Agile Public Administration: Partnership and Digital Transformation for Citizen Centric Service Delivery.

Integration of Linguistics, Mental Health, & Wellness for Responsive Governance

BY
Ireen Moonga & Rachael Mabuku Kabeta
Mulungushi University, Zambia

Introduction

- Effective governance requires linguistic inclusivity, mental health literacy, and wellness.

- Head teachers serve as cultural mediators in multilingual settings.

- These domains support holistic, human-centered school leadership.

Background & Rationale

- Mother tongue based and Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy supports local languages but implementation challenges persist.

- Free education has contributed a % to this teacher stress thus increasing the need for psychosocial support.

- Few studies integrate language, mental health, and wellness in school governance.

Problem Statement

- There are implementation gaps between policy and school realities.

- Head teachers must address linguistic diversity and psychosocial stress.

- Lack of integrative governance models combining all three domains.

- Lack of commitment to work by some teachers- stiff correction leading to mental and health unwellness (Lubbungu, et al. 2022)

- Headteachers may be more exam-driven due to pressure for school ranking rather than wellness-driven reforms.

- Inadequate Professional Continuous Development- Teachers receive fragmented workshops rather than long-term competency-based mentorship in linguistics, psychosocial support, or wellness integration in order to trust the system.

Purpose & Objective

▶ To explore practices that foster responsive, human-centered governance.

▶ To analyze how head teachers integrate linguistics, mental health, and wellness.

Significance of the Study

- Advances understanding of inclusivity in governance.

- Highlights mental health literacy as a leadership competency.

- Introduces the Integrated Human-Centered Governance Framework.

Theoretical Frameworks

- ▶ Vygotsky's **Social-Cultural Theory**: Language mediates learning & participation (Vygotsky, 1978)

- ▶ Maslow's **Humanistic Education Theory**: Meeting emotional needs enhances motivation (Maslow, 1943)

- ▶ **Transformational Leadership**: Inspires, supports, mentors (Downton, 1973).

Key Literature Insights

- Linguistic inclusivity improves participation & sense of belonging (De Jong, E. J., Coulter, Z., & Tsai, M.-C. 2020).

- Mental health literacy reduces stigma & supports well-being (Downton, J. V. (1973)

- Wellness programs enhance motivation and staff cohesion (De Jong, E. J., Coulter, Z., & Tsai, M.-C. 2020)

Methodology

- Interpretive qualitative design.

- Study site: Kabwe District primary schools.

- Purposive sampling of 16 head teachers.

- Data: Interviews & observations; thematic analysis.

Findings: Linguistic Inclusivity

- Use of local languages enhances engagement.
- Reduces miscommunication and builds trust.
- Strengthens cultural identity and belonging.

Findings: Mental Health Literacy

- ▶ Head teachers identify early signs of distress.
- ▶ Peer counseling and check-ins normalize support.
- ▶ Empathy improves morale and classroom climate.

Findings: Wellness Practices

- Wellness clubs, sports, retreats, and social funds.

- Boost teacher motivation and unity.

- Wellness linked to productivity and retention.

Integration of Themes

- Language builds communication bridges.
- Mental health literacy deepens empathy.
- Wellness fosters sustainable teamwork.
- Together → responsive, holistic governance.

Discussion

- Findings align with sociocultural, humanistic, and transformational theories.

- Governance is relational, empathetic, and wellness-oriented.

- Leadership practices improve learning environments.

4 Pillars of Transformational Leadership

1.Communication Competence (Bilingual/Multilingual)

▶ Clear, culturally respectful communication in local languages and English.

2. **Modelling of Ethical Behaviour**

▶ Integrity, fairness, punctuality, non-violence, and accountability.

3. **Data-Informed Decision Making**

▶ Use attendance, performance, and wellbeing data to guide improvements.

4. **High Expectations for All**

▶ Belief that every teacher can achieve good results.

Conclusion

- **Transformational leadership**-engine

- **Linguistic inclusivity**-multilingual participation, inclusive communication

- **Mental health literacy**-empathetic leadership, emotional support, awareness and stigma reduction

- **Wellness-**health programmes, recreation and team-building, recognition and supoort systems

References

▶ Bradshaw, M., Gericke, H., Coetzee, B. J., Stallard, P., Human, S., & Loades, M. (2021). Universal school-based mental health programmes in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review and narrative synthesis. Preventive Medicine, 143, 106317. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.106317 (ScienceDirect)

▶ Downton, J. V. (1973). Rebel Leadership: Commitment and Charisma in a Revolutionary Process.

▶ Lekamge, R. B., Jain, R., Sheen, J., Solanki, P., Zhou, Y., Romero, L., … & Ilic, D. (2025). Systematic review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of whole-school interventions promoting mental health and preventing risk behaviours in adolescence. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 54(2), 271–289. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-025-02135-6 (SpringerLink)

▶ Dieu Yin, S. Z., Low, M. K., & Mishu, M. P. (2025). School-based interventions to prevent anxiety and depression in children and adolescents in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review. PLoS One, 20(4), e0316825. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0316825 (PLOS)

▶ Cavanagh, M., … (2024). The theoretical and evidence-based components of Whole School Approaches (WSA): A scoping review. (Published July 21,

THANK YOU