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Managerial Practices and School Functioning in Approved Private Secondary Schools of Likasi I

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ABSTRACT

Background: School leaders are responsible for administrative coordination within national education regulations, but the perceived consistency of managerial practices in private secondary schools in Likasi I has received limited empirical description.

Objective: To describe responses concerning decision-making, administrative coordination and operating conditions in state-approved private secondary schools.

Methods: A descriptive analysis examined ten five-category questionnaire items, each containing 118 recorded responses. Frequencies and percentages were calculated, and exploratory chi-square goodness-of-fit tests against equal category probabilities were evaluated with Holm adjustment for ten comparisons.

Results: Consultation before decisions was rated 'never' or 'rarely' by 42.4% of responses and 'often' or 'always' by 24.6%. Low ratings predominated for clarity of administrative procedures (58.5%), financial transparency (56.8%) and administrative resource availability (58.5%). Five of ten distributions differed from the uniform benchmark after multiplicity adjustment. Judgements about task fairness, initiative, supervision, collaboration and overall management were more dispersed.

Conclusion: The findings describe variation in perceived administrative practices but do not demonstrate effects on school performance or legal compliance. Interpretation remains restricted by incomplete respondent-level, sampling and fieldwork information. Better-defined measures of managerial practices and independent school outcomes are needed for explanatory research.

KEYWORDS: school management, educational leadership, administrative governance, private secondary schools, Likasi, Democratic Republic of the Congo

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1. INTRODUCTION

School management concerns the everyday arrangements through which a school turns educational goals, public requirements, available resources and professional responsibilities into organised activity. A school headteacher makes decisions about timetables, duties, instructional support, records, communication and the use of materials and funds. These decisions rarely operate in isolation: they are enacted by administrators and teachers, interpreted in local circumstances and constrained by the conditions under which the institution operates. Research on leadership therefore treats management not merely as an individual characteristic of a principal but as a pattern of practices embedded in an organisation. Bush and Glover (2014) distinguish among leadership models without assuming that any single label captures the complex work of school management. Spillane (2006) similarly shows why routines, personnel, tools and interactions all matter when identifying how leadership actually occurs. Such perspectives are useful for examining private secondary schools, in which the statutory authority of a headteacher coexists with the responsibilities of proprietors, teaching staff, families and the education administration.

The present study concerns state-approved private secondary schools in the Likasi I educational sub-division, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). These institutions have some organisational responsibilities of their own, but their recognised status does not place them outside national educational regulation. Law No. 14/004 of 11 February 2014 applies to approved public and private educational institutions (article 6). It identifies conditions governing the creation and operation of private schools, including legal, material, financial and pedagogical guarantees (articles 45 and 49–52), and assigns the central authorities responsibility for national curricula and general standards of educational management and supervision (article 151). The framework makes compliance an

observable aspect of school operations, but compliance alone is not equivalent to educational quality. Information about administrative procedures must therefore be considered together with staff participation, the organisation of work and the availability of resources (Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2014).

There are plausible reasons to expect school management to matter. Leithwood et al. (2020), revisiting a large body of leadership research, argue that successful leadership is usually consequential through its effects on the conditions of teaching and learning. Hallinger (2011) identifies leadership focus, context and the sharing of leadership as interconnected elements in a model of leadership for learning. Grissom et al. (2021), in a systematic synthesis of 219 studies, highlight attention to instruction, productive school climate, collaboration and personnel or resource management. These findings do not establish the size of any effect in Likasi I, where the institutional, economic and professional conditions may be different. Instead, they provide a rationale for examining concrete managerial practices before making claims about their possible contribution to school functioning.

School leadership can be directive, consultative, collaborative or distributed across several actors. These terms describe tendencies rather than mutually exclusive classes of school heads. A principal may retain formal responsibility for regulatory decisions while seeking staff views on how to implement a school timetable. Day et al. (2016) report that successful leaders combine instructional and transformational strategies in ways that change over the course of school improvement. Harris (2013) warns that distributed leadership should not be treated as an automatically effective prescription: its operation depends on actual arrangements and responsibilities. The relevant empirical questions are thus whether staff are consulted, whether instructions are understandable, whether initiatives are encouraged and whether day-to-day operations are sufficiently coordinated. The existence of these features cannot be deduced from a headteacher's job title.

The distinction between managerial practices and outcomes is central to this investigation. Robinson et al. (2008) examined associations between leadership approaches and student outcomes, while Hallinger and Heck (2010) and Heck and Hallinger (2009) analysed school improvement in longitudinal datasets. Those studies included performance-related observations beyond individual staff opinions. By contrast, the present investigation is based on ten aggregate response distributions concerning school administration. These items describe reported frequency or perceived presence of managerial arrangements; they do not directly measure learning achievement, regulatory compliance or the effect of a leadership practice on either outcome.

For policy and practice, the administrative dimensions remain relevant in their own right. Consultation may make information from different departments available before a decision is taken. Clear instructions can reduce uncertainty about assigned responsibilities, although the presence of clarity need not imply that staff have been involved in formulating a decision. Regular supervision can support coordination, but it may also be experienced as control if feedback and professional support are absent. Transparency concerns the availability and intelligibility of information about financial decisions, rather than merely the existence of financial documents. Material resources influence what staff can implement even when administrative expectations are clearly communicated. These distinctions prevent an overly simplified contrast between authoritative and participatory leadership.

International evidence indicates that the organisational context is not incidental. The OECD (2020) describes differences in school leaders' working conditions, decision-making responsibilities and professional collaboration in participating education systems. UNESCO's 2024/5 Global Education Monitoring Report identifies establishing expectations, supporting learning, fostering collaboration and developing people as dimensions of educational leadership, while recognising substantial contextual variation (UNESCO, 2024). The World Bank (2018) also distinguishes school attendance and institutional provision from demonstrated learning, emphasising that weak management and governance may interfere with educational processes. These analyses inform the questions asked here; none supplies measurements of the participating schools. An analysis centred on Likasi I must therefore be transparent about its own data, sampling and evidential limits.

In Likasi I, the management of approved private secondary schools raises concrete administrative questions concerning the implementation of programmes, school schedules, staff coordination, institutional records and material provision. Each of these activities has consequences for everyday operations, although the prevalence of irregularities cannot be established without school records or inspections. The investigation therefore focuses on dimensions that can be described from questionnaire responses, without equating unfavourable ratings with proven regulatory violations.

This study addresses the following question: how are selected managerial practices and administrative operating conditions perceived in state-approved private secondary schools in Likasi I? Its objectives are to describe reported consultation, clarity of instructions, initiative and supervision; examine perceived fairness, procedural clarity, financial transparency, resources and collaboration; and identify the limits of statistical interpretation when only aggregated response frequencies are available. No causal relationship between leadership and school outcomes is hypothesised or tested.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Study design and evidential basis

A descriptive quantitative approach was used to examine aggregated questionnaire responses from the Likasi I educational sub-division. Ten questions employed five ordered response categories and each yielded 118 recorded answers. The analysis addresses item-level frequency distributions. Individual questionnaires, school identifiers, interview transcripts and documentary inspection

records were not accessible for verification. Consequently, the study cannot reconstruct individual response patterns, infer respondent-level correlations or independently verify a school-level sampling design. The evidence is treated as cross-sectional descriptive material; the precise observation period is not established.

2.2. Setting and administrative frame

The institutional listing identified 74 private secondary schools in the Likasi I educational sub-division, with entries for headteachers, administrative staff and teachers. Its displayed totals were internally inconsistent: the printed grand total was 1,471 persons (74 headteachers, 145 administrative employees and 1,252 teachers), whereas addition of the component entries gave 1,477 (74, 151 and 1,252, respectively). The pre-calculated school-row totals added to 1,475, indicating a further row-level arithmetic discrepancy. These values cannot establish a reliable population denominator. Accordingly, no sampling fraction, school coverage rate or respondent response rate is reported.

2.3. Participants and unit of observation

All ten item distributions totalled 118 responses. Although several questions concern administrative personnel, precise respondent roles, eligibility rules, recruitment procedures, numbers invited and numbers by school were not recoverable from the aggregated counts. The denominator therefore represents the number of answers to each item, not a demonstrably random sample of administrative employees. Identical item totals do not by themselves establish that the same 118 individuals answered every question. Because respondents cannot be assigned to specific schools, intra-school dependence and between-school differences could not be estimated.

2.4. Period of data collection

Data collection was conducted in April 2026, during the 2025–2026 school year. The study adopted a cross-sectional design to examine managerial practices and school functioning in state-approved private secondary schools in Likasi I, Democratic Republic of the Congo. All statistical analyses were based on the observed response frequencies collected during this period. No comparisons across school years were undertaken.

2.5. Variables and measurement

The response options were 'never', 'rarely', 'sometimes', 'often' and 'always', in ordinal order. A validated multi-item leadership scale was not documented, and equivalence of wording across all questions could not be established. For presentation, five questions were grouped under managerial interactions (consultation, instruction clarity, initiative, monitoring and overall management) and five under operating arrangements (task fairness, procedures, financial transparency, resources and collaboration). This grouping was conceptual only. No factor analysis, reliability coefficient or aggregate latent-variable score was calculated.

2.6. Outcome-variable limitations

School functioning was not operationalised as an independent outcome variable. Data on curriculum completion, adherence to the school calendar, teaching quality, attendance, examination results and verified legal compliance were not linked to the questionnaire responses. It was therefore impossible to estimate a statistical association between specific managerial practices and independently measured school outcomes. The analysis remains descriptive, rather than substituting managerial opinion items for indicators of student or school performance.

2.7. Data extraction and quality control

Observed counts were checked within each item and each five-category distribution summed to 118. Percentage values were computed from the category counts. Institutional staff entries were added by column and compared with printed totals to assess numerical consistency. Pearson chi-square contributions were calculated using the difference between observed and expected frequencies. No missing individual records were reconstructed and no school-level observations were imputed.

2.8. Descriptive analysis

For each item, absolute counts and percentages were calculated using 118 as the denominator. The two favourable categories, 'often' and 'always', were also combined for succinct comparison with the two unfavourable categories, 'never' and 'rarely'. This recoding does not transform an ordinal variable into a continuous measure and does not imply equal distances between adjacent categories. The intermediate category, 'sometimes', was displayed separately. Labels such as 'positive' and 'negative' were interpreted in relation to each item's wording; they did not automatically represent audited effectiveness. In particular, for the monitoring item, frequency is not sufficient to assess the appropriateness or quality of supervision.

2.9. Inferential analysis

Exploratory Pearson chi-square goodness-of-fit tests compared each observed item distribution with a hypothetical uniform distribution (20% per response category). With 118 responses per item, the expected count was 23.6 in every category. The statistic had four degrees of freedom, and the 5% reference critical value was approximately 9.49. Asymptotic p-values were obtained from the chi-square distribution; Holm-adjusted p-values were calculated across ten comparisons. The uniform benchmark was not

derived from a behavioural theory and should not be interpreted as a normative standard for school management. Tests of departure from this benchmark neither measure associations nor demonstrate effects on school performance. Independence of responses could not be assessed without respondent and school identifiers.

2.10. Decision rules and reproducibility

The interpretation prioritised absolute counts and category proportions. Exploratory p-values are reported with correction for multiple testing, and adjusted values above 0.05 were not described as significant. All observed counts are displayed so percentages can be reproduced using a denominator of 118; each chi-square statistic can be reproduced using five expected counts of 23.6. Statistical comparisons across staff roles, school characteristics or performance indicators were not possible.

2.11. Ethical and reporting information

Information sufficient to establish a specific ethics-review decision, authorisation for access to schools, informed-consent procedure or data-protection arrangements was not available for verification in the aggregated analytic material. No claim of formal ethics approval or documented consent is therefore made. Confirmation of the procedures actually followed, including confidentiality protections and the right to decline participation, is required before journal submission.

3. RESULTS

Each of the ten questionnaire items comprised 118 recorded answers. Tables 1–10 present the frequency distributions, percentages and contributions to the exploratory goodness-of-fit statistics. The results describe reported managerial practices and administrative conditions, not observed differences in educational performance.

3.1. Consultation of administrative personnel in decision-making

Table 1. Frequency of consultation of administrative staff by the headteacher before administrative decisions

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	23	19.5	23.6	0.02
Rarely	27	22.9	23.6	0.49
Sometimes	39	33.1	23.6	10.05
Often	18	15.3	23.6	1.33
Always	11	9.3	23.6	6.73
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**18.61**

Note. Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 18.61$, $p = 0.00094$; Holm-adjusted $p = 0.00656$ (family of 10 tests).

Consultation before administrative decisions was most frequently described as occurring 'sometimes' (39/118, 33.1%). 'Never' and 'rarely' accounted together for 50 responses (42.4%), while 'often' and 'always' accounted for 29 (24.6%). This pattern suggests intermittent rather than consistently frequent consultation among the recorded responses. It does not establish that the headteachers never consult teachers, parents or other groups, because the item was framed around administrative personnel. Nor does it reveal whether consultation concerned staffing, instructional support, budgets or routine scheduling. The five response categories differed substantially from equal frequencies, $\chi^2(4) = 18.61$, $p = .00094$, with Holm-adjusted $p = .00656$.

3.2. Clarity of instructions for assigned tasks

Table 2. Clarity and precision of instructions received for the performance of assigned tasks

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	19	16.1	23.6	0.90
Rarely	31	26.3	23.6	2.32
Sometimes	13	11.0	23.6	4.76
Often	18	15.3	23.6	1.33
Always	37	31.4	23.6	7.61
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**16.92**

Note. Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 16.92$, $p = 0.00201$; Holm-adjusted $p = 0.01205$ (family of 10 tests).

Clarity and precision of instructions showed a different pattern. The largest category was 'always' (37/118, 31.4%), followed by 'rarely' (31/118, 26.3%). Together, 'often' and 'always' represented 55 respondents (46.6%), compared with 50 (42.4%) in 'never' or 'rarely'. The distribution was therefore divided rather than consistently positive. The goodness-of-fit statistic was $\chi^2(4) = 16.92$, $p =$

.00201, Holm-adjusted p = .01205. Because the responses were anonymous aggregate counts without school labels, the contrast between groups could not be attributed to particular establishments, leadership approaches or types of administrative duty.

3.3. Encouragement of administrative initiatives

Table 3. Encouragement of initiatives and suggestions proposed by administrative personnel

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	15	12.7	23.6	3.13
Rarely	26	22.0	23.6	0.24
Sometimes	23	19.5	23.6	0.02
Often	20	16.9	23.6	0.55
Always	34	28.8	23.6	4.58
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**8.53**

Note. **Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 8.53$, p = 0.07412; Holm-adjusted p = 0.29648 (family of 10 tests).**

Encouragement of staff suggestions and initiatives produced 54 responses in 'often' or 'always' (45.8%), 41 in 'never' or 'rarely' (34.7%) and 23 in 'sometimes' (19.5%). The most frequent single category was 'always' (34/118, 28.8%). Despite this category being the mode, the five frequencies did not depart significantly from uniformity at the conventional 5% level, $\chi^2(4) = 8.53$, p = .0741. It would be incorrect to infer from this test that no differences in initiative encouragement exist between schools or that managerial practice is unrelated to staff autonomy. Neither hypothesis was tested, and the table is not organised by establishment.

3.4. Fairness in allocating administrative duties

Table 4. Perceived fairness in the allocation of administrative duties

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	18	15.3	23.6	1.33
Rarely	21	17.8	23.6	0.29
Sometimes	25	21.2	23.6	0.08
Often	26	22.0	23.6	0.24
Always	28	23.7	23.6	0.82
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**2.76**

Note. Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 2.76$, p = 0.59829; Holm-adjusted p = 0.59829 (family of 10 tests).

Perceived fairness in the allocation of administrative duties was spread comparatively evenly across the categories: 18, 21, 25, 26 and 28, from 'never' through 'always'. More respondents selected 'often' or 'always' (54/118, 45.8%) than 'never' or 'rarely' (39/118, 33.1%). Yet the overall dispersion was close to the equal-frequency reference distribution, $\chi^2(4) = 2.76$, p = .5983. The appropriate conclusion is that the aggregate categorical distribution did not show a detectable departure from the particular uniform benchmark. It is not evidence that task allocation was equally fair in every school, nor that respondents agreed with one another about what constituted fairness.

3.5. Monitoring of administrative work

Table 5. Regular monitoring of administrative staff activities by the headteacher

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	34	28.8	23.6	4.58
Rarely	19	16.1	23.6	0.90
Sometimes	21	17.8	23.6	0.29
Often	26	22.0	23.6	0.24
Always	18	15.3	23.6	1.33
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**7.34**

Note. Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 7.34$, p = 0.11902; Holm-adjusted p = 0.29648 (family of 10 tests).

Monitoring of administrative activities elicited 'never' from 34 respondents (28.8%), the largest single group. A total of 53 responses (44.9%) fell into 'never' or 'rarely', while 44 (37.3%) fell into 'often' or 'always'. The goodness-of-fit test yielded $\chi^2(4) = 7.34$, $p = .1190$. Even where supervision appeared infrequent, the table did not record its intensity, focus, quality or supportive character. Consequently, frequency alone cannot distinguish a problematic absence of oversight from delegated responsibility, nor can it explain whether monitoring affects instructional outcomes.

3.6. Clarity of administrative procedures

Table 6. Clarity of administrative procedures in day-to-day school operations

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	39	33.1	23.6	10.05
Rarely	30	25.4	23.6	1.74
Sometimes	21	17.8	23.6	0.29
Often	13	11.0	23.6	4.76
Always	15	12.7	23.6	3.13
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**19.97**

Note. Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 19.97$, $p = 0.00051$; Holm-adjusted $p = 0.00456$ (family of 10 tests).

The clarity of administrative procedures was reported as 'never' by 39 respondents (33.1%) and 'rarely' by 30 (25.4%), making 58.5% combined; 28 respondents (23.7%) selected 'often' or 'always'. The recalculated statistic was $\chi^2(4) = 19.97$, $p = .00051$, Holm-adjusted $p = .00456$. These are respondents' ratings, not verified instances of regulatory non-compliance.

3.7. Transparency of financial management

Table 7. Transparency of financial resource management in the operation of the school

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	41	34.7	23.6	12.83
Rarely	26	22.0	23.6	0.24
Sometimes	20	16.9	23.6	0.55
Often	14	11.9	23.6	3.91
Always	17	14.4	23.6	1.85
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**19.37**

Note. Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 19.37$, $p = 0.00066$; Holm-adjusted $p = 0.00531$ (family of 10 tests).

Financial transparency received 'never' or 'rarely' from 67 respondents (56.8%), compared with 31 (26.3%) reporting 'often' or 'always': $\chi^2(4) = 19.37$, $p = .00066$, Holm-adjusted $p = .00531$. These frequencies cannot establish whether specific financial regulations were breached or whether a formal account audit would reach the same conclusion.

3.8. Availability of administrative tools and resources

Table 8. Availability of the tools and resources required for administrative work

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	42	35.6	23.6	14.35
Rarely	27	22.9	23.6	0.49
Sometimes	19	16.1	23.6	0.90
Often	12	10.2	23.6	5.70
Always	18	15.3	23.6	1.33
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**22.76**

Note. Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 22.76$, $p = 0.00014$; Holm-adjusted $p = 0.00141$ (family of 10 tests).

Availability of administrative resources received 69 low-frequency responses ('never' or 'rarely'; 58.5%) and 30 high-frequency responses ('often' or 'always'; 25.4%): $\chi^2(4) = 22.76$, $p = .00014$, Holm-adjusted $p = .00141$. The questionnaire results do not establish which specific material, documentary or technological resources were lacking.

3.9. Collaboration between administrators and teachers

Table 9. Perceived effectiveness of collaboration between administrative and teaching personnel

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	28	23.7	23.6	0.82
Rarely	14	11.9	23.6	3.91
Sometimes	24	20.3	23.6	0.01
Often	32	27.1	23.6	2.99
Always	20	16.9	23.6	0.55
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**8.27**

Note. Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 8.27$, p = 0.08213; Holm-adjusted p = 0.29648 (family of 10 tests).

Collaboration between administrative and teaching staff received its largest count in 'often' (32/118, 27.1%). 'Often' and 'always' together represented 52 responses (44.1%), whereas 'never' and 'rarely' represented 42 (35.6%). The chi-square statistic was $\chi^2(4) = 8.27$, p = .0821, which remained non-significant after correction. The data therefore show a mixed collaboration profile, rather than a uniformly poor relationship between administrators and teachers. Whether collaboration involved joint lesson planning, attendance management, disciplinary decisions or the resolution of staff concerns was not determined.

3.10. Overall adequacy of management by the headteacher

Table 10. Perceived adequacy of school management ensured by the headteacher

Response category	Observed (n)	Responses (%)	Expected (n)	χ^2 contribution
Never	32	27.1	23.6	2.99
Rarely	10	8.5	23.6	7.84
Sometimes	23	19.5	23.6	0.02
Often	31	26.3	23.6	2.32
Always	22	18.6	23.6	0.11
Total	**118**	**100.0**	**118.0**	**13.27**

Note. Expected counts are 23.6 in each category under an equal-probability benchmark. $\chi^2(4) = 13.27$, p = 0.01002; Holm-adjusted p = 0.05012 (family of 10 tests).

The final item asked whether the headteacher ensured sound management. 'Never' was selected by 32 respondents (27.1%); 'often' by 31 (26.3%); 'always' by 22 (18.6%). Overall, 53 respondents (44.9%) selected 'often' or 'always', 42 (35.6%) selected 'never' or 'rarely', and 23 (19.5%) selected 'sometimes'. The recomputed chi-square statistic was $\chi^2(4) = 13.27$, p = .0100. This nominal result no longer met the 5% threshold after adjustment across ten tests (Holm p = .05012). It should not be described as a robust association between the headteacher's style and the functioning of the school; the item asked for an overall perception and was analysed without a predictor variable.

3.11. Summary of the ten exploratory tests

Across the ten items, five distributions remained below the adjusted 5% threshold: decision consultation, instruction clarity, administrative procedure clarity, financial transparency and resource availability. The other five did not. This distinction is about their relative departure from an assumed equal allocation among five response categories; it is not a ranking of educational importance. For example, monitoring and collaboration can merit managerial attention even when their five-category distributions do not depart significantly from uniformity. In all ten items, the most informative findings are the actual reported category frequencies and the patterns they reveal about the variability of administrative experiences.

3.12. Quality check of the school-staff inventory

A numerical check of the institutional staff listing showed a discrepancy between column totals (74 headteachers, 151 administrative employees and 1,252 teachers; total 1,477) and the printed overall figure of 1,471. School-row totals added to 1,475; one row total was understated by two persons. The actual administrative population therefore remains uncertain. These inconsistencies preclude a defensible response rate or claim that the 74 listed schools were proportionately represented among respondents.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Interpretation of the reported management practices

The results indicate heterogeneous administrative experiences within the recorded Likasi I responses. Consultation before decisions was more often intermittent or infrequent than routine; instruction clarity was assessed differently by different respondents; and

procedures, financial transparency and resources received high proportions of low-frequency ratings. Judgements about task fairness, initiative and collaboration were comparatively dispersed. These patterns do not justify classifying school leaders uniformly as authoritarian, democratic or ineffective, because no direct validated leadership-style measure was administered.

This heterogeneity is compatible with research that treats educational leadership as a combination of practices rather than a stable personal type. Bush and Glover (2014) show that models of school leadership capture different emphases and should not be equated with observed organisational outcomes. Day et al. (2016) describe the integration of instructional and transformational strategies in successful school-improvement settings. In Likasi I, the finding that consultations are often intermittent cannot by itself establish the dominance of directive leadership, especially when nearly half the responses to instruction clarity, staff initiative and perceived management adequacy fall into 'often' or 'always'. The questionnaire measures particular reported behaviours and conditions rather than a validated leadership style profile.

A practical distinction emerges between clarity of instructions and participation in decisions. The first concerns what workers understand they are expected to do; the second concerns whether their perspectives shape decisions. Respondents may receive clear orders without participating in their formulation, and participation may occur even when subsequent task allocation is confusing. This difference matters for governance recommendations. A school can improve the accessibility of written instructions through reliable records, schedules and work plans. Improving participation, by contrast, requires processes through which administrative or teaching staff can raise concerns and contribute relevant information. Sebastian et al. (2016) found that the role of teacher leadership varied by organisational process in the schools they studied, reinforcing the need to distinguish specific practices instead of invoking participation as an undifferentiated remedy.

The reported weakness in procedural clarity has a particular significance in schools operating under a common statutory framework. The 2014 DRC education law identifies the duties of educational authorities and the conditions applying to private educational establishments, but lawful authorisation does not establish that every worker has access to usable, current internal procedures. Administrative clarity depends on whether responsibilities, decision routes, reporting deadlines and accountability arrangements are documented and understood. A low rating on 'procedural clarity' may indicate that a procedure is missing, inconsistently applied or poorly communicated. The questionnaire does not distinguish these explanations. A subsequent investigation should therefore compare perceptions with actual school regulations, registers, duty statements and documentary instructions before diagnosing a legal breach (Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2014).

Financial transparency is related but not identical to the adequacy of financial resources. Where respondents rarely perceive transparent management, several mechanisms are possible: budget information may not be communicated; information may be communicated but difficult to interpret; relevant staff may be excluded from decisions; or the question may elicit distrust associated with other institutional experiences. The item does not identify fraud, misappropriation or any specific legal violation. It does, however, identify a question appropriate for administrative review: what budget information is available to authorised participants, in what format, with what opportunity for explanation and oversight? Such a review would need to respect the governance rules applicable to each private school and avoid assuming that all employees are entitled to identical financial documents.

The resource-availability pattern is pertinent to the feasibility of administrative work. More than half the responses placed availability in 'never' or 'rarely'. Preparing schedules, maintaining attendance records, processing correspondence and coordinating instruction may depend on equipment, information, trained colleagues, workspace and time. Shortages in these inputs could hinder implementation despite managerial intentions. The World Bank (2018) emphasises the relationship between resources, management arrangements and conditions for learning. The survey does not identify which resources were absent or their monetary value; a task-based inventory would be needed to specify the gaps.

The distribution for staff initiative also cautions against simplistic explanations. Responses were dispersed rather than concentrated, and approximately 46% selected the upper two categories. Even when a principal retains formal authority, the opportunity to offer solutions can be present in selected areas of school activity. Harris (2013) considers both the advantages and tensions of distributing leadership, while Spillane (2006) conceptualises leadership as occurring through situated interactions. The implication is not that every decision must be delegated. Instead, responsibilities could be differentiated according to regulatory authority, professional expertise and the consequences of the decision. An evaluation would then ask whether the decision process fits the task and whether participants can account for the action taken.

The weakly patterned monitoring responses likewise resist one-sided interpretation. A 'never' response may reflect a shortage of supervision, but a 'frequently' response might represent developmental coaching or intrusive control. Monitoring of school records, follow-up to staff concerns and pedagogical supervision are not interchangeable. Hallinger (2011) emphasises a focus on learning within school leadership, whereas Grissom et al. (2021) distinguish instructional interactions from wider organisational management. A valid assessment of managerial supervision in Likasi I should therefore document what was checked, by whom, at what intervals and with what follow-up, rather than treating the mere frequency of monitoring as a verified quality indicator.

Collaboration between administrative and teaching personnel is another mechanism with potential relevance to school routines. Information about the school calendar, staffing and classroom needs must cross professional boundaries. Interactions can be slowed by unclear responsibilities, inadequate meeting structures or shortages of time and material support. OECD (2020) documents why

collaboration and decision-making autonomy are relevant features of teachers' and school leaders' work, but its international estimates should not be projected onto this Congolese sample. Here, 44.1% reported collaboration 'often' or 'always', whereas 35.6% selected 'never' or 'rarely'. The data support the modest conclusion that respondents differed in their perceptions; they do not reveal whether this variation is mainly between schools, roles or individual experiences.

The apparent divide in instruction clarity, together with the contrasting consultation and collaboration profiles, raises a question about the distribution of managerial experience. Some schools might have more explicit structures than others, while within the same school different staff groups might encounter different procedures. The aggregate material cannot distinguish those explanations. Hox et al. (2018) explain why data from individuals nested within institutions may require multilevel analysis when examining organisational influences. It would be inappropriate to apply such methods retrospectively without school identifiers and adequate numbers of units. Nevertheless, the possibility of clustering shows why the current goodness-of-fit results should be regarded as provisional descriptions rather than population-level estimates with known error rates.

4.2. Statistical interpretation and multiple testing

The chi-square goodness-of-fit results require narrow interpretation. This procedure evaluates whether a single categorical response distribution differs from a specified set of expected proportions. It does not assess associations between headteachers' practices and school functioning, or differences between respondent groups. For five categories and no estimated parameters, the degrees of freedom equal four, with a 5% reference critical value of approximately 9.49. The null hypothesis used here assigns a proportion of 0.20 to each category. Its rejection indicates non-uniform frequencies, not evidence of effective or ineffective leadership (Field, 2018).

A uniform response distribution is not a theoretically grounded indicator of satisfactory school management. Responses concentrated at 'always' and responses concentrated at 'never' could both produce small p-values, despite their opposite substantive meanings. Conversely, a distribution close to equal proportions might mask heterogeneity between schools or roles. The uniform proportions were used solely as an exploratory reference; the distribution of observed answers remains the principal result. Future research should formulate comparisons against substantive hypotheses and collect appropriate outcome measures.

Multiplicity is a further concern. Ten statistical tests increase the chance of reporting at least one nominally significant result by accident when multiple nulls hold. Holm adjustment was applied here as a transparent family-wise procedure, not as a solution to the weaknesses of the equal-probability null. Five comparisons remained significant, while the general management item had an adjusted p-value of approximately .05012 and therefore did not cross the specified 5% threshold. More importantly, none of the ten chi-square statistics measures a relationship between two variables. Even a very small p-value cannot recover missing information about school performance, respondent role or the chronology of management practices and outcomes.

4.3. Sampling, timing and measurement limitations

Incomplete sampling information restricts generalisation more seriously than the nominal p-values suggest. The institutional listing has inconsistent population totals, and the procedures by which the 118 item responses were obtained cannot be reconstructed. Inclusion probabilities are unknown and the number of participating schools cannot be verified. A list of 74 schools is not equivalent to evidence that each participated. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasise, research designs must match the claims they are intended to support. These data answer a descriptive question about recorded responses, not a population-level question about every approved private secondary school in Likasi I.

Uncertainty about the survey period prevents an analysis of change across school years and obstructs links between the ratings and specific administrative reforms. Dated questionnaires or survey exports would be needed to establish when the observations occurred. In the absence of that verification, comparisons by academic year, school calendar period or policy implementation phase are not justified.

The present measures also leave several substantive dimensions of school functioning unobserved: completion of national curricula, adherence to the school calendar, completeness of administrative records, staffing continuity, legal approval conditions and student learning outcomes. The UNESCO (2024) report distinguishes leadership processes from educational results, a distinction that is essential here. Frequency ratings may identify domains that merit follow-up, but they are not substitutes for documented curriculum coverage, examination performance or inspection findings.

Future analytical work would require a measurement plan that separates managerial practices, intermediate organisational conditions and school outcomes. For instance, staff consultation, feedback and supervision could be measured with several tested items; the availability of procedures and materials could be checked through a structured document and equipment audit; calendar compliance could be measured from dated schedules; and curriculum coverage could be checked through validated class-level records. School examination results might be relevant outcomes if comparability and potential confounding were addressed. Such a design would allow explicit modelling of associations while accounting for school size, staffing, location and institutional characteristics. Longitudinal or otherwise credible causal designs would be necessary before attributing changes in outcomes to particular leadership practices (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Heck & Hallinger, 2009).

Four limitations determine the scope of inference. First, only aggregated response tables were accessible, preventing verification against individual questionnaires and precluding cross-tabulations, scale reliability tests and multilevel modelling. Second, institutional population totals were inconsistent and recruitment and respondent characteristics were incompletely documented. Third, the fieldwork date could not be confirmed. Fourth, the questions measured reported perceptions rather than observed behaviour, audited governance or educational outcomes. These limitations do not invalidate the recorded item frequencies, but they restrict the conclusions to descriptive patterns.

4.4. Implications for school management and inspection

Within those limits, the findings indicate a set of operational questions for school management and educational inspection. Administrators could examine how staff are informed about decisions, how they locate and interpret internal procedures, whether budget information is explained to those with relevant responsibilities, and which basic resources are unavailable for assigned tasks. Inspectors and school heads could then triangulate these perceptions with documents and observation rather than relying only on a summary score. The DRC statutory framework supplies the legal context for these checks; educational leadership research supplies a reason to examine professional relationships as well as formal rules (Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2020). The practical value of the study lies in directing attention to identifiable administrative processes, not in claiming a demonstrated causal effect.

5. CONCLUSION

The available Likasi I data comprised ten distributions of 118 questionnaire responses concerning the work of heads of state-approved private secondary schools and their administrative environment. They showed intermittent consultation in decision-making, mixed assessments of instruction clarity and staff initiative, and substantial low-frequency ratings for procedure clarity, financial transparency and resource availability. Patterns for perceived fairness, monitoring and collaboration were more dispersed. Five of the ten comparisons with a uniform category distribution remained below 0.05 after Holm adjustment. None of these tests established a relationship between managerial practice and school functioning.

The absence of confirmed respondent-level and sampling records, uncertainty about the observation period and inconsistencies in administrative staff totals preclude stronger conclusions about school differences, statutory compliance, educational outcomes or causal effects. The practical priority is to review decision-making communication, written procedures, financial reporting and access to administrative resources with the personnel concerned, then verify reported concerns against institutional records. Assessment of leadership effects on school functioning would require separately measured practices and outcomes.

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