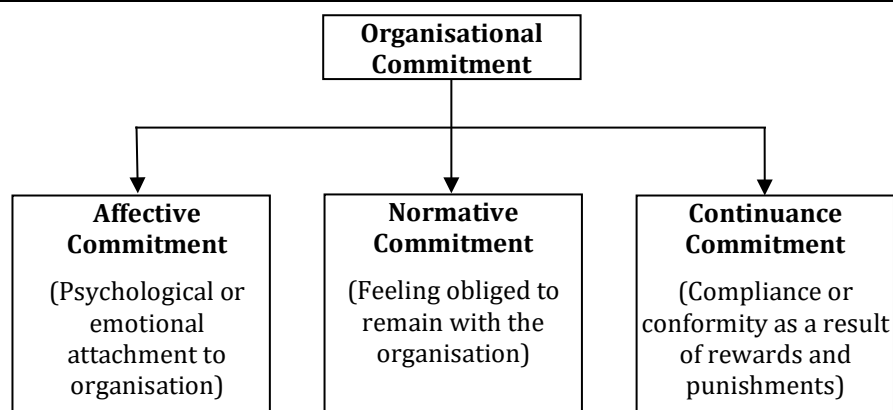
Figure 1. Meyer and Allen's Three-component Model of Organisational Commitment

Source: Adapted from Meyer and Allen (1991)

Affective commitment is particularly significant in the educational sector because it encompasses teachers' emotional connection to their school, students, and the teaching profession. Teachers with high affective commitment are likely to be more enthusiastic, motivated, and engaged in their work. They often go beyond the basic requirements of their job, investing extra time and energy into their students' success and the development of their teaching practice (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). This emotional bond can lead to greater job satisfaction and a stronger dedication to educational goals, which benefits students and promotes a positive learning environment.

Continuance commitment in education involves teachers weighing the costs of leaving their current position and reaching at decision to stay and continue in their role. This might include considerations of job security, benefits, and the stability of their current role compared to potential opportunities elsewhere. Teachers who feel they have invested heavily in their current position or who face limited alternative career options may exhibit higher continuance commitment (Meyer et al., 1993). While this type of commitment can ensure stability within the school, it may not necessarily bring about the same level of enthusiasm or innovation as affective commitment. It is crucial for educational institutions to address factors that enhance job satisfaction and provide career development opportunities to balance these considerations.

Normative commitment reflects the sense of duty or obligation that teachers feel towards their schools or the teaching profession. This can be influenced by personal values, societal expectations, or professional norms. Teachers with high normative commitment may stay in their roles due to a deep-seated belief in the importance of their work or a commitment to contributing to the education system (Li et al., 2013). This type of commitment can drive teachers to uphold high standards and persist through challenges, even when faced with difficulties.

Management's selection of a leadership approach can significantly enhance teachers' affective, continuance and normative commitment, as outlined in Meyer and Allen's Model. The adoption of a participative and supportive leadership style can cultivate a sense of belonging and shared values among teachers, which strengthens their emotional attachment (affective commitment) to their work and the organisation. Placing teachers in administrative positions (head of department, class master, etc.) or assigning them to other functions within the school can enhance the continuance aspect of their commitment to the success of the school, as they often weigh the potential costs of leaving their established roles against the benefits of staying. When leaders demonstrate genuine care for teachers' professional development and well-being, often through the use of transformational leadership approach, it also reinforces a sense of moral obligation (normative commitment) to stay and contribute to the school's success. This holistic approach not only improves job satisfaction but also aligns teachers' personal values with the institution's goals, thereby creating a more dedicated and cohesive educational environment.

Empirical Review

This empirical review delved into studies from diverse contexts to shed light on the relationship between management approach to leadership and teacher commitment. Goal was to draw parallels and insights relevant to the context of secondary schools in the Kupe-Muanenguba Division. The review highlights key findings, methodologies, and recommendations from these studies, and so provides a comprehensive understanding of how effective leadership practices can enhance teacher commitment to work.

Mbua (2023) examined how different leadership styles of principals affect teacher and school effectiveness in secondary schools in Tiko Sub-division, Cameroon. Using a descriptive survey research design, the study involved 137 participants (15 principals and 122 teachers) drawn from 15 secondary schools in the area. Data was collected through a questionnaire titled "Principal's Leadership Style on Teacher and School Effectiveness" and analysed using SPSS and Pearson correlation. The results indicated that principals' leadership styles significantly impact both teacher and school

effectiveness, with mean values of 4.34 and 4.20, respectively. The study concluded that instructional, participatory, and transformational leadership styles are particularly effective in improving school and teacher performance. It recommended that principals develop management skills to better engage teachers and enhance overall effectiveness.

In another study, Kyomuhangi et al. (2023) looked at how different leadership styles of head teachers affect teacher commitment in secondary schools in Bushenyi-Ishaka Municipality, Uganda. The research examined the impact of democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles on teacher commitment. Data was collected from 212 teachers and 6 head teachers using a correlational research design and analysed with both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study found that all three leadership styles—democratic, autocratic, and laissez-faire—positively influenced teacher commitment. The researchers concluded that while democratic leadership is crucial for sustaining teacher commitment, both autocratic and laissez-faire styles also contribute to it. In this regard, head teachers were advised to utilise democratic leadership to enhance commitment, while also employing autocratic and some laissez-faire techniques as part of their leadership approach.

Tran et al. (2023) investigated the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles on the organisational commitment of high school teachers in Vietnam, in South East Asia. The researchers used two standardised surveys to gather data from 387 teachers across 24 public high schools in the Mekong Delta. The analysis revealed that transformational leadership positively affected teachers' organisational commitment, whereas transactional leadership had a negative impact. Analyses further indicated that all aspects of both leadership styles predicted teachers' organisational commitment. The study suggested that school leaders should consider integrating both transformational and transactional leadership styles to enhance teachers' commitment to their organisation.

In the Americas, Prempeh and Kim (2022) investigate the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles on teachers' commitment in terms of emotional attachment, sense of obligation, and the consideration of staying versus leaving, in Odaho, USA. Their study, which used the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to evaluate the leadership styles of 80 high school teachers selected for convenience, found that these leadership styles primarily strengthened teachers' emotional connection to their schools. However, neither style was effective in predicting teachers' moral commitment to stay or in evaluating the benefits of remaining versus leaving. The study suggests that to enhance teacher commitment, school management should focus on motivating and inspiring teachers. It also recommends that school leaders and supervisors regularly participate in leadership training and seminars to improve their management effectiveness and support teacher dedication.

The studies reviewed above collectively underscore the influence of various leadership styles on teacher commitment and effectiveness but reveal some gaps that the current study set out to address. Mbua (2023), for instance focused on how different leadership styles impact teacher and school effectiveness but did not specifically examine teacher commitment. Also, both Kyomuhangi et al. (2023) and Tran et al. (2023) offer insights into the effects of leadership styles on teacher commitment, but their findings are limited to Uganda and Vietnam, respectively, overlooking the unique socio-cultural dynamics of Cameroon. Besides, allowing teachers to self-evaluate their effectiveness and commitment potentially introduced biases which puts the validity and reliability of the findings of these studies to question, as self-assessment often compromises objectivity. This study bridges these gaps by evaluating teacher commitment from the perspective of students and by focusing on the specific management approaches to leadership in secondary schools in the Kupe-Muanenguba Division. The research provides a localised perspective on how the various approaches to leadership influence teacher commitment—knowledge that should inform more contextually relevant strategies for enhancing teacher engagement and effectiveness.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed the survey design and the concurrent triangulation method. This involved collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from various stakeholders, notably school principals, teachers, and students, on the same issues. Data was gathered through questionnaires and a semi-structured interview guide. The researcher collected both forms of data simultaneously, prioritised the methods equally, maintained independent data analysis, and integrated the results during overall interpretation. This process aimed to identify convergence, divergence, contradictions, or relationships among the different data sources (Creswell, 2009). A major strength of this approach is that it allows for a comprehensive analysis of the research issues and enhances the validity of the findings.

Area of the Study

This study was carried out in Kupe-Muanenguba Division found in the South West Region of Cameroon. Kupe-Muanenguba Division is located between longitudes $9^0 9^1$E and $9^0 48^1$E, and latitudes 5^033^1N and 4^041^1N of the equator. Established through a Presidential decree in 1993, Kupe-Muanenguba Division is composed of three sub-divisions: Bangem (the Divisional Headquarters), Tombel, and Nguti. It covers a total area of 3,951 km² and has a diverse population of approximately 197,171 inhabitants. The majority of the population relies on subsistence agriculture as their primary source of livelihood.

The Division hosts numerous primary and secondary schools. Education is a significant priority for many families in Kupe-Muanenguba, with parents striving to ensure that their children attain at least secondary education despite limited resources. However, as the Division is predominantly rural, the living conditions for teachers are often suboptimal, which impact their commitment to work. Additionally, schools in this area frequently face severe shortages of essential resources, creating challenging work environments for teachers. These factors contribute to difficulties in maintaining high levels of teacher motivation and commitment, which is crucial for the overall educational outcomes in the region.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all principals, teachers and students of all the secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division. As of 2023-2024 academic year and as per the statistics obtained from the Service of School Map in the Divisional Delegation of Secondary Education for Kupe-Muanenguba Division, there is a total of 37 government and mission secondary schools in this Division, with a teacher and student population of 724 and 4531 respectively.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study covered six randomly selected government secondary schools—two from each sub-division. The choice of these schools was based on their high association with the issue of teacher commitment. Also, the standardised curriculum and uniform training for teachers and administrators, as mandated by the Ministry of Secondary Education, helped minimise the impact of environmental and structural confounders.

A random sample of 248 teachers and 354 students was selected, following Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) population/sample size guide. The teachers and students completed separate questionnaires. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with the principals of the six schools involved and one vice principal (also categorised in this study as principals) from each of the schools. Both the school managers and teachers who participated in the study were diverse in terms of gender, age, length of service, professional qualifications, and educational attainment. Similarly, the student participants were varied with respect to gender, age, and study cycle. These stratifications were considered appropriate for ensuring the validity and representativeness of the samples.

Research Instruments

The "Teacher Insights on Management Approach to Leadership Questionnaire" (TIMAL-Q), developed by the researcher, was utilised to gather data on the leadership approaches of school principals and vice principals. The TIMAL-Q included a cover letter addressed to the respondents (teachers) detailing the research objectives, purpose, and ethical considerations. It was divided into two sections: Section A collected demographic information from the respondents, while Section B addressed the independent variable—management approach to leadership. This latter section featured 21 closed-ended items measured on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The items were evenly distributed across the three leadership approaches examined.

A separate questionnaire titled "Student Perception of Educator Commitment Questionnaire" (SPEC-Q), constructed by the researcher and maintaining the same format and number of sections as the previously mentioned questionnaire, was used to collect data from students regarding teacher commitment to work. Section B of this questionnaire contained ten items designed to assess teacher commitment from the quantitative and qualitative perspectives, and from the affective, continuance, and normative components of commitment, in line with conceptual and theoretical review. Both the TIMAL-Q and SPEC-Q were validated by experts and found to have both face and content validity.

A semi-structured interview guide was used to explore how school managers apply the leadership approaches relevant to the research. Responses were open-ended, allowing respondents to answer the questions in the way they deemed most appropriate. With the interviewees' permission, a tape recorder was used to ensure that their responses were fully captured for accurate reporting. This face-to-face interview was deemed necessary to verify alignment with teachers' opinions.

To ensure the objectivity and consistency of responses from teachers and students to the respective questionnaires, a pilot study was conducted with 10 teachers and 15 students from a secondary school that was not among those initially sampled for the study, and from a different sub-division to minimise the Hawthorne Effect. The respondents for the pilot test were selected based on their meeting of the inclusion criteria. After conducting the pilot study, reliability was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha method. The internal consistency assumption was not violated, with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranging from .618 to .781 (Cronbach, 1951).

For the qualitative instrument, the parallel method of testing reliability was employed, with the participation of two inspectors selected in the South West Region of Cameroon. The method is a palliative to most test-retest method problems. Rather than administering the same questionnaire on two separate occasions, the parallel method involves providing respondents with two different but equivalent questions during a single session. This method although safe from some disadvantages of the test-retest method, may result to a longer instrument. Statistically, this model assumes

that all items have equal variances and error variances across replications, allowing parallel tests to assess the reliability of an instrument. While this approach is typically used in quantitative studies, it can also be applied in qualitative research, as demonstrated in this study. Here, reliability was evaluated conceptually rather than mathematically, a process referred to as the conceptual parallel method (Nana, 2018). In this study, questions addressing the same constructs and objectives were framed differently and placed in different sections of the interview guide. The goal was for committed and consistent respondents to provide similar answers.

Data Collection Process

The study was conducted in May 2024 with the assistance of a team of well-trained research assistants, all of whom were university graduates. The team was divided into three groups, with each group assigned to cover a specific sub-division. The entire data collection process spanned one week, allowing sufficient time to gather data while adhering to research ethics and following the proper procedures.

Data Analysis Procedure

The questionnaire comprised categorical variables. Data were analysed using counting techniques, specifically frequency and proportions. Inferential statistics, including the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, were employed to test the hypotheses guiding the study. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was used to abstract and summarise the findings. The results were presented in code-quotation tables. This approach ensures objectivity and reliability in qualitative analysis by grounding the analysis in actual quotations. While codes and umbrella terms can be subjectively interpreted, the quotations provide concrete evidence to mitigate potential bias (Nana, 2018).

Findings

This section presents the findings according to research objectives. First, the results derived from the analysis of questionnaire data are detailed, followed by qualitative findings from interviews with principals and vice principals. Presenting the quantitative results first establishes a foundation of statistical evidence, which is then enriched by the nuanced insights gained from qualitative interviews. This structure allows for a thorough understanding of the research outcomes and ensures a holistic view of the study's findings.

Management's Use of Democratic Approach to Leadership and Teacher Commitment

Table 1. Teachers' Opinions on Management's Use of Democratic Approach to Leadership

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Decision
Teachers are encouraged to express their opinions and ideas during school meetings.	65 (26.2%)	130 (52.4%)	46 (18.6%)	7 (2.8%)	A
The management team values and considers teachers' suggestions for improving school practices.	57 (23%)	129 (52%)	54 (21.8%)	8 (3.2%)	A
Teachers have a clear and open line of communication with school management.	41 (16.5%)	104 (41.9%)	79 (31.9%)	24 (9.7%)	A
The principal actively promotes a collaborative environment among teachers and staff.	97 (39.1%)	100 (40.3%)	35 (14.1%)	16 (6.5%)	A
The school management regularly involves teachers in decision-making processes.	34 (13.7%)	75 (30.2%)	91 (36.7%)	48 (19.4%)	D
The school management is receptive to constructive criticism from teachers.	32 (12.9%)	61 (24.6%)	104 (41.9%)	51 (20.6%)	D
Teachers are regularly consulted about changes in school policies that affect their work.	33 (13.3%)	42 (16.9%)	77 (31.1%)	96 (38.7%)	D

The statistics presented in Table 1 indicate that the respondents agreed with four out of the seven indicators measuring management's use of a democratic approach to leadership. This finding implies that respondents generally view the management approach to leadership as democratic. However, the fact that agreement was not universal suggests that there are areas where democratic practices can be enhanced or more consistently applied in school management. In other words, this partial agreement points to opportunities for improving how democratic principles are implemented in leadership practices.

Table 2. Students' Opinions on Teachers' Commitment

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Decision
My teacher persists in their role despite challenges or difficulties they may face.	103 (29.1%)	165 (46.6%)	64 (18.1%)	22 (6.2%)	A
My teacher provides helpful feedback on assignments to help students improve.	98 (27.7%)	129 (36.4%)	76 (21.5%)	51 (14.4%)	A
My teacher feels they have a moral obligation to be committed to their role.	88 (24.9%)	121 (34.2%)	78 (22.0%)	67 (18.9%)	A
My teacher shows creativity in their teaching activities.	96 (27.1%)	111 (31.4%)	68 (19.2%)	79 (22.3%)	A
My teacher feels a strong sense-of-duty to be here for their students.	91 (25.7%)	118 (33.3%)	83 (23.5%)	62 (17.5%)	A
I believe my teacher continues to teach because they have to, and not because they want to.	132 (37.3%)	101 (28.5%)	65 (18.4%)	56 (15.8%)	A
My teacher is attentive and responsive to students' needs.	65 (18.4%)	77 (21.7%)	117 (33.1%)	95 (26.8%)	D
My teacher is consistently available during office hours or after class to help students.	58 (16.4%)	68 (19.2%)	125 (35.3%)	103 (29.1%)	D
I feel that my teacher is passionate about teaching this subject.	55 (15.5%)	73 (20.6%)	129 (36.4%)	97 (27.4%)	D
My teacher regularly participates in training to improve their teaching skills.	72 (20.3%)	88 (24.9%)	98 (27.7%)	96 (27.1%)	D

Students were satisfied with their teachers' commitment across six out of ten indicators. This commitment was primarily observed from a qualitative perspective, reflecting aspects of both continuance and normative commitment. This suggests that while there is generally a positive perception of teachers' dedication, there is still room for improvement. From the findings, it can be said that students value the personal engagement and ongoing efforts of their teachers, as well as their adherence to professional and ethical standards. At the same time, teachers' quantitative and affective aspects of commitment were reported to be weak, implying challenges in meeting expectations regarding measurable aspects of teachers' dedication and the emotional connection they build. It would be beneficial to address these areas by increasing teachers' measurable involvement and strengthening emotional support in their interactions with students.

Research Hypothesis One: There is no Significant Association Between Management's Use of Democratic Approach to Leadership and the Level of Teacher Commitment in Secondary Schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division

Pearson rank correlation was used to test if there exist any significant functional relationship between management's use of a democratic approach to leadership and the level of teacher commitment. The statistics are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Correlations Analysis of the Relationship Between Management's Use of Democratic Approach to Leadership and Teachers' Commitment

		Democratic Approach to Leadership	Teachers' Commitment
Democratic Approach to Leadership	R	1	.980*
	P-value		.028
	N	248	354
Teachers' Commitment	R	.980*	1
	P-value	.028	
	N	354	354

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

The findings presented in Table 3 indicate that the correlation coefficient between management's use of the democratic approach to leadership and teachers' commitment is .980. This value represents a strong positive correlation and is statistically significant at the 5% level (*p*=.028). This suggests that an increase in the use of democratic approach to leadership is associated with an increase in teachers' commitment. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that management's use of the democratic approach to leadership positively enhance teachers' commitment.

Table 4. Thematic Analysis of Principals' Perceptions on Using the Democratic Approach to Leadership When Working with Teachers

Themes	Quotations
Collaborative decision-making	"I hold staff meetings where I invite them to share their ideas and provide feedback on various school initiatives." "I form working groups with their representation to address specific school issues and implement solutions."
Empowerment and autonomy	"I encourage teachers to adopt teaching methods and strategies that they believe will be most effective in their classrooms." "As much as possible, I allow them to make decisions about their classrooms and encourage them to take ownership of their teaching practices"
Open communication	"Given the challenging nature of the work environment, I maintain an open-door policy; I welcome them to discuss their concerns with me at any time." "Suggestion boxes have been put up in a number of locations to gather people's opinions on how we run this school; we make sure that the feedbacks we receive are considered."
Participative resolution of conflict	"I use collaborative methods to mediate and resolve conflicts among them; I bring all parties to the table to find a fair solution." "We work together to ensure that concerns are resolved in a mutually acceptable way."

N=12

When asked about the ways they use the democratic approach to leadership, respondents described various practices they believed aligned with this approach. A majority of the 12 principals interviewed (8) reported that they employ a collaborative approach in decision-making. The same number indicated that they empower teachers to make decisions regarding their career aspirations. Seven principals mentioned that they maintain open channels of communication, while 4 noted that conflicts among teachers are resolved in a participative manner. These reports considerably align with teachers' views on principals' use of the democratic approach to leadership. A sample of direct quotations from the respondents is presented in Table 4 above.

Management's Use of Transformational Approach to Leadership and Teacher Commitment

Table 5. Teachers' Opinions on Principals' Use of Transformational Approach to Leadership

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Decision
The school management provides an inspiring vision for the future of the school.	30 (12.1%)	31 (12.5%)	97 (39.1%)	90 (36.3%)	D
The school management encourages innovative teaching practices.	67 (27%)	107 (43.1%)	46 (18.6%)	28 (11.3%)	A
The school management commits to teachers' professional development.	34 (13.7%)	57 (23%)	71 (28.6%)	86 (34.7%)	D
The school management leads by example.	41 (16.5%)	104 (41.9%)	79 (31.9%)	24 (9.7%)	A
The school management encourages a culture of continuous learning among teachers.	75 (30.2%)	99 (39.9%)	38 (15.3%)	36 (14.5%)	A
The school management provides constructive criticism to help teachers improve their practice	33 (13.3%)	41 (16.5%)	76 (30.7%)	98 (39.5%)	D
The school management builds trust between administration and teaching staff.	68 (27.4%)	71 (28.6%)	67 (27)	42 (16.9%)	A

Statistics presented in Table 5 above indicate that respondents agreed with four out of the seven indicators measuring management's use of transformational approach to leadership. This implies that majority of the respondents perceive that school management effectively employs transformational leadership practices in these areas. Yet, the remaining indicators where agreement was less pronounced highlight areas where the transformational approach was not as strongly perceived, suggesting potential opportunities for further development in aspects such as fostering a strategic vision, professional development, and helpful criticism for teachers.

Research Hypothesis Two: Management's Adoption of Transformational Approach to Leadership Does Not Have a Significant Effect on Teacher Commitment in Secondary Schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division.

Pearson rank correlation was used to test if there exist any significant functional relationship between management's use of transformational approach to leadership and Teachers' commitment.

Table 6. Correlations Analysis of the Relationship Between Transformational Approach to Leadership and Teachers' Commitment

		Transformational Approach to Leadership	Teachers' Commitment
Transformational Approach to Leadership	R	1	.980*
	P-value		.028
	N	248	354
Teachers' Commitment	R	.980*	1
	P-value	.028	
	N	354	354

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

The findings presented in the correlation matrix in Table 6 above reveal that the correlation coefficient between the transformational approach to leadership and teachers' commitment is .980. This indicates a very strong positive correlation and is significant at the 5% level of significance (p=.028). This implies that an increase in the use of a transformational approach to leadership is associated with an increase in teacher's commitment to work. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that transformational leadership significantly boosts teachers' commitment.

Table 7. Thematic Analysis Depicting Principals' Perceptions of Ways by Which They Use Transformational Approach to Leadership

Themes	Quotations
Recognition and appreciation	"Given the challenging nature of the work environment, I make it a habit to regularly acknowledge and celebrate their achievements to encourage them to do more." "I make sure that their efforts do not go unnoticed and always thank them for their contributions."
Empowerment and autonomy	"I encourage teachers to adopt teaching methods and strategies that they believe will be most effective in their classrooms." "I do my best to support them in pursuing opportunities that align with their career aspirations."
Support and collaboration	"I prioritise creating a supportive environment where everyone feels comfortable seeking help and collaborating with their peers." "We hold departmental meetings where we encourage teachers to share ideas, solve problems together, and support one another."
Innovative practices	"We always tell them to shift away from the traditional approaches to teaching and try new methods in seeking ways to improve educational outcomes." "Although constrained by resources, we still strive to provide the guidance and support they need when trying new approaches."
Professional development	"I organise workshops from time to time, where I invite experts in relevant fields to provide them with training." "When an opportunity for pedagogic seminars arises, I send a selection of teachers based on available resources so they can update their professional competencies."

N=12

Questioned on their use of the transformational leadership approach, respondents listed several practices they believed fell within this framework. All the principals reported consistently recognising and appreciating their teachers for their contributions despite the challenges they face. A majority of the 12 principals interviewed (10) indicated that they empowered teachers to choose their own methods. Nearly as many respondents (9) noted that they inspired a supportive and collaborative work environment, allowing teachers to freely seek and receive the support they needed. Eight principals mentioned that they encouraged innovative practices and provided the necessary resources, while six reported exposing teachers to professional development opportunities. A sample of direct quotations from respondents is presented in Table 7.

Management's Use of Transactional Approach to Leadership and Teacher Commitment

Table 8. Teachers' Opinions on Principals' Use of Transactional Approach to Leadership

Item	SA	A	D	SD	Decision
The school management set performance benchmarks for teachers	78 (31.4%)	98 (39.5%)	51 (20.6%)	21 (8.5%)	A
The school management monitors teachers' performance.	91 (36.7%)	103 (41.5%)	43 (17.3%)	11 (4.4%)	A
Teachers are given incentives when they meet performance goals.	88 (35.5%)	98 (39.5%)	50 (20.2%)	12 (4.8%)	A
The school management penalises teachers if they fail to meet certain expectations.	83 (33.5%)	95 (38.3%)	45 (18.1%)	25 (10.1%)	A
The school management is fair in their dealings with teachers.	81 (32.7%)	99 (39.9%)	35 (14.1%)	33 (13.3%)	A
There are clear criteria for determining rewards and disciplinary actions.	43 (17.3%)	51 (20.6%)	87 (35.1%)	67 (27%)	D
Principals focus on compliance with formal procedures in their interactions with teachers.	39 (15.7%)	49 (19.8%)	81 (32.7%)	79 (31.8%)	D

According to the data shown in Table 8, a majority of teachers agree that the school management employs a transactional approach in their leadership practices. This suggests that teachers recognise and agree with the transactional leadership practices, such as clear performance expectations, rewards for performance, and fair dealings, as indicated by the data. But since two of the seven indicators were not agreed upon by the teachers, it also implies that there are certain aspects of the transactional approach that might not be effective in the schools' management practices.

Research Hypothesis Three: 3. There is no Significant Impact of Management's Transactional Leadership Approach on Teacher Commitment Within Secondary Schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division

Findings presented on the correlation matrix in Table 9 below revealed that the correlation coefficient between the variable transactional approach to leadership and teachers' commitment of .800 is positive and strong, and is significant at 5% level of significance (*p*=.014). This implies that an increase in the use of transactional leadership will enhance teachers' Commitment.

Table 9. Correlations Analysis of the Relationship Between Management's Use of Transactional Approach to Leadership and Teachers' Commitment

		Teachers' Commitment	Transactional Approach to Leadership
Teachers' Commitment	R	1	.800*
	P-value		.014
	N	354	354
Transactional Approach to Leadership	R	.800*	1
	P-value	.014	
	N	354	248

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Table 10. Thematic Analysis Depicting Principals' Perception of Ways by Which They Use Transactional Leadership Approach

Themes	Quotations
Setting clear expectations	"We set the standards early at the start of the academic year and ensure that all teachers know exactly what is required of them." "There are documents that specify how their performance is assessed."
Performance monitoring and evaluation	"We monitor and keep a record of their performance to ensure they adhere to the established standards and rules and regulations." "They are evaluated periodically and receive feedback on their performance."
Use of system of reward and punishment	"We provide statutory incentives and also reward individual teachers' efforts at the end of the school year." "We sometimes have to withhold certain rewards, such as recommendations, if a teacher exhibit unprofessional behaviour."

Table 10. Continued

Themes	Quotations
Use of Appreciation and Praise	"We organise staff socials and other events where we recognise and acknowledge their successes." "I do not hesitate to acknowledge and praise anyone who does things right, I believe it is an important morale booster."
Adherence to policies	"I remind them of the established guidelines and make sure that they comply." "If any policy changes, we update them during meetings and ensure that they understand the implications."

Table 10 above presents themes and a sample of direct quotations from principals on how they use the transactional approach to leadership. All respondents reported that they define expectations for teachers at the beginning of the academic year and that they monitor and evaluate teachers' performance. Majority of the respondents (9) reported using a system of rewards and punishments, the same as for appreciation and praise. However, only a few (3) mentioned enforcing adherence to policies and school rules and regulations. The statistics present a high degree of consistency between teachers' responses and the managerial actions adopted by school principals, which are perceived as transactional in nature. This suggests that the principals' strategies visibly prioritise operational efficiency and adherence to established protocols, over nurturing a more innovative and supportive school environment.

Discussion

The research findings reveal a significant relationship between management approach to leadership and teachers' commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba Division. Specifically, the democratic approach to leadership has been shown to markedly enhance teachers' commitment. This suggests that involving teachers in decision-making and actively valuing their contributions promotes a participatory environment that leads to increased job satisfaction and a stronger sense of belonging among teachers. Such democratic practices not only motivate teachers but also contribute to a collaborative and supportive school culture. This finding aligns with established literature that highlights the role of democratic leadership in improving organisational climate and teacher morale, particularly in resource-constrained settings like Kupe-Muanenguba (e.g. Kyomuhangi et al., 2023).

Like the democratic approach, the study uncovers a strong positive correlation between transformational leadership and teachers' commitment. This correlation is consistent with findings from Mbua (2023), which demonstrates that transformational leadership significantly enhances both teacher effectiveness and overall school performance. Similarly, Prempeh and Kim (2022) identified a strong connection between transformational leadership and teachers' emotional attachment to their schools, while Tran et al. (2023) found that transformational leadership positively impacts teachers' organisational commitment. This approach is equally highly effective in environments with limited resources and inadequate infrastructure, as it addresses the negative impacts of such constraints by focusing on intrinsic motivators and professional development. Leaders who utilise transformational strategies are better equipped to boost teachers' morale and retention despite external challenges.

The research also highlights a strong positive relationship between the transactional approach to leadership and teachers' commitment. This finding supports the existing literature that emphasises the effectiveness of transactional leadership in enhancing organisational commitment and performance (Mbua, 2023). However, it contrasts with studies that have found a negative correlation between transactional leadership and teachers' commitment or questioned the overall effectiveness of both transformational and transactional leadership approaches in predicting teachers' moral commitment (Prempeh & Kim, 2022; Tran et al., 2023).

Overall, the study shows various practices which school managers believed aligned with the leadership approaches of interest to the research and underscores the varying impacts of the approaches on teachers' commitment in secondary schools in Kupe-Muanenguba. While both democratic and transformational leadership approaches positively influence teachers' commitment, the transactional approach also plays a crucial role in maintaining motivation and performance in the resource-limited environment. These findings highlight the importance of leadership in shaping teacher engagement and performance and suggest that an adequate understanding of different management approaches to leadership can help address specific challenges faced by schools in similar contexts.

Conclusion

This study has shown how different management approaches to leadership impact teacher commitment in a context marked by high levels of resource constraints and infrastructure challenges. The findings reveal a very strong positive correlation between the democratic and transformational approaches to leadership and teacher commitment, both with correlation coefficients of .980 and statistical significance at the 5% level (*p*=.028). This indicates that these approaches to leadership are highly effective in enhancing teacher dedication. The democratic approach, which promotes teacher involvement in decision-making and school governance, and the transformational approach, marked

by visionary leadership and motivation, both significantly enhance teachers' commitment by fostering a more inclusive and engaging work environment. Also, the study finds a strong positive correlation of .800 between the transactional approach to leadership and teacher commitment, with significance at the 5% level ($p=$.014). This implies that transactional leadership, which relies on rewards and performance monitoring, also contributes effectively to teacher commitment, albeit to a slightly lesser extent compared to democratic and transformational approaches.

The findings have several implications for school management and policy in Kupe-Muanenguba Division and similar contexts. A blended approach to leadership that integrates democratic and transformational practices, with selective use of transactional methods, offers the most promise for enhancing teacher commitment. Such an approach not only addresses the measurable aspects of teacher performance but also strengthens their emotional and professional attachment to their roles.

Recommendations

Given the findings of this study, it is recommended that school managers in Kupe-Muanenguba Division focus on integrating democratic and transformational approaches to leadership to maximise teacher commitment, particularly in the measurable and affective aspects that are yet to be felt in the area. Implementing democratic leadership strategies would involve increasing teacher participation in decision-making processes. Heads should create structured platforms to carter for this purpose, such as regular forums, committees, and feedback systems that ensure that teachers feel valued and heard. This participatory approach can help cultivate a greater sense of ownership and motivation among teachers, which is crucial in a resource-constrained setting. Also, adopting practices that are transformational in nature such as setting a compelling vision for the school, providing opportunities for professional growth, and recognising teachers' achievements can inspire and energise teachers, and align their personal and professional goals with the school's objectives.

Although transactional leadership also contributes positively to teacher commitment, it should be used in conjunction with democratic and transformational approaches. While transactional methods can effectively manage short-term performance and discipline, they may not fully address the deeper motivational needs of teachers. Therefore, combining transactional leadership with more holistic approaches should help balance immediate performance requirements with long-term teacher engagement and satisfaction.

Given the peculiarities of Kupe-Muanenguba Division, school managers must adopt a pragmatic approach to leadership. It would be beneficial to provide training and development programmes for school managers to enhance their skills in democratic and transformational leadership; this would ensure that these models are effectively applied and tailored to the schools' specific needs. Continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms should be established to monitor the impact of these approaches to leadership on teacher commitment and make necessary adjustments to strategies as required. This comprehensive approach will help sustain high levels of teacher engagement and commitment, and so contribute to improved educational outcomes in the area.

Limitations

While the data obtained from the research participants significantly informed the conclusions reached, the study samples could not fully represent the diversity of perspectives across all secondary schools in the study area. This limitation affects the extent to which the findings can be generalised. Future research employing a larger and more diverse sample would be instrumental in enhancing the generalisability of findings across various secondary schools in the Division. Also, research focused on the impact of socio-economic and cultural factors could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the context influencing management approach to leadership and teacher commitment in Kupe-Muanenguba Division.

Ethics Statement

This research was conducted with a strong commitment to ethical standards. All participants—principals, teachers, and students—provided informed consent, having fully understood the purpose of the study and their voluntary involvement. Confidentiality was prioritised by removing personal identifiers and securely storing data so that only the research team had access. Although no specific risks were associated with participation, individuals were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. Furthermore, it was essential to avoid plagiarism and misrepresentation of the intentions of the authors whose works were consulted for the study. To adhere to the required ethical standards, all consulted works have been accurately cited and referenced as appropriate. This approach ensured the integrity of the research while valuing the contributions of diverse sources of information.

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