

Leadership Factors in the Implementation of LSHE/CSE in Zambia: A Literature-Based Review

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Abstract

This literature-based review critically examines the leadership factors influencing the implementation of Life Skills Health Education (LSHE), formerly known as Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), in Zambian secondary schools. The paper synthesizes empirical and theoretical insights from global, regional, and national perspectives to contextualize the persistent challenges facing adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH). Anchored in three theoretical lenses—Higgins' 8-S Framework, the Leadership Obstacles Course (LOC) Model, and the Upper Echelons Theory—the review interrogates leadership styles, institutional capacities, stakeholder attitudes, and cultural dynamics. Particular emphasis is placed on the role of school leadership in policy execution, curriculum integration, and strategic stakeholder engagement. The findings reveal that transformational and democratic leadership styles are central to effective LSHE/CSE implementation, especially in resource-constrained and culturally complex environments. The study further identifies critical gaps in leadership training, policy support, resource mobilization, and inter-sectoral coordination. By situating LSHE/CSE within a leadership discourse, the article contributes to a deeper understanding of how leadership practices can be reimagined to improve educational outcomes and promote adolescent well-being in Zambia.

Keywords: Leadership factors, Life Skills Health Education (LSHE), Policy Implementation, Stakeholder Engagement

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1. Introduction

The paper presents the critical review of literature relevant to the research. According to Booth et al. (2021), a literature review is conventionally understood to be a methodical and critical analysis of the most significant published scholarly literature on a certain topic. In order to put the reviewed literature in context and to show what other authors and researchers have to say about it, this article introduces it from a global, regional, and national (local) perspective. As stated, the goal of a literature review is to find information and create a solid foundation of knowledge for future research.

Literature review also offers details on other academic non-research endeavours and information that could help with future study on a specific subject (Karunarathna et al., 2024). Such information and knowledge could help with the conception and design of future research projects in addition to helping with the draughting of scholarly papers. A deeper understanding of a particular issue is aided by other reasons for performing literature reviews; these reasons may not align with the new researcher's intended methodology, but they could still be advantageous. It helps choose the best research design to address the study issue (Karunarathna et al., 2024).

This paper contains the theoretical and empirical review of literature related to the topic and objectives. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the study are presented and justified in this article. In addition, the research gaps are reported.

1.2 Defining an adolescent

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescents as persons between 10 and 19 years of age. (WHO, 2022). Global organisations like the United Nations and World Health Organisation designate the time between childhood and adulthood as adolescents (10–19 years old), youth (15–24 years old), and young people (10–24 years old). As all these age groups are included in the target group for the purpose of this dissertation, the terms adolescents, youth, and young people will all be used. Adolescence is more than just a stage of life. This is an active time in life, full of possibilities and difficulties alike (Eccles, Lord & Buchanan, 2018). There are biochemical, physical, and intellectual changes occurring throughout this time of transition from childhood to adulthood (Eccles et al., 2018).

According to Soenens, Vansteenkiste and Beyers (2019), adolescence is also a period of broadening perspectives, understanding oneself, and gaining independence. While there may be correlations in both mental and physical transformations that this age group experiences globally, societies may differ in their understanding of this stage of life (Magnussen, 2015). Adolescence is a term that is well-established in certain nations but is still relatively new or developing in others. Legal markers are used in a lot of western countries to signify the adult transition. Consequently, there is a minimum legal age that is typically set at 16, 18, or 21 years old for consenting to sexual relations and marriage.

In many African societies, adulthood is assumed following initiation rites, marriage, and the normal process of procreation (Lesthaeghe, 2023). These conventional methods of socialisation into adulthood have changed in the last many years. Adolescence is now linked to prolonged schooling and a later marriage age, which frequently results in premarital sex. Adults and religious organisations frequently disapprove of the new lifestyles that young people are leading (Lesthaeghe, 2023). Additionally, as a result of these developments, more young people require knowledge and services related to sexual and reproductive health.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Understanding leadership

Generally, leadership according to Northouse (2021) is “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it”. Nilsen et al. (2020) reported that effective leadership is vital for successful change implementation in healthcare settings. Barr and Dowding (2022) also state that effective people-centred leadership is of great importance towards change implementation. According to Bounds et al. (2013), leadership is the process by which an individual impacts the behaviour of individuals or groups towards goal setting and goal achievement. Additionally, the essence of leadership is persuading people to achieve desired outcomes; it can be characterised as transformational, distributed, democratic, visionary, and instructional (Cherkowski, 2010).

Types of leadership

Leadership is a multifaceted concept, encompassing various styles that can significantly influence organizational effectiveness and employee engagement. Among the prominent leadership styles identified in the literature are transformational, democratic, autocratic, servant, transactional, charismatic and laissez-faire leadership.

Transformative leadership

Transformational leadership refers to the type of leadership that focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to achieve their utmost potential (Bakker et al., 2022). It is a form of leadership that emphasizes on creating and sharing a vision for a group or organization and then inspiring the followers to work towards achieving that vision (Shao et al., 2022). This form of leadership is considered to be highly effective as it tends to result in a committed and highly motivated team that is capable of achieving great things (Bass & Bass, 2019). One of the key characteristics of transformational leadership is the ability to inspire and motivate followers (Bakker et al., 2022).

The main four aspects of transformational leadership are individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence (Bass & Bass, 2019). These four aspects represent the foundation of transformational leadership and are crucial for effective leadership according to Northouse (2021). Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that inspires and motivates employees to achieve optimal performance, resulting in the overall success of the organisation (Alsayed et al., 2020).

According to Shields (2010), transformative leadership is "holding the most promise and potential" to address the social justice and educational demands of complex, varied, and underprivileged communities. Given that transformative leadership is moral and adheres to democratic principles that value human dignity, it may address issues of exclusion. According to Shields and Hesbol (2019), the transformative leadership theory suggests that learners are more likely to concentrate on their studies and achieve better learning outcomes "when the learning environment is inclusive, respectful, and equitable."

These leaders foster a culture of reflection, welcome criticism and skepticism, and establish forums for professional

dialogue where all participants may contribute. The potential of charismatic leadership to forge solid, ethically grounded interpersonal bonds that uplift and empower others is incorporated into transformative leadership (Caldwell et al., 2012). A transformative leadership strategy creates leaders who are willing to try out novel, workable strategies and ways of thinking in their leadership approach. These leaders are also open, inclusive, and appreciate diversity in the pursuit of moral goals.

According to Caldwell et al. (2012), this leadership style blends a strong desire to "achieve previously unachieved organizational outcomes" with a humble personal demeanor. Therefore, SMTs can benefit from the transformative leadership approach as they work to create an inclusive school culture in their individual educational settings to the advancement of knowledge (Precey, 2011). Eight criteria define transformative leadership, according to Shields and Hesbol (2019); moral fortitude; public and private good; critique and promise; interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness; the need for equitable change; new conceptual frameworks and mindsets; democracy emancipation; equity; and redistribution of power. The eight principles are demonstrated in a transformational leadership theory model (Figure 1).

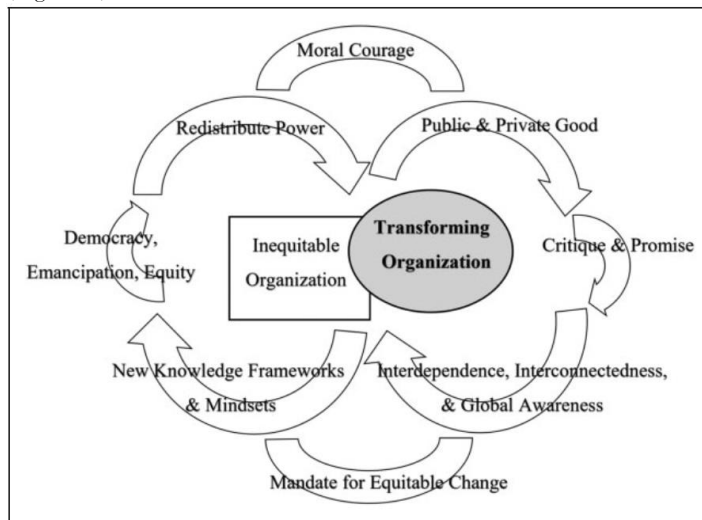


Figure 1: Model of transformative leadership theory (Source: Shields & Hesbol, 2019)

A leader would begin with a mandate for substantial and equitable change, which calls for understanding oneself, the organisation, and the school community, according to Shields and Hesbol (2019). According to Shields and Hesbol (2019), the next step is to modify knowledge frameworks in order to ensure equity by being "culturally and linguistically responsive, eliminating deficit thinking, addressing racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and other prejudices". Redistributing power and striking a balance between the interests of the public and private sectors are crucial, and these two concepts are linked to a shared vision in this study.

The phrases "public and private good" in this study relate to the human and material resources for learning necessary to create an inclusive learning environment (Shields & Hesbol, 2019). Shields and Hesbol (2019) argue that there is a need to emphasise social equality, freedom, equity, and justice as well as making sure that students comprehend interdependence and interrelationships in order for them to become internationally conscious. Additionally, transformative leadership should guarantee both capability and critique, acknowledging that transformation invariably entails certain interactions that demand leaders to exhibit "moral courage" (Shields & Hesbol, 2019).

The paradigm of transformational leadership surfaced as an essential leadership methodology from the influential 1978 study by political sociologist James MacGregor Burns (Vinger & Cilliers (2006:2). With the help of others and a strong moral foundation, transformational leaders work to create an enticing vision of a better future that will affect both social systems and individuals (Precey, 2011:39). In order to "seek to satisfy higher needs, and engage the full person of the follower," leaders in this category must exhibit charismatic behaviours, inspire inspirational motivation, and stimulate the mind (Stewart, 2006:9). Additionally, when they search for "potential motives in followers," transformational leaders take on the task of treating each follower with individual attention (Stewart, 2006:9). The foundation of the transformational leadership method is the idea that the "obligations and dimensions of members in the organisation" are the main focus of leadership (Bush, 2007:396).

Transformational leaders, according to Precey (2011:39), encourage others to follow them by bringing about meaningful and constructive change that turns followers into leaders. "School vision, school goals, and intellectual stimulation" are all developed and articulated by transformational leaders (Bush, 2007:396). Assuming the role of transformational leaders, SMTs can provide teachers with customised support by exemplifying essential organisational principles and best practices, as well as by setting high performance standards, as recommended by Bush (2007:396).

Through the use of "passion enthusiasm" and dynamic interactions with stakeholders in the school community, SMTs can have a beneficial impact on the culture of the school, according to a transformational leadership approach (Bush, 2007:396). SMTs could create institutions that encourage student involvement in school decision-making as transformative leaders (Bush, 2007:396). SMTs must exhibit high levels of interpersonal engagement and possess a "deep

understanding of personal, team, and organisational learning" in order to change the school and create inclusive education cultures (Precey, 2011:39). Transformational leaders have the ability to inspire people to achieve better than planned or anticipated. Setting more demanding standards, giving followers more authority, and attending to their unique needs and personal growth could all help accomplish the desired performance (Lyonga, 2019:327).

Furthermore, according to Lyonga (2019:327), transformational leaders have the power to encourage followers to dedicate themselves to an organization's common vision and objectives while also pushing them to be creative and grow as leaders. First and foremost, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that transformational leadership is "far superior in generating desirable outcomes," which may be advantageous for integration in an educational setting (Caillier, 2016:885). Moreover, the proposition put forth by Caillier (2016:885) suggests that the transformational leadership methodology fosters cultures that are rich and dedicated to the community. Creating systems that encourage involvement in decision-making and distributed leadership within the business is a key component of commitment.

In addition, Stewart (2019) states that transformational leadership includes a shift that improves the relationship and the resources of all parties concerned. Change is essential for a shared commitment to school reform, a higher degree of dedication, and an enhanced ability to accomplish shared goals (Hallinger, 2023). According to Givens (2008:4), transformational leaders have the capacity to empower their subordinates to achieve higher achievements. Additionally, Givens (2008:4) states that by concentrating on each individual's values and connecting those values to the organisational setting in which they function, "transformational leaders are able to enable those whom they lead to reach greater levels of accomplishment."

According to Hallinger (2003), there are seven components of transformational leadership. These are as follows: "individualized support, shared goals, vision, intellectual stimulation, culture building, rewards, high expectations, modelling." Figure 2 below explains these components.

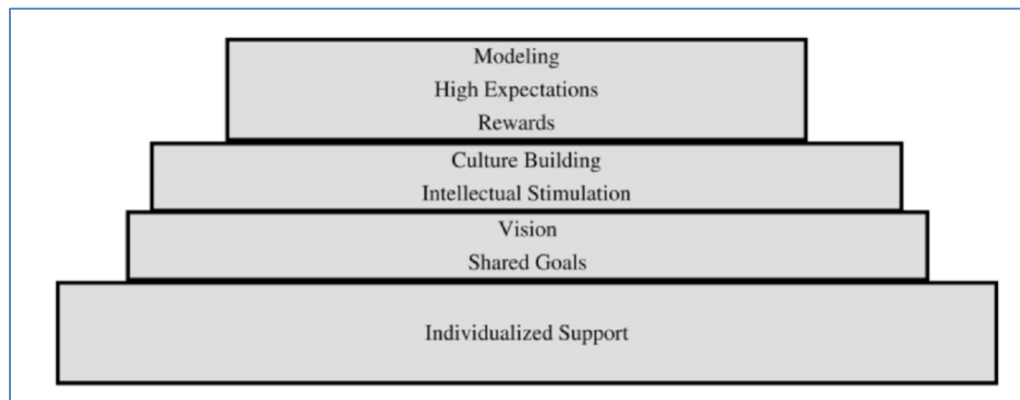


Figure 2: Transformational leadership model (adapted from Leithwood et al., 1998)

According to Hallinger (2003), the transformational leadership model, "behavioural components such as individualised support, intellectual stimulation, and personal vision" suggest that the concept is predicated on a knowledge of each staff member individually. The foundation of the concept is the idea that "leadership does not only assume coordinating and controlling of staff" in order to achieve the desired ends of the organisation, but also aims to persuade individuals to achieve anticipated outcomes (Hallinger, 2003:337).

An inclusive educational culture where leaders are able to support teachers by "building from the bottom-up rather than from the top-down" (Hallinger, 2003:337) is most suited for transformational leadership. When shared leadership techniques are implemented, the transformational approach can be successful. When shared leadership techniques are implemented, the transformational approach can be successful. Leaders collaborate with teams to discover resources that could be used to create an inclusive school culture.

Ubuntu Leadership

In addition to being described as a cultural worldview that embodies all that makes a person human, ubuntu is also seen as a sign of "group solidarity on survival issues vital to the survival of communities" (Msila, 2014:1109). Additionally, according to Msila (2014:1109), the Ubuntu concept is based on five interconnected principles: "the importance of people and relationships over things, participatory decision making and leadership, sharing and collective ownership of opportunities, responsibilities, and challenges, patriotism, and reconciliation as a goal of conflict management."

According to Letseka (2014:547), Ubuntu is an African cultural phenomenon that manifests itself in the expression of "humanity, harmony, reciprocity, compassion, and dignity" (Letseka, 2014:547). According to Letseka (2014), "a person is a person through others," or *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, is derived from the idea that ubuntu defines a person in terms of their relationship with others. According to Msila (2014:1110), the idea of Ubuntu is essential for a lot of organisations, including educational institutions. To support them in their leadership practice, Zambian school administrators require the "best leadership models, philosophies, and strategies," which include establishing an inclusive education culture in their diverse school environments (Msila, 2014:1110). According to Msila (2008:81), the Ubuntu leadership strategy

encourages a culture of interdependence and interrelation among the staff; as a result, SMTs could help teachers discover the path and goal of inclusivity through Ubuntu. Ubuntu fosters the ideals and behaviours of kindness, compassion, selflessness, and respect, which transforms classrooms into effective learning environments (Msila, 2008:70).

Servant leadership

Servant leadership is where leaders interact with followers to achieve authority whilst democratic leadership is when leaders seek input of followers allowing them to take participative roles in decision-making (Cabalquinto, 2022). Generally, servant leadership is a people-centric and moral-based leadership style where leaders act as stewards by prioritising fulfillment of the needs of their followers (Canavesi & Minelli, 2022). Zada et al. (2022) also defines servant leadership as the leadership practice characterised with honesty, high moral standards and stewardship while prioritising needs of the subordinates.

According to Demeke, van Engen and Markos (2024), servant leadership is an effective leadership approach capable of bringing positive changes and innovations in complex organisations. Kül and Sönmez (2021) also support that servant leadership helps in effective change implementation as leaders focus on empowerment, personal development, innovative behaviors and training of followers. As argued by Lui (2024), servant leaders prioritise transparency, two-way communication, innovation and teamwork which are critical success factors for smooth and effective implementation of change.

Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership is a leadership style in which leaders promote compliance of followers through both punishments for failure and rewards for good work (Burns, 2020). The transactional leader possesses authority within the organisational hierarchy to carry out tasks and administer rewards or punishments based on team performance (Purwanto et al., 2020). According to Cherian et al. (2020), this particular leadership style affords the manager the opportunity to effectively oversee and direct the functioning of a group. The leader is granted authority in order to evaluate, rectify, and instruct subordinates when it is observed that the productivity of group members is below the expected standard (Cherian et al., 2020). Additionally, the leader bestows recognition for efficiency and effectiveness once the desired outcome has been achieved (Bass & Bass, 2019; Kubai, 2023). This leadership style necessitates vigilant scrutiny of deviations, blunders, and errors, followed by prompt implementation of corrective measures (Daft, 2020).

Autocratic leadership

Autocratic or authoritarian leadership is a leadership style that is characterised by the centralization of power, when a dominant leader assumes full control and makes key decisions with minimal input from team members (Northouse, 2021). Under this style, leaders have a preference for exercising agency in decision-making processes, relying on their own subjective perceptions, ideas, and judgements (Pizzolitto, Verna & Venditti, 2023). This particular type of leadership is commonly adopted by military establishments, monarchies, and autocratic regimes (Daft, 2020). Occasionally, this particular approach may not yield novel answers to challenges, hence potentially compromising the overall performance of the group (Cherian et al., 2020).

Laissez-faire leadership

Laissez-faire leadership, also known as delegate leadership, is a leadership style characterised by a leader who adopts a relaxed approach and allows group members to participate in the decision-making process (Cherian et al., 2020). According to Thanh and Quang (2022), when employees possess a high level of ability and are capable of independently executing tasks, this particular leadership style has been found to yield favourable productivity outcomes. Nevertheless, the laissez-faire leadership style becomes ineffective in achieving organisational performance in situations where individuals lack the ability to establish their own goals and duties, effectively manage their projects, and resolve their own problems (Lundmark, Richter & Tafvelin, 2022).

Democratic leadership

Democratic leadership, alternatively referred to as participative leadership, is a style of leadership that emphasises the involvement of team members in decision-making processes (Liggett, 2022). The individual in question actively considers the views put forth by the group, yet ultimately retains decision-making authority (Oussible & Tinaztepe, 2022). According to Cherian et al. (2020), the involvement of team members in the decision-making process leads to an improvement in the satisfaction and motivation of subordinates. One limitation of the democratic leadership style pertains to its challenges in making timely short-term decisions (Cherian et al., 2020). Moreover, in circumstances characterised by ambiguous roles and duties or time sensitivity, there is a potential for communication failures and incomplete initiatives (Oussible & Tinaztepe, 2022).

2.2. Conceptualizing school leadership

Generally, the term “management” is a process or series of activities which include planning, organizing, leading and control that gives the necessary direction to the organization such as the school, so that its objectives can be achieved (Schermerhorn, Bachrach & Wright, 2020). Marcus and Van Dam (2019) describes a manager as a liaison officer, leader

and ceremonial head, responsible for giving speeches, directs, motivates, inspires and networking with various people, distribution of information, allocation of resources and maintenance of order and development.

Managers, such as school principals and heads of department, occupy formal positions and that place on them the responsibility to planning, organize, lead and control (Cheng, 2022; Sternad, 2019). In the context of this study, school leadership refers to the school leadership team that is made up of principals, deputy principals and heads of departments, which is responsible for planning, organizing, leading and control of the measures that are put in place to uphold discipline in schools (Cheng, 2022).

2.3. Understanding Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Sexuality education being termed ‘comprehensive’ is more recent and is rooted in a rights-based perspective and language (Mwape, 2020). It recognizes the urgency and rights of young people to make their own informed decisions. It acknowledges that young people may or may not engage in sexual behaviour and sexual activity, and thus strives to provide adequate information regarding safer sex practices (Leung et al., 2019). Generally, LSHE/CSE is an educational approach designed to address various aspects of sexuality, including cognitive, emotional, physical, and social dimensions (Choobe & Yangailo, 2024).

Its goal is to empower children and young people to achieve optimal health, well-being, and dignity (Losioki, 2023). LSHE/CSE aims to help individuals develop respectful relationships, make informed choices that promote their own well-being and that of others, and understand and assert their rights throughout their lives (UNESCO 2020). LSHE/CSE covers a broad range of issues relating to the physical, biological, emotional and social aspects of sexuality. According to Losioki (2023), LSHE/CSE refers to a structured curriculum-based education which is provided in both formal and non-formal educational settings.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) (2020) defines LSHE/CSE as “education on all issues related to sexuality and its expression, covering the same topics as sexuality education, but also issues such as relationships, attitudes towards sexuality, sexual roles, gender relations, and social pressures to be sexually active, and providing information on sexual and reproductive health services.” This education may also incorporate communication and decision-making skills training (Browne, 2015). According to Chube and Yangailo (2024), LSHE/CSE is an educational approach designed to teach schoolchildren about the various aspects of sexuality, including cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects.

LSHE/CSE is grounded in United Nations agreements, particularly the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action, which urged governments to ensure adolescent well-being through sexuality education, reproductive health education, gender equality, and violence prevention (Haberland & Rogow, 2015). According to Avert (2017), LSHE/CSE serves to mitigate the risks associated with sexual behaviour, such as unintended pregnancy and STIs, while also fostering healthy relationships. LSHE/CSE recognizes the sexual activity of adolescents and aims to empower them to make informed and healthy sexual choices (Kendall, 2021).

Furthermore, LSHE/CSE according to Losioki (2023) aims at equipping children and the youth with skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that help them to realize their well-being and dignity, through the provision of knowledge, attitudes and skills. LSHE/CSE programmes focus on gender equality, human rights principles and youth empowerment (Bonjour & Van der Vlugt, 2018). LSHE/CSE aims to give students knowledge, attitudes, skills and values that enable them to make appropriate choices and informed decisions in their sexual lives (Losioki, 2023).

2.4. Theoretical Framework

Bell et al. (2022) argued that that without a theoretical framework, the vision, design and structure is unclear. Punch (2014) indicates that there are two main uses of theory in research that include methodological theory and substantive theory. While both are important, the methodological theory concerns the theory or philosophy behind research methods and the substantive theory concerns the content of the research. This theoretical framework, therefore, is concerned with a substantive theory that guided the content of the study.

Thus, the theoretical framework for this research is made up of the Higgins’ 8-s framework for successful strategy execution, the Leadership Obstacles Course (LOC) model and the upper echelons theory (UET). According to Bell et al. (2022), a theoretical framework can be derived from existing theory or theories in the literature that has already been tested and validated by others.

Higgins’ 8-S framework for successful strategy execution

The main theory underpinning the research is the 8-S framework for successful strategy execution developed by Higgins (2005). Using the eight S’s of strategy, structure, system, staff, shared goals, style, resource, and strategic performance, Higgins (2005) created a framework for heuristic strategy implementation. By including the 8th S component (Strategic performance), which is the derivative or result of the interaction of the 7-S’s components contained in the original McKinsey’s 7-S’s framework, Higgins (2005) revised the original McKinsey’s 7-S framework and developed the 8-S framework for implementing strategies in organizations (Kanyangale & Sibanda, 2021).

The 8-S model’s goal is to make it possible for management to oversee the cross-functional execution of strategies more successfully and effectively. The 8-S model emphasizes that a strategy is created with the intention of reaching a specific goal. Higgins (2005) indicated on the ‘8S’ of executing strategies that different strategies require different kinds of

structures, systems, styles, staffing, resources and shared values for them to be successfully implemented. According to the 8-S framework, the main organizational elements must be in line with the strategy that the organization wishes to adopt in order for strategy implementation to be successful (Munyao, 2019). The model describes the eight factors critical for effective strategy executions as illustrated in Figure 3.

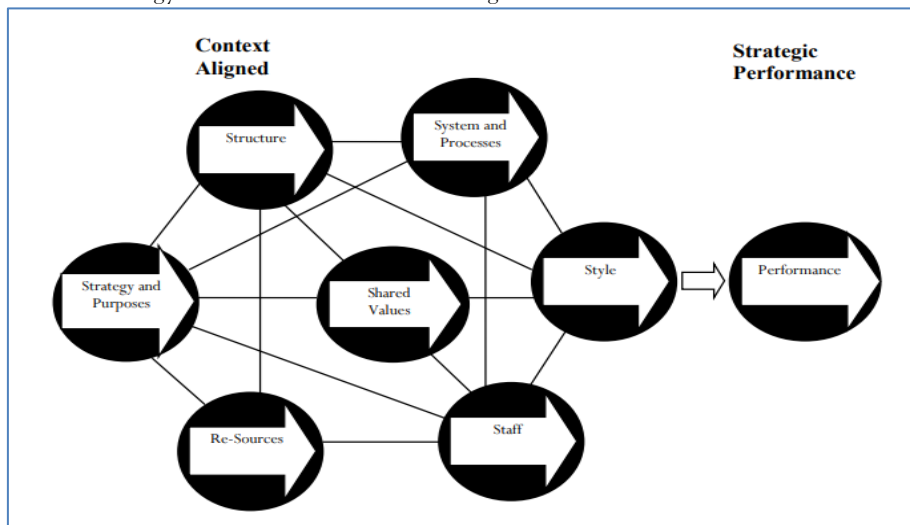


Figure 3: Higgin's (2005) 8-S Framework

The Higgin 8-S model illustrated in Figure 2.1 points out clearly that the aspects of strategy implementation are intertwined. From the model, system and processes is among the 8s for successful strategy implementation where systems and processes refer to formal and informal procedures and policies applied organization to enable successful implementation of strategies (Kumar & Sushil, 2015). On the other hand, there is style which refers to the leadership styles employed in strategy execution.

The 8-S model describes style as the leadership mode exhibited by managers or leaders when dealing or communicating with other stakeholders in strategy implementation processes (Higgins, 2005). More so, the other 'S' in the 8-s model represents staff. The 8-S framework views staff as the manpower required to help in achievement of a strategic purpose (Kanyangale & Sibanda, 2021). The amount of people needed, their histories, abilities, aptitudes, traits, and characteristics are all defined in this component. It also addresses staffing-related concerns including staff training, compensation, incentive, and advancement of employees (Higgins, 2005).

According to the framework, resource availability is very critical towards successful implementation. Resource availability is very critical towards successful implementation of strategies as a strategy cannot be successfully implemented without marshalling additional resources such as money, human resources, information, technology and time (Kumar & Sushil, 2015; Munyao, 2019). Higgins (2005) claimed that it is crucial that managers make sure that stakeholders have full access to the necessary resources, such as materials, personnel, money, technology, and other management systems, during the process of implementing a strategy.

More so, there is the component of shared values which relates to organizational culture (Kanyangale & Sibanda, 2021). Lastly, the 8-S model views strategic performance as a derivative of the other seven 'S's which also represents successful strategy implementation (Higgins, 2005). This 8-S framework is relevant to this study as it aids in explaining some key factors for effective implementation of CSE among secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

Upper Echelon Theory

More so, the theoretical foundation of this study was also be formed by the Hambrick and Mason's (1984) Upper Echelons Theory (UET). The theory is premised on the premise that organizational outcomes are directly influenced by the knowledge, experience, expertise, and skills of individuals in key leadership roles in the organization (Schaedler et al., 2021). The theory postulates that performance is significantly influenced by the particular background characteristics, values, and knowledge of dominant coalition members who occupy influential management positions in top organizations (Hambrick, 2017). In short, organisational performance (success or failure) is directly impacted by the choices made by individuals (leaders) in power (Schaedler et al., 2021).

The UET provides a crucial framework for understanding how the characteristics of top management teams influence organizational actions (Adoli & Kilika, 2020). This theory posits that the subjective experiences, biases, and values of leadership shape strategic choices due to their cognitive limitations (bounded rationality) in complex situations. According to Jaleha and Machuki (2019), the UET builds upon the concept of strategic leadership hence the theory was been found applicable to this research. According to UET, the nature of the volatile external environment requires strategic leaders to express a clear vision for the future by implementing organizational change (Adoli & Kilika, 2020; Quigley & Hambrick, 2015).

However, the theory has been criticized for its lack of elaboration on the characteristics of real strategic leadership, as it

uses demographic indicators to infer strategic leadership behavior (Adoli & Kilika, 2020; Saratuki, 2017). Besides the theory was of great importance to this study as it aided in explaining the role of leadership in implementation of LSHE/CSE in secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

Leadership Obstacles Course (LOC) Model

The theoretical framework of the study is based on the Leadership Obstacles Course (LOC) model developed by Gross (1971). This model advocates for a clear understanding among organizational leaders regarding intended changes, ensuring they are equipped with relevant skills to implement innovations and providing necessary resources for implementation (Choobe & Yangailo, 2024). The LOC model is a conceptual framework designed to address the challenges leaders face in various organizational contexts (Law, 2022). The model further stipulates that staff resistance is a crucial obstacle to achieving the set goals (Law, 2022).

Further, the LOC model stipulates that educational changes must be a sequence of three stages namely initiation, attempted implementation and incorporation (Chube & Yangailo, 2024) The change process is first proposed to the stakeholders who discuss the content of the curriculum (Law, 2022). After adoption, the curriculum is implemented and adopted by all learning institutions. With time, individuals get used to the new system leading to higher acceptance levels (Colley, 2023). The implementation obstacles are tackled at every stage, signalling that the curriculum gains acceptance gradually (Aaron et al., 2015). Therefore, the model has a feedback and monitoring mechanism in determining whether a solved problem keeps recurring at every stage.

The model emphasizes the identification and mitigation of barriers that impede effective leadership and decision-making processes. By systematically analyzing obstacles, leaders can develop strategies to overcome these challenges, thereby enhancing their effectiveness and fostering a positive organizational culture (Aaron et al., 2015; Colley, 2023). The LOC model advocates for sound leadership in achieving the long-term goals of the curriculum (Law, 2022). The LOC model was found of great relevance to this study as it aids in understanding the challenges facing school leadership in Zambian secondary schools in implementing LSHE/CSE.

3. The 2013 Comprehensive Sexuality Education Framework

To enhance SRH knowledge among adolescents, the government of Zambia rolled out a new framework for LSHE/CSE in 2013, targeting children and adolescents enrolled in grades 5 to 12 (about 10 -19 years old) (Mukanga et al., 2024a; Zulu et al., 2019). The framework was developed with reference to UNESCO guidelines of 2009 and grounded in a human rights framework (Chavula et al., 2023; Mukanga et al., 2024a). A key feature of this new framework is that it is not supposed to be offered as a standalone subject, but is to be integrated in carrier subjects such as science and social studies (Zulu et al., 2019).

This new LSHE/CSE Framework replaced the Reproductive Health Education Act (Chavula et al., 2023). The new LSHE/CSE framework added more SRHR themes such as gender relations, information on contraceptive methods, sexuality, as well as values, attitudes, and self-realization life skills (Mukanga et al., 2024a). The Ministry of Education in Zambia set out the new and ambitious framework for LSHE/CSE is summarized in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Outline of thematic areas within the new CSE Framework.

First thematic areas	Second thematic areas
1. Relationships	4. Human Development
1.1 Families	4.1 Sexual and Reproductive Anatomy and Physiology
1.2 Friendship, Love, and Relationships	4.2 Reproduction
1.3 Tolerance and Respect	4.3 Puberty
1.4 Long-term Commitments, Marriage, and Parenting	4.4 Body Image
2. Values, Attitudes, and Skills	4.5 Privacy and Bodily Integrity
2.1 Values, Attitudes, and Sources of Sexual Learning	5. Sexual Behaviour
2.2 Norms and Peer Influence on Sexual Behaviour	5.1 Sex, Sexuality, and the Sexual Life Cycle
2.3 Decision-making	5.2 Sexual Behaviours and Sexual Response
2.4 Communication, Refusal, and Negotiation Skills	6. Sexual and Reproductive Health
2.5 Finding Help and Support	6.1 Pregnancy Prevention
3. Culture, Society, and Human Rights	6.2 Understanding, Recognizing, and Reducing the Risk of STIs, including HIV
3.1 Sexuality, Culture, and Law	6.3 HIV and AIDS Stigma, Treatment, Care, and Support
3.2 Sexuality and the Media	
3.3 The Social Construction of Gender	
3.4 Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Sexual Abuse and Harmful Practices	

Source: Chavula et al. (2023)

The framework is meant to be integrated into career subjects and introduced in all schools in Zambia. The framework targets children and adolescents in schools as a way of addressing the health knowledge gap (Chavula et al., 2023). The overarching purpose of implementing the LSHE/CSE Framework in Zambia has been to address the inadequate and

unequal access to SRH knowledge among young people, which contributes (among other factors) to several SRH-related problems (Zulu et al., 2019).

4. Research Findings

4.1. Perceptions and attitudes towards LSHE/CSE

School leadership including principals play crucial roles in the successful implementation of LSHE/CSE within schools, with their attitudes and perceptions significantly influencing the integration and support of LSHE/CSE programs (Mukau & Nichols, 2024; Thabela, 2018). However, the concept of LSHE/CSE and its introduction in schools has witnessed much controversies and misconceptions among stakeholders including school leadership or leadership. Banda-Latif (2020) found mixed perceptions among stakeholder regarding LSHE/CSE implementation in Malawi. Many school principals tend to resist teaching LSHE/CSE in junior grades due to their negative attitudes towards it (Chavula et al., 2022). On the other hand, Mukau and Nichols (2024) revealed positive attitudes and perceptions of school stakeholders, specifically principals and teachers regarding implementation of LSHE/CSE in primary schools in Zimbabwe.

A study by Moono et al. (2019) which studied the influence of LSHE/CSE in promoting reproductive health among secondary school students in Lusaka province indicated positive benefits of LSHE/CSE to learners. The study revealed that LSHE/CSE helped students to make more responsible decisions about their sexual life, protect themselves against unplanned pregnancies and acquire factual information about their sexual responsibility. Further, Moono et al. (2019) indicated that students were able to access reproductive health services because of the knowledge acquired through LSHE/CSE.

According to Mwape (2022), there are beliefs that LSHE/CSE aims to impart necessary knowledge, right skills and positive attitudes into learners so that they can make right choices with regard to their sexual lives. Fonner et al. (2014) further confirm that LSHE/CSE increases knowledge about numerous aspects of sexuality, sexual behaviours and the risk of pregnancy, HIV, and STIs. Further evidence suggests that LSHE/CSE has positive impacts on behaviour change, such as increased condom use, girls' empowerment, and delayed sexual debut (Sa, Tian & Wang, 2021).

Kasonde (2013) conducted a study on the perception of teachers to LSHE/CSE in secondary schools in Botswana. This was a cross-sectional, quantitative study, which aimed at establishing the perceptions, knowledge and attitudes of teachers to LSHE/CSE in secondary schools. The survey was conducted using self-administered structured questionnaires. The study found that the majority of teachers agreed that LSHE/CSE delays sexual debut and that LSHE/CSE increases awareness of HIV/AIDS, promotes condom use which reduces cases of teenage pregnancies and transmission of STIs. This is an indication that teachers had positive attitudes towards well-designed and implemented LSHE/CSE programmes. Chirawue et al. (2014) also revealed positive attitudes towards sexuality education among teachers in South Africa. LSHE/CSE aims to provide an age-appropriate, culturally relevant programme aimed at equipping pupils with sexual health information and skills to improve SRH outcomes (Achen et al., 2023).

Contrastingly, Goldman and Bradley (2021) reported that in Australia, school leadership lacked knowledge/information on LSHE/CSE and they perceived LSHE/CSE delivery as sporadic, 'ad hoc and discretionary'. Wilhelmina et al. (2017) conducted a study on the influence of LSHE/CSE on adolescents' involvement in premarital sex in Tanzania showed that majority of the adolescents who participated in LSHE/CSE engaged in sexual practices with multiple partners. In the same view, Osa (2017) reported that LSHE/CSE makes adolescents feel more pressured to engage in sex. However, Abma and Martinez (2017) argue that even when LSHE/CSE curricular do not overtly encourage teenagers to engage in sexual activity, they do not discourage it either.

Other academics have indicated that LSHE/CSE is double-edged, in the sense that it educates about sexuality and encourages adolescents to indulge in sexual activities at the same time. For instance, Lyimo, Masinde and Chege (2017) reconnoitered the influence of LSHE/CSE on adolescents in Tanzania and study established that although LSHE/CSE guides adolescents to avoid premarital sex and reproduction, it is also a factor in promoting adolescents' engagement in sexual acts. Chibalange and Penda (2024) also found that stakeholders had mixed perceptions on comprehensive sexuality education in Zambian secondary schools, with some support LSHE/CSE while others had concerns.

4.2. Roles and responsibilities of school leadership in implementation of integrated LSHE/CSE

School leadership including principals play crucial roles in the successful implementation of LSHE/CSE within schools (Mukau & Nichols, 2024; Thabela, 2018). Literature contains several roles and responsibilities. The key roles of educational leaders in strategy implementation according to Tariq (2024) include setting objectives, engaging stakeholders, implementing action plans and initiatives and evaluating outcomes. According to Knudson (2021), effective school leadership engage in strategic planning and decision-making to set clear action plans and objectives. Wyk and Marumolola (2012) reported that school management teams (SMTs) and school governing boards (SGBs) have the central role in formulation and implementing of school-level policies. Rabbitte and Enriquez (2019) also reported that school leadership plays an essential role in setting up policies that support comprehensive sexuality education.

In the context of Zimbabwe, school principals oversee and supervise LSHE/CSE implementation, make decisions regarding timetable allocation and resource allocation (Mukau & Nichols, 2024; Muridzo, 2017). A recent study by Rivenes-Lafontan, Jones and Lama (2024) also emphasized that structured oversight is key in facilitating LSHE/CSE

delivery among Nepalese schools as it aids in addressing challenges and boosting teachers' confidence and competency in delivering LSHE/CSE. As observed by Mapfumo (2018), school principals serve as key intermediaries between stakeholders and schools facilitating engagement and resource mobilization for LSHE/CSE programs. Sumual et al. (2024) also indicated that school principals have the responsibility in managing and mobilizing resources and ensuring resource management and utilization.

Effective leadership from school principals is crucial for inspiring support and creating a conducive environment for LSHE/CSE implementation (Mahoso, 2022). Van-Reeuwijk, Rahmah and Mmari (2023) reported that school leaders and managers have a role for creating enabling environments for LSHE/CSE implementation in schools in Indonesia. In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), Sani et al. (2018) reported that collaborative decision-making and open communication is a responsibility of school leaders in facilitating LSHE/CSE implementation.

The study by Chibalange and Penda (2024) examined the influence of transformational leadership on implementation of LSHE/CSE for sustainable outcomes in secondary schools from Muchinga Province in Zambia. The main objectives were to establish implementation of LSHE/CSE, to explore the influence of leadership on LSHE/CSE implementation and to assess the benefits of LSHE/CSE implementation. The research employed the qualitative method and the descriptive design. Data collected using semi structured interviews and observations was analysed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that the roles of school leadership in LSHE/CSE implementation include motivating teachers and students, providing guidance, and promoting individualized counseling.

Kawonga (2022) also found that school managers promote community involvement and teacher motivation in implementing comprehensive sexuality education in rural secondary schools in Zambia. In the same vein, Masibhera, Mokaya and Werema (2021) also found that school head teachers and leadership have the role of motivating teachers for implementation of LSHE/CSE in secondary schools. Similarly, Mulenga and Penda (2024) also emphasised that effective school leaders champion LSHE/CSE implementation and delivery by providing guidance and motivating teachers and students.

One of the primary responsibilities of educational leaders in strategic planning is setting clear and achievable objectives (Tariq, 2024). This involves identifying the school's vision and mission, understanding its current status, and determining areas for improvement (Tariq, 2024). Leaders must align these objectives with the broader educational standards and community expectations, ensuring that they are both ambitious and realistic (Cheng, 2021). Once the strategic objectives are established, educational leaders are responsible for implementing the planned initiatives (Acton, 2021). This involves developing action plans, allocating resources, and assigning responsibilities (Tariq, 2024).

The other key responsibility is monitoring and evaluation. According to Tariq (2024), monitoring and evaluation are critical components of strategy implementation. In this regard, educational leaders have the role to regularly assess the progress of implemented initiatives, using data and feedback to measure their effectiveness. This ongoing evaluation helps identify areas of success and areas needing improvement, allowing for timely adjustments to enhance the overall impact of the strategic plan (Acton, 2021; Fusarelli et al., 2018). The research by Papparatto et al. (2024) which proposed a framework for M&E LSHE/CSE interventions in Italian schools indicated that M&E is among the school leadership responsibilities.

Educational leaders also play a key role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement within their schools. By promoting professional development, encouraging innovative practices, and supporting a growth mindset, leaders can create an environment where both staff and students are motivated to strive for excellence (Tariq, 2024). This culture supports the successful execution of strategic plans and contributes to long-term school development (Acton, 2021; Fusarelli et al., 2018).

4.3. Effects of school leadership on implementation of LSHE/CSE

Studies have shown that school leadership plays a critical role in the implementation of LSHE/CSE within educational institutions. Effective leadership is essential in creating a supportive environment for the successful integration of LSHE/CSE into school curriculums. In this section, the researcher reviews literature on the impacts and role of school leadership in implementation of LSHE/CSE.

Chibalange and Penda (2024) that transformational leadership plays a significant role in LSHE/CSE implementation in Zambian schools. Mahoso (2022) stated that effective leadership such as transformational leadership from school principals is crucial for inspiring support and creating a conducive environment for LSHE/CSE implementation. Similarly, Agen'go, Buhere and Aloka (2024) found that democratic leadership styles employed by head teachers significantly facilitated effective implementation of educational programmes in Kenya's public primary schools. The study by Karo et al. (2024) also found that democratic leadership employed by principals facilitated implementation of the curriculum-based programmes in Indonesian schools.

Malla, Sapsuha and Lobud (2020) also reported that democratic leadership by school principals in Islamic school enabled implementation of education curriculum-based programmes through open communication and collaboration with stakeholders. However, the findings are contrary to Imende et al. (2020) who found no significant impacts of transformative and democratic leadership styles on implementation of strategic educational plans in Kenya's public secondary schools.

4.4. Challenges experienced by school leadership in implementation of LSHE/CSE in schools

Implementing LSHE/CSE in schools presents numerous challenges for school leadership. Mwape and Munsaka (2020) investigated the implementation of LSHE/CSE in public secondary schools in Zambia using Samfya District as the case study. The study employed the qualitative case study research design involving 27 participants purposively selected from three public schools in Samfya District. Data was collected using observations, document analysis, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The results revealed that the key challenges faced include absence of a comprehensive LSHE/CSE framework, lack of skills as teachers were not adequately trained for LSHE/CSE delivery, lack of involvement of key stakeholders such as local communities in implementation of LSHE/CSE and inadequate extracurricular activities. Lujuo and Wandela (2024) also cited that inadequate extracurricular activities (ECAs) were among key challenges faced by school leaders in implementing school-based programs. Other several challenges have been reported in existing literature and are reviewed as follows:

Non-inclusion or lack of integration of LSHE/CSE in the curriculum

The non-inclusion and lack of integration of LSHE/CSE in educational curricula remain pressing issues, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. As found by Hall et al. (2016), lack of integration of LSHE/CSE into educational curricula inhibits its effective implementation in the United States. Chahwanda et al. (2021) also concluded that LSHE/CSE implementation in Southern African countries remains limited as comprehensive sexuality education is not part of school curricula.

Ogolla and Ondia (2019) also found that LSHE/CSE delivery is severely inhibited by non-inclusion of LSHE/CSE in the Kenyan curriculum. More so, Achen et al. (2024) reported that the absence of a structured approach to LSHE/CSE within the curriculum significantly limits its potential impact on adolescent sexual health outcomes. According to Chavula, Zulu and Hurtig (2022), there are several factors which contribute lack of integration of LSHE/CSE into educational systems. Vanwesenbeeck et al. (2016) also found that lack of integration of LSHE/CSE into educational systems inhibits its implementation in resource-poor settings.

Shortage of resources

Insufficient funding also hinders LSHE/CSE program planning (Keogh et al., 2018). Smith et al. (2011) underscored that resource constraints, including limited financial, material, and technical resources, pose significant challenges to the implementation of school-based sexuality education programs. The study by Mukonka, Mushibwe and Mwanza. (2022) also identified challenges in implementation of LSHE/CSE in Zambian primary schools to include limited materials and resources on LSHE/CSE. Keogh et al. (2021) also found that lack of teaching resources is a key challenge to implementing LSHE/CSE in schools. Similarly, Keogh et al. (2018) found that program planning-related challenges such as insufficient and piecemeal funding for LSHE/CSE.

Ogolla and Ondia (2019) also found that inadequate resources inhibit the implementation of LSHE/CSE in Kenyan secondary schools. Similarly, Mukanga et al. (2024b) found that piecemeal funding and insufficient time allocation were contextual resource-related factors that influenced the implementation of LSHE/CSE in Zambia. The study by Bwendo (2019) which studied teachers' and pupils' views on LSHE/CSE in secondary schools in Chingola district of Zambia found that shortage of trained teachers and lack of teaching equipment was a key challenge.

Lack of stakeholder coordination, support and commitment

Lack of stakeholder coordination, support and commitment is another widely cited challenge faced in implementation of LSHE/CSE. Lack of coordination between government and civil society was found a key factor that inhibits implementation of LSHE/CSE in Kenya (Sidze et al., 2017). Adogu and Nwafulume (2015) reiterated that lack of commitment and absenteeism among key stakeholders were major drawbacks in the implementation of LSHE/CSE.

In the context of Zambia, Mwape and Munsaka (2020) reported that lack of community involvement was the challenge faced in implementation of LSHE/CSE in public schools in Samfya District, Zambia. The study by Nyimbili et al. (2019) conducted the study to investigate teacher and parental involvement in providing LSHE/CSE in selected primary schools of Kalomo district of Zambia revealed that lack of parental support and involvement influenced implementation of LSHE/CSE.

Bwendo (2019) also reported that lack of parental support and involvement influenced implementation of LSHE/CSE in secondary schools in Chingola district in Zambia. Additionally, Moono et al. (2019) did a study on the barriers to teaching of LSHE/CSE in secondary schools in Lusaka province and discovered that LSHE/CSE was taught in an uncoordinated manner since there was lack of stakeholder coordination. Mukanga et al. (2024b) also found that lack of stakeholder engagement influenced effective implementation of LSHE/CSE programmes.

Negative attitudes and perceptions among stakeholders

Sidze et al. (2017) found that many teachers held negative attitudes and misconceptions about several issues related to LSHE/CSE which impede the delivery of sexuality education to pupils. Smith and Harrison (2013) discovered that South African teachers had negative attitudes towards LSHE/CSE hindering its implementation in schools due to beliefs that sexual issues were not suitable for discussion with students. Similarly, Iyer and Aggleton (2013) found that Ugandan secondary school teachers held conservative attitudes towards young people's sexual activities and primarily focused on

abstinence when teaching sexuality education.

Negative perceptions among stakeholders, particularly parents and religious leaders, pose a major barrier to effective LSHE/CSE implementation in Ghana (Amo-Adjei, 2024; Esia-Donkoh et al., 2017). At regional level, Achen et al. (2024) found that negative attitudes and perceptions is a key challenge faced in implementing LSHE/CSE programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study by Keogh et al. (2018) also reported that negative attitudes and perceptions among stakeholders are among the key challenges faced by school leadership in implementing comprehensive sexuality education programmes in low- and middle-income countries.

Similarly, Vanwesenbeeck et al. (2016) also found that negative attitudes and perceptions among stakeholders are among the challenges faced in implementing comprehensive sexuality education programmes in resource-poor settings. In the context of Uganda, Achora et al. (2018) found that negative attitudes and perceptions among stakeholders are challenges faced in implementing LSHE/CSE programmes in rural primary schools. Ogolla and Ondia (2019) also assessed implementation of LSHE/CSE in Kenya and found that negative attitudes and perceptions among teachers inhibit the implementation of LSHE/CSE in Kenyan secondary schools. Other studies have also found that negative attitudes and perceptions among stakeholders are key challenges faced in implementing LSHE/CSE programs (Van-Reeuwijk, Rahmah & Mmari, 2023).

Resistance to change

Resistance to change is also a key challenge faced by management in implementing LSHE/CSE programmes. According to Mavula et al. (2022), resistance to LSHE/CSE implementation is a significant challenge in many countries, often rooted in religious, cultural, and political factors. A study conducted by Beyers (2017) revealed reluctance to teach LSHE/CSE due to beliefs that LSHE/CSE is unnecessary to address sexuality issues with adolescents. Resistance to LSHE/CSE implementation among teachers is also due to fear of work overload for teachers (Chube & Yangailo, 2024).

In Pakistan, community influencers have propagated misinformation, leading to organized resistance (Ahmed et al., 2022). Similarly, in Ghana, religious and cultural beliefs deeply embedded in politics have sparked public discourse and opposition to LSHE/CSE (Saaka, 2024). The study by Keogh et al. (2018) also identified challenges to implementing LSHE/CSE curricula in LMICs including cultural resistance.

1.10.6 Lack of skills and training among teachers

One major challenge is the lack of competent teachers equipped with the necessary skills to deliver LSHE/CSE effectively (Mocheche, 2018; Zulu et al., 2019). Studies across different countries, including Australia, South Africa, and Malawi, highlight teachers' deficiencies in understanding LSHE/CSE content and methodologies (Banda, 2020; Benedict, 2021). Hernandez et al. (2021) also indicate that one of the many reasons why Texas public schools do not implement LSHE/CSE is that teachers lack sexual health training in that area. Mwape and Munsaka (2020) also found that lack training of teachers influenced implementation of LSHE/CSE in secondary schools in Samfya District, Zambia.

Keogh et al. (2021) also found that inadequate teacher training is among key challenges to implementing LSHE/CSE in schools. Mweembe (2016) and Khan (2019) also noted similar findings that qualified and trained teachers expected to deliver LSHE/CSE were lacking in most Zambian schools. A study done by Bilinga and Mabula (2014) on teaching LSHE/CSE in primary schools in Tanzania, looking at the challenges and implications, found evidence of LSHE/CSE teachers lacking relevant teaching skills. Chirawu et al. (2014) revealed that teachers in South African schools lacked relevant skills and training to effectively teach.

Lack of supporting legislation or policies

Lack of supporting legislation or policies is also a key challenge for implementation of the LSHE/CSE by school authorities. According to Ketting, Brockschmidt and Ivanova (2021), in many developing economies, there is no specific law on how LSHE/CSE can be delivered. UNFPA (2024) indicates that many school settings lack a clear policy direction on how to proceed with LSHE/CSE programme delivery. This unclear policy state of affairs impedes successful implementation of the programme because it is like there is no direction and no one seems to care in such schools (Mwape, 2020). Mwape (2022) cited lack of school-based policies to guide teachers and other stakeholders on how LSHE/CSE should be implemented.

The qualitative case study by Mukau and Nichols (2024) revealed systemic barriers that hinder effective LSHE/CSE implementation and integration in Zimbabwean primary schools include ambiguous policy frameworks. Zulu et al. (2019) also conducted a study on teacher discretion in implementing LSHE/CSE in the rural district of Nyimba in Zambia. The study discovered that schools lacked guidelines on how to integrate LSHE/CSE content into the carrier subjects. As a result, there was no school-based policy to help put into practice the national educational curriculum policy on LSHE/CSE implementation (Zulu et al., 2019). This led to teachers using their discretion on what and when to teach concerning LSHE/CSE. This scenario can be attributed to the lack of school-based policy on how to actualize LSHE/CSE in schools. UNESCO (2020) also emphasizes that absence of LSHE/CSE policies is a significant drawback to implementation of LSHE/CSE programmes in schools. Muzata (2023) also cited that inconsistent policies were among the major issues of contention in implementation of LSHE/CSE in Zambia

1.10.8 Religious indoctrination and cultural beliefs among stakeholders

The effective implementation of LSHE/CSE faces significant hurdles due to cultural and religious beliefs and norms, particularly in countries like Zambia. Studies such as Kasonde (2013) and Mukonka et al. (2022) have reported religious

indoctrination and cultural beliefs among stakeholders as one of key challenges faced by school leadership in driving LSHE/CSE implementation. Shibuya et al. (2023) also found that teachers and school leadership experienced conflicts in implementing LSHE/CSE due to cultural and religious contexts.

Ketting et al. (2021) also stated that teachers' confidence in LSHE/CSE implementation is shaken by the cultural and religious backgrounds of their communities. Furthermore, Chirwa-Kambole et al. (2020) indicated that cultural and religious beliefs among teachers and parents complicated the delivery of LSHE/CSE. Bwendo (2019) also found that cultural beliefs influence teaching of comprehensive sexuality education in Zambian schools. The research by Browes (2015) in the context of Ethiopia also found that cultural norms influence implementation of LSHE/CSE programs requiring community sensitization and engagement to address cultural resistance.

Liu (2024) identified cultural resistance as the key challenge to LSHE/CSE implementation stating that resistance to LSHE/CSE programmes in China was strong because parents feared LSHE/CSE was against culture or religion and that LSHE/CSE was a Western concept unsuitable for China. The qualitative case study by Mukau and Nichols (2024) in the context of Zimbabwean primary schools revealed that systemic barriers that hinder effective LSHE/CSE implementation and integration include entrenched cultural beliefs. Additionally, discussions about sexual matters are hindered by cultural taboos and religious objections, which create discomfort for both educators and students (De-Haas & Hutter, 2019). In Tanzania, Losioki (2024) found that socio-cultural barriers limit effective delivery of LSHE/CSE in primary schools.

In Zambia, Moono et al. (2019) conducted a study on the barriers to the teaching of LSHE/CSE in selected secondary schools in Lusaka province. The study revealed that culture is one of the major challenges to the teaching of LSHE/CSE in secondary schools. This was revealed by the fact that over 70% of the respondents highlighted that culture affected the teaching of LSHE/CSE in secondary schools. Mukanga et al. (2024b) also reported that contextual factors that influence implementation of LSHE/CSE include religious and socio-cultural beliefs. The recent evidence by Chube and Yangailo (2024) also found that cultural values and norms were among factors affecting teaching of LSHE/CSE in Zambian secondary school. Mukonka, Mushibwe and Jacobs (2023) also revealed that culture and religion negatively impact the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education in Zambian primary schools.

Lack of comprehensiveness in educational curricula

Regarding the comprehensiveness of LSHE/CSE programs, scholars such as Loisoki (2023) and Vanwesenbeeck (2020) believe that not all LSHE/CSE is comprehensive in terms of content and delivery methods. This idea was also raised by Sidze et al. (2017) who argued the range of comprehensive sexuality education topics covered in school curricula lacks comprehensiveness. Furthermore, the topics included in curricula and required subjects may be limited to contraception and pregnancy prevention, gender relations, equity and rights (Sidze et al., 2017). Previous research also found that most school-based comprehensive sexuality education programs are primarily knowledge- and content-based (Billie & Hutter, 2019; Green et al., 2017). However, LSHE/CSE is also expected to address personal, social, and cultural factors to achieve healthy and equitable relationships (Loisoki, 2023; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016).

4.5. Strategies for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE in schools

From the review of literature, several strategies to ensure effective implementation of LSHE/CSE have been widely documented by several scholars and researchers. The widely documented strategies for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE programmes include stakeholder involvement, resource mobilization, training and capacity development programmes as well as awareness and sensitization programmes.

Stakeholder involvement and consultation

Stakeholder involvement and consultation have been found to be critical components of effective implementation of educational programmes such as LSHE/CSE. A successful LSHE/CSE programme first necessitates an enabling environment which includes stakeholder support (Chau et al. 2016; Keogh et al., 2021). According to Mwape and Munsaka (2022), in pursuit of effective LSHE/CSE implementation, stakeholder such as educators, practitioners and students must be continuously engaged and consulted in the decision-making processes to implementation a reality through stakeholder participation and empowerment.

The study by Ivanova et al. (2019) reported that effective LSHE/CSE implementation can be achieved through stakeholder involvement and engagement. In agreement with Ivanova et al. (2019), Ocran (2021) reported that the private sector including communities, NGOs and parents need to be encouraged to participate in programme delivery at all levels of programme implementation to ensure effective implementation of LSHE/CSE. Browes (2015) also concluded that for impactful LSHE/CSE implementation in Ethiopian schools, leadership need to aim to engage and involve the wider community.

Adebayo et al. (2022) examined strategies for LSHE/CSE implementation in Nigeria and found that the main strategies include stakeholder involvement and participation. According to Panchaud et al. (2019), consultation with stakeholders also helps identify potential challenges that may arise during program implementation and develop strategies for addressing them. Olapeju and Okafor (2020) also argued that effective implementation requires engagement of different stakeholders including educators, policymakers, parents, and community members.

Resource mobilization

Effective implementation of LSHE/CSE requires adequate resources such that resource mobilization plays a crucial role in ensuring that non-formal education programs are successful. Several studies have documented resource mobilization as a key strategy for effective LSHE/CSE implementation. In their study, Fredrick et al. (2019) suggested that governments in the whole developing world need to prioritize consistent funding and formulate supporting policies for efficient resource mobilization to ensure effective implementation of educational programmes such as LSHE/CSE. Similarly, Miedema et al. (2020) recommended that governments need to prioritize funding to promote effective implementation of LSHE/CSE. As also recommended by Adelekan et al. (2024), for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE, governments need to ensure availability of adequate LSHE/CSE facilities and centers which cater for the young adults and school drop-outs as well as adequate funding.

The issue of resource mobilization was also emphasized by Adebayo et al. (2022) who recommended mobilization of adequate funding towards successful implementation of LSHE/CSE programmes in Nigeria. Olapeju and Okafor (2020) recommended resource mobilization for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE in Nigeria as well as increments in national budget allocation to LSHE/CSE. Ivanova et al. (2019) also cited that the first step towards effective implementation of non-formal education is resource mobilization. According to Ivanova et al. (2019), resource mobilization involves identifying and securing the necessary resources such as funding, materials, and human resources needed for the program.

Sensitization, training and capacity development of teachers

Educator training has been found critical in ensuring that LSHE/CSE programs are delivered effectively. The strategy of educator training was also supported by Ivanova et al. (2019) as a key strategy for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE. Kolawole (2010) also recommended for training of facilitators and educators towards successful implementation of LSHE/CSE programmes in schools. Similarly, Ocran (2021) proposed that for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE, facilitators and teachers need to be motivated through regular training. Mwape and Munsaka (2020) also emphasized the need for teachers to be adequately sensitized and trained on LSHE/CSE.

Olapeju and Okafor (2020) recommended several strategies for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE in Nigeria and these included proper training of facilitators and educators. Similar recommendations were also made by Panchaud et al. (2019) who recommended for in-service training for facilitators and teachers. In conclusion, educator training plays a vital role in ensuring effective implementation of LSHE/CSE programs. It equips educators with necessary skills and knowledge needed for designing relevant curricula, identifying learning needs, using innovative teaching methods as well as promoting inclusivity among learners. Browes (2015) also stated that teachers need to undergo extensive and comprehensive LSHE/CSE training to address their attitudes and knowledge about LSHE/CSE.

Awareness and sensitization programmes

Effective implementation of LSHE/CSE programs has been found to be largely dependent on stakeholder awareness. According to Ocran (2021), awareness plays a crucial role in creating demand and support for LSHE/CSE programs. In support, Liosoki (2024) stated that when stakeholders are aware of the benefits of LSHE/CSE, they are more likely to participate in these programs. Ivanova et al. (2019) also argued that awareness campaigns are key for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE. Similarly, Adebayo et al. (2022) examined strategies for LSHE/CSE implementation in Nigeria and found that the main strategies include awareness campaigns and social mobilization programmes.

According to Adebayo et al. (2022), awareness campaigns will help in sensitizing and raising awareness among stakeholders on the importance of LSHE/CSE programmes through workshops, seminars and symposium. Kolawole (2010) also recommended for awareness and education programs through mass campaigns regarding LSHE/CSE programs. Olapeju and Okafor (2020) also recommended several strategies for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE in Nigeria and these adequate publicity of the LSHE/CSE programme through awareness programmes. Similar recommendations were also made by Panchaud et al. (2019) who recommended for awareness campaigns. Ahmed et al. (2022) also reported that strategies to address cultural resistance to implementing LSHE/CSE in schools in Pakistan including community sensitization and awareness programmes.

Public-Private Partnerships

The other strategy cited in several studies is engaging in PPPs. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have become increasingly popular in the education sector, particularly in the implementation of LSHE/CSE programs. PPPs were among other strategies suggested by Ivanova et al. (2019) towards effective LSHE/CSE implementation in schools. The strategy of PPPs was also proposed by Pick et al. (2008). Liosoki (2024) recommended for governments to partner with private sector players such as NGOs to ensure effective implementation of LSHE/CSE.

As also offered by Samadae et al. (2021), for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE, collaboration with private and donor organizations for funding the LSHE/CSE programmes is key. PPPs play a critical role in ensuring effective implementation of LSHE/CSE programs. By bringing together diverse stakeholders with complementary skills and resources, facilitating access to funding sources, involving local organizations in program design and delivery, and sustaining initiatives beyond their initial funding period through private sector support.

Implementation of school-based policies

UNFPA (2024) indicates that school-based policy entails the school commitment needed for effective delivery of LSHE/CSE and such a commitment extends programme reach. Thus, implementation of school-based policies has been found key towards effective implementation of LSHE/CSE. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes the need for clear school-based policy guidelines to ensure effective implementation of high-quality LSHE/CSE. This is because school-based policies outline the steps and standards that must be put in place to operationalize the national policies at the classroom level (Mwape, 2022).

Losioki (2023) also reported that a positive policy environment is considered as a crucial factor for effective implementation of LSHE/CSE in schools. It helps to guide the integration of sexuality education in curricula, it specifies and guides the delivery of LSHE/CSE, teacher training and students’ assessment (Losioki, 2023). Venketsamy and Kinnear (2020) also conclude that leaders who intend to implement LSHE/CSE must develop policy guidelines and detailed scripted lesson plans for teachers so that they teach what is scripted and relevant for a particular grade.

4.6. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework serves as a research tool to aid researchers in developing awareness and understanding of the situation under investigation (Imenda, 2014). The conceptual framework for the study is presented in Figure 4.

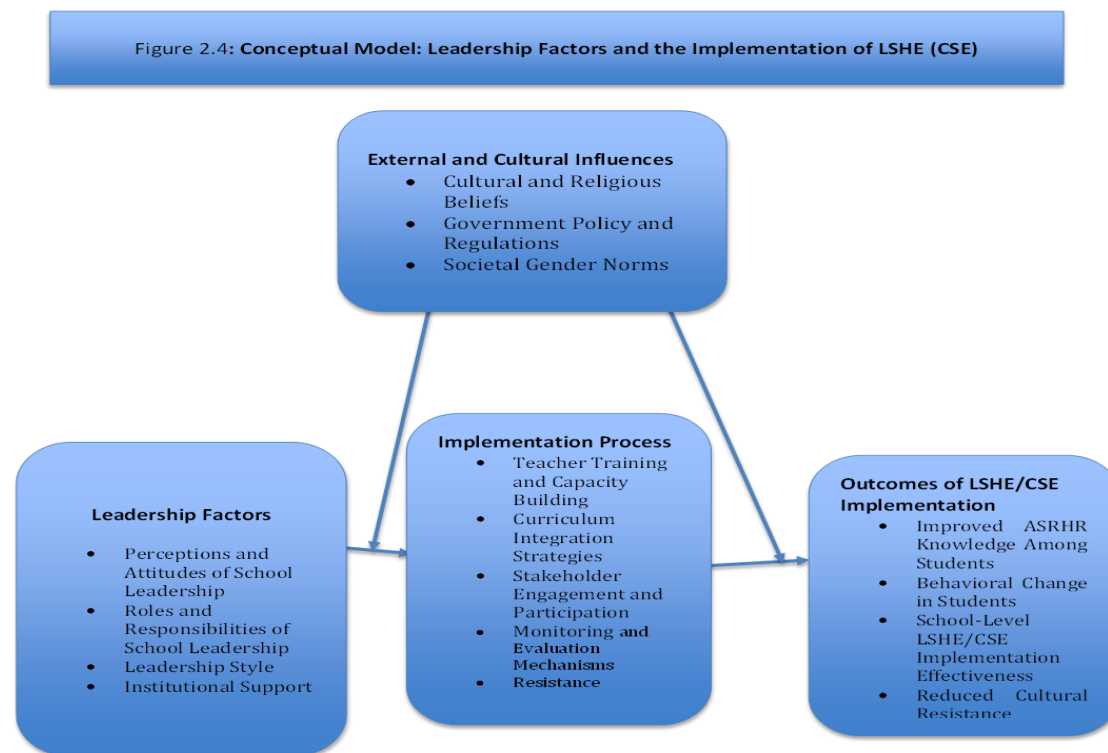


Figure 4: The Conceptual Framework

4.7. Research Gaps

From the aforementioned review, several gaps in knowledge have been noted. Firstly, although a large body of research has been written about LSHE/CSE implementation in schools, relatively few studies have examined the roles of school leadership in implementation of LSHE/CSE in secondary schools particularly in the context of Zambia. More so, there exists a population gap where most of the previous studies have focused on teachers and the adolescents whilst very focused on school leadership. There also exists the methodology gap as most of the previous empirical studies employed qualitative or quantitative approaches. These are the main research gaps that the present study pursues to address. The research gaps are summarised in the literature review matrix presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Literature review matrix for the study

Author	Title	Methodology/Analysis/Findings	Gaps
Mukau and Nichols (2024)	Attitudes and perceptions of school stakeholders on LSHE/CSE in primary schools: A study of junior grades in Zimbabwe.	Qualitative approach rooted in the interpretive paradigm	The qualitative study’s findings lack generalizability

Amo-Adjei (2024)	Resistances to the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education curriculum in Ghana's educational institutions	Lacked adequate stakeholder engagement by leadership led to resistance to LSHE/CSE implementation	The findings in the context of Ghana lack applicability of Zambian context
Chibalange and Penda (2024)	The Influence of Transformational Leadership on the Implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education for Sustainable Outcomes.	Qualitative descriptive design	The study focused on rural public secondary schools in Muchinga Province of Zambia.
Chube and Yangailo (2024)	Factors Affecting the Teaching of Comprehensive Sexuality Education among Secondary School Teachers.	Management factors including training in LSHE/CSE, access to resources, and support from school leadership, significantly influenced LSHE/CSE teaching	The study was limited to secondary schools in Mpongwe District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia.
Kasonde (2013)	Perceptions of teachers to sexuality education in secondary schools in Gaborone, Botswana	Qualitative case-study	The qualitative study's findings lack generalizability and lack applicability to Zambian context
Mukonka, Mushibwe and Mwanza (2022).	Establishing the Implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (LSHE/CSE) in Selected Primary Schools of Zambia from 2014–2018.	Mixed-method study	The study focused on primary schools in Zambia
Mwape (2022)	The Status Of Implementing Comprehensive Sexuality Education In Selected Public Schools In Samfya District, Zambia	Qualitative case-study design	The study only focused on public schools Zambia.
Nyimbili, Mainza, Mumba & Katunansa (2019)	Teacher and parental involvement in providing comprehensive sexuality education in selected primary schools of Kalomo district of Zambia	Qualitative phenomenological design	The study was limited to primary schools in Kalomo district in Zambia

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Education systems have emphasised inclusive education as a way to support all students, regardless of their physical condition or level of learning. According to this theory, educational institutions must adopt social justice policies that mandate fair treatment of all students and permit them to participate in mainstream classes without facing prejudice. According to the literature, several nations—including Zambia—have laws requiring public schools to accept all students, including those who face learning obstacles, and to give them the assistance they need to succeed in school.

SMTs must respond to this exercise as school leaders and carry out this duty by putting inclusive education policies into place. Education policies that define ideals and set goals for inclusive practices are examples of policies like the SIAS policy. Therefore, having a thorough understanding of policies could help SMTs allocate resources, prepare for specific learner issues, and identify intervention programs that would best address these. The literature also showed that, despite global efforts to promote inclusive education, there are still many doubts in educational systems regarding inclusive education.

Among these difficulties is the ignorance of school administrators, who are tasked with fostering inclusive school cultures and leading inclusive education procedures via persistent lobbying. Mostly in public schools that are overcrowded, changes in instructional content, techniques, structures, and strategies have not yet become entrenched. The national curriculum of Zambia, which is centred on social justice and inclusiveness, recognises students' freedom to attend any school of their choosing. However, research has shown that because of unequal resource distribution, the disadvantages of the previous educational system continue to exist in some school categories, and students with special needs are still not included. Because many students originate from communities with low living standards, poverty, and socioeconomic inequality, the legacy of these issues is overshadowing efforts to build social justice practices.

The literature review clarified that Education White Paper 6, a policy that promoted its implementation, was responsible for introducing inclusive education into the South African educational system in 2001. The revelation that there hasn't been much progress made towards inclusive education in public schools that were designated as full-service institutions raises serious concerns, nevertheless.

The literature reveals that leadership is critical to the successful implementation of LSHE/CSE in schools.

Transformational and democratic leadership styles offer significant potential to navigate cultural resistance, policy limitations, and stakeholder coordination. Strengthening school leadership capacity and stakeholder collaboration can enhance the impact of sexuality education programmes across Zambia.

The literature reviewed affirms that leadership is not merely an administrative function but a transformational force with the capacity to shape the trajectory of adolescent health education. Effective implementation of LSHE/CSE in Zambian secondary schools hinges on the quality, vision, and responsiveness of school leadership. Transformational and democratic leadership styles emerge as the most promising paradigms for fostering inclusive school environments, overcoming resistance, and cultivating collaborative partnerships among stakeholders. Despite policy advancements and curriculum reforms, significant barriers persist—including negative perceptions, religious and cultural resistance, inadequate resources, and limited leadership training.

Theoretical models such as Higgins' 8-S Framework, the Upper Echelons Theory, and the LOC Model illuminate the structural and behavioral variables that influence leadership effectiveness in this domain. However, the realization of LSHE/CSE goals requires more than conceptual frameworks; it demands morally courageous leaders who are willing to challenge societal norms, redistribute power, and champion inclusive education from the frontlines.

The review underscores an urgent need to bridge existing research gaps, especially in leadership-specific studies within LSHE/CSE implementation in Zambia. Building school-level leadership capacity, strengthening institutional support, and ensuring coherent policy guidance are essential strategies for fostering sustainable and culturally responsive delivery of sexuality education. In reimagining the future of LSHE/CSE, it becomes evident that empowered leadership is not just desirable—it is indispensable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicting interests

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Data Availability statement

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Ethical considerations

The article followed all ethical standards appropriate for this kind of research.

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