

Collaborative Goal-Setting as a Catalyst for Teachers' Job Satisfaction in Public Primary Schools in Kyerwa District, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of collaborative goal-setting on teachers' job satisfaction in public primary schools. It recognizes that teachers' participation in setting professional goals can enhance professional ownership, autonomy, recognition, motivation, and satisfaction. A mixed-methods approach with concurrent embedded design was employed. The study involved a sample of 116 participants, comprising 92 teachers and 12 head teachers, from selected schools and head teachers drawn through stratified random sampling. Quantitative data were collected using questionnaires, whereas qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive through SPSS Version 27, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that collaborative goal-setting positively influence teachers' job satisfaction. Specifically, teachers reported active involvement in setting professional development goals, agreed with collaboratively established goals being clear, specific, and achievable, and head teachers provided support and resources for achieving agreed goals. Furthermore, collaborative goal-setting made teachers feel valued as professionals, the set goals were relevant to their classroom challenges, and collaborative goal-setting increased teachers' overall job satisfaction. Qualitative findings further showed that continuous monitoring, teacher involvement in evaluating progress, and recognition of goal achievement strengthened the positive influence of collaborative goal-setting. The study concludes that collaborative goal-setting is an important supervisory practice for enhancing teachers' job satisfaction.

KEYWORDS

Collaboration; goal-setting; job satisfaction; catalyst and engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are central to the effective delivery of quality education because their commitment, motivation, professional competence, and satisfaction with their work influence classroom practices and learners' educational experiences. Teacher job satisfaction refers to the extent to which teachers feel positively about their work, working conditions, professional relationships, responsibilities, and opportunities for development. Recent research indicates that job satisfaction is an important factor associated with teachers' effectiveness, professional commitment, retention, and the quality of education they provide (Glaveli et al., 2024). In particular, teachers who perceive their working

environment as supportive and who have opportunities to participate meaningfully in school affairs are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward their profession. Therefore, improving teachers' job satisfaction has become an important concern for school leaders and education authorities seeking to strengthen teacher commitment and improve educational outcomes.

One important school-management practice that may influence teachers' job satisfaction is collaborative goal-setting, whereby teachers and school leaders jointly identify priorities, establish targets, determine responsibilities, and agree on strategies for achieving school objectives. Unlike approaches in which goals are imposed solely by school administrators, Collaborative goal-setting fosters teacher ownership, autonomy, and commitment by enabling professionals to shape decisions impacting their work. This mechanism, where teachers perceive themselves as active contributors rather than mere implementers, explains why meaningful involvement in school-level decisions is consistently associated with greater satisfaction and professional commitment in prior international research (Park et al., 2023; Brezicha et al., 2020).

However, the quality of collaboration matters. In the U.S., Ketsman and Reeves (2025) found that only deep, instruction-focused collaboration improves satisfaction, whereas superficial coordination does not. Similarly, Cheng and Brady (2025) noted an indirect link to student achievement via teaching quality, though causality remained unconfirmed. In China, Wang (2023) confirmed the positive satisfaction link, moderated by teacher age. Cross-cultural findings from other contexts reinforce these patterns: in Indonesia, Dermawan et al. (2026) reported that mentoring, recognition, and collaborative support from madrasah heads directly boosted satisfaction and organizational commitment, while in rural New Mexico, Ortiz (2026) linked empathetic, culturally responsive leadership to stronger teacher retention. Collectively, these findings, spanning the U.S., China, Indonesia, and rural Mexico, demonstrate that genuine, high-quality participatory practices provide teachers with voice and influence, strengthening satisfaction across diverse educational settings.

In African education systems, teacher participation in school management is increasingly vital as schools must navigate changing expectations, rising accountability demands, and the need for effective teamwork. Evidence from Nigeria underscores the benefits of such collaboration. Idowu (2025) found that collaborative goal-setting significantly enhances school effectiveness and teacher motivation, while Okeke (2026) reported that collaborative teaching boosts job satisfaction by reducing workload, facilitating shared expertise, providing mentorship, and fostering a supportive professional environment. In Kenya, the relationship between participation and satisfaction is similarly positive but is often undermined by implementation challenges. Kiprop-Marakis (2021) linked limited teacher participation to reduced autonomy and lower satisfaction. Conversely, Meshack et al. (2025) emphasized that regular, inclusive feedback enhances satisfaction, though its inconsistent application weakens this effect. Extending this view, Omachar (2025) found that inclusive policies boost academic staff satisfaction, yet bureaucracy and rigid employment contracts frequently counteract these gains.

The literature consistently demonstrates that school leadership is a critical driver of teacher job satisfaction in Tanzania, though the effectiveness of specific practices varies. A central theme across multiple studies is the power of participatory and supportive leadership. Witike and Habi (2022) established that such approaches are fundamental to creating positive working environments, a finding reinforced by Ruth (2023), who specifically linked teacher involvement in decision-making to higher satisfaction in primary schools. This positive dynamic extends to higher education, as Manyama and

Siming (2026) found that collaborative goal-setting between leaders and lecturers enhances both satisfaction and performance, with satisfaction acting as a mediating factor.

However, the impact of these leadership behaviors is not uniform and can be constrained by systemic factors. For instance, while Nobeye (2025) verified that school heads' administrative and support roles moderately influence satisfaction in Geita primary schools, he also noted that the direct impact of these efforts is hampered by inadequate remuneration and awards. Similarly, Goldman (2025) emphasized that while participatory leadership, recognition, and support boost teacher satisfaction, the positive effects are limited by weak professional development opportunities. Taken together, these findings suggest that while supportive leadership is essential, it must be part of a balanced strategy that also addresses tangible resource and development needs to fully realize its potential.

Despite the growing evidence concerning teacher participation, autonomy, and job satisfaction, there remains a need to examine how collaborative goal-setting specifically influences teachers' job satisfaction in public primary schools in Tanzania, particularly at the district level. This is important because goal-setting in schools may involve different practices, including teachers' participation in identifying school priorities, setting instructional targets, developing departmental or individual objectives, monitoring progress, and reviewing achievements. Although existing studies have examined teacher autonomy, participatory decision-making, leadership styles, and job satisfaction, relatively limited attention has been given to collaborative goal-setting as a distinct school-management practice, especially in rural Tanzanian settings such as Kyerwa District. Understanding this relationship may provide useful evidence for head teachers, education officers, and policymakers on how teachers can be more meaningfully involved in establishing and pursuing school goals. Therefore, this study examines the influence of collaborative goal-setting on teachers' job satisfaction in public primary schools in Kyerwa District, Tanzania, with the intention of contributing empirical evidence to improve school leadership, teacher motivation, and the overall working environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Collaborative goal-setting is the act of building a professional "home" for teachers. In this space, their individual struggles are met with collective support, their voices shape their daily work, and their shared efforts are directed toward a future they have imagined and committed to together. Various studies conducted globally, regionally, and locally have verified the link between collaborative goal setting and teachers' job satisfaction.

A study conducted in the United States by Ketsman and Reeves (2025) investigated the relationships between teacher collaboration and job satisfaction. The study, conducted using an explanatory correlational design employing a mixed-methods approach with a structured questionnaire administered to 231 teachers at Northern Illinois University, revealed a key distinction in collaborative practices. It found that only deep, instruction-focused collaboration, such as jointly planning and analyzing lessons, had a slight positive effect on teacher job satisfaction, whereas more superficial coordination did not. Therefore, the primary recommendation was that schools intentionally cultivate substantive, lesson-centered professional partnerships to enhance teacher morale, moving beyond merely facilitating routine exchanges. In comparison, the original study's emphasis on deep collaboration was a useful lens though were limited to the U.S. context.

Similarly, the study conducted in Shanghai and England by Cheng and Brady (2025) comparing the association between teacher collaboration and well-being utilized a mixed-methods, descriptive cross-sectional design. This study collected data through questionnaires and structured interviews from 186 respondents in Shanghai and England. It

found that teacher collaboration indirectly improved student mathematics achievement by enhancing classroom teaching practices, a mediated pathway that was notably stronger in England. Consequently, the study recommended that policymakers and school leaders actively structure collaborative professional environments to improve instructional quality and thereby boost student learning. The study's cross-sectional design could not confirm whether collaboration caused improved achievement but only established an association between the variables. Its findings were also limited because they were based on only two specific contexts, Shanghai and England.

In addition, the study conducted in China by Wang (2023) examined collaborative goal setting and work performance among middle school teachers using a descriptive research design. The study assessed goal-setting dimensions, including clarity, alignment, prioritization, and work performance indicators such as teaching effectiveness, professional development, and collaboration. The findings showed sound goal-setting practices and moderate satisfaction levels, with age significantly influencing the outcomes. A positive relationship was found between collaborative goal-setting and job satisfaction. The study recommended a targeted faculty development programme that addressed age-specific needs. However, its applicability was limited by contextual differences, underscoring the need for further qualitative and quantitative research before adopting similar practices. Likewise, the study conducted in Nigeria by Idowu (2025) on collaborative goal setting and scheduling strategies of head teachers as correlates of primary school effectiveness in Southwest Nigeria employed a descriptive survey design and sampled 135 head teachers and 1,350 teachers across six states. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between collaborative goal-setting and school effectiveness, as it provided teachers with direction and motivation, whereas scheduling showed no significant relationship. The study recommended that school leaders prioritize collaborative goal-setting to enhance school effectiveness and teacher satisfaction. However, its applicability was limited because it focused on head teachers rather than classroom teachers. This study was considered necessary to understand collaborative goal-setting within this distinct East African context.

Moreover, the study conducted in Kenya by Meshack et al. (2025) on the influence of performance goal-setting on enhancing teachers' job satisfaction employed a mixed-methods design involving principals and teachers in public secondary schools through questionnaires and interviews. The findings suggested that regular, specific, and inclusive feedback mechanisms enhanced teachers' job satisfaction by promoting clarity and personal alignment. However, inconsistent implementation and exclusion from feedback processes undermined satisfaction. Nevertheless, because the study focused on secondary schools in Kenya, its findings could not be directly applied to public primary schools in Kenya, given differences in educational levels, cultural contexts, and resource availability.

Furthermore, the study conducted in Tanzania by Muzanila (2020) provided nuanced insights into how organizational goal-setting affected work-life balance. The quantitative study involving 109 respondents found that job planning through goal specificity and deadlines, job monitoring through supervisor availability, and the timeliness of appraisal feedback exerted significant negative influences on work-life balance by increasing working hours. In contrast, clarity of feedback positively influenced work-life balance. The study concluded that common goal-setting practices in that context tended to exacerbate work-life imbalance. It is recommended that supervisors set realistic deadlines and provide timely, clear feedback while encouraging employees to advocate for these changes. However, the generalizability of these findings was limited by the study's focus on a single public-sector institution and its relatively small sample size.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with a quantitative emphasis and a concurrent embedded design to examine the influence of collaborative goal-setting on teachers' job satisfaction in public primary schools. The target population comprised 1,316 participants from 108 public primary schools, including 108 head teachers and 1,208 teachers. Stratified random sampling selected 12 schools based on PSLE performance, while all 12 head teachers were included and 92 teachers were selected using simple random sampling, resulting in a total sample of 116 participants. Data were collected using structured six-point Likert-scale questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Instrument validity was established through expert review, while reliability was confirmed by a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.919 for 21 questionnaire items. The instruments were piloted in a school outside the main sample, and qualitative trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation and member checking. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 27 through descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Ethical procedures, including research clearance, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and protection of participants' rights, were observed throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study sought to determine how joint participation in professional development planning, goal clarity, supervisory support, professional recognition, the relevance of goals to classroom realities, and overall satisfaction converge to shape primary school teachers' job satisfaction. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Teachers' Responses on How Collaborative Goal-Setting Influences Teachers' Job Satisfaction (n = 92)

Statements	SD F(%)	D F(%)	N F(%)	A F(%)	SA F(%)
i. I am actively involved in setting my own professional development goals with my head teacher.	21 (22.8)	8 (8.7)	0 (0.0)	31 (33.7)	32 (34.8)
ii. The goals set collaboratively with my head teacher are clear, specific, and achievable within our school context.	21 (22.8)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	57 (62.0)	12 (13.0)
iii. With my head teacher's support and resources, I am able to achieve the goals we set together.	24 (26.1)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	54 (58.7)	12 (13.0)
iv. The collaborative goal-setting process makes me feel valued as a professional at this school.	12 (13.0)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	67 (72.8)	11 (12.0)
v. The professional goals we set are relevant to the specific challenges I face in my classroom.	11 (12.0)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	71 (77.2)	8 (8.7)
vi. Collaborative goal-setting with my head teacher increases my overall job satisfaction as a teacher at this school.	11 (12.0)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	74 (80.4)	6(6.5)

Key: SD= Strong Disagree; D= Disagree; N= Neutral; A = Agree; SA=Strong Agree; F= Frequency
Source: Field Data (2026)

Teachers in public primary schools generally perceive collaborative goal-setting as positively influencing their job satisfaction, though a significant minority report inconsistent experiences (see Table 1).

Active involvement in setting professional development goals

Regarding the first statement, a combined total of 63 teachers (68.5%) agreed that they are actively involved in setting their own professional development goals with their supervisors, with 32 (34.8%) strongly agreeing and 31 (33.7%) agreeing. However, a notable 29 teachers (31.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, with 21 (22.8%) strongly disagreeing and 8 (8.7%) disagreeing, and no teacher remained neutral. This distribution indicates that while a majority of teachers experience some level of participatory goal-setting with their supervisors, a significant minority are effectively excluded from this collaborative process. The complete absence of neutral responses is particularly striking. It suggests that teachers hold firm, experience-grounded positions on whether they are genuinely involved or systematically bypassed in professional development planning. During interviews, one head teacher shared the following observation:

“In our school, we deliberately involve every teacher in identifying their own professional growth areas at the beginning of each academic year. I meet with each teacher individually, and we jointly set specific development targets linked to their classroom challenges and career ambitions. Teachers who participate in setting their own goals are far more committed to achieving them, and their enthusiasm for teaching is visibly higher than when goals are handed down from above without their input.” (HT1, May 2026).

Collaborative goal setting drives teacher motivation and ownership, while exclusion fosters disengagement, a dynamic confirmed by this analysis. Echoing Ketsman and Reeves (2025), deep collaboration positively impacts satisfaction, whereas superficial coordination proves ineffective.

Documentary evidence, however, reveals fractured practice. Some schools demonstrate genuine participatory alignment, operationalizing Transformational Leadership principles (Asbari, 2020; Kwan, 2020) and mirroring Wang (2023). Conversely, other records indicate a glaring leadership deficit, with no substantive teacher voice documented. The evidence therefore compels a firm conclusion: individualized, structured goal setting constitutes a nonnegotiable supervisory imperative for Kyerwa District head teachers, not an optional strategy, but an essential mechanism for securing teacher satisfaction.

Clarity, specificity, and achievability of collaboratively set goals

Regarding the second statement, a combined total of 69 teachers (75.0%) agreed that the goals set collaboratively with their supervisors are clear, specific, and achievable within their school context, with 57 (62.0%) agreeing and 12 (13.0%) strongly agreeing. Nevertheless, a substantial 23 teachers (25.0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, with 21 (22.8%) strongly disagreeing and 2 (2.2%) disagreeing, and no teacher was neutral. This finding indicates that while the majority of teachers acknowledge the quality of jointly set goals, a meaningful proportion still reports experiencing goals that lack clarity, specificity, or contextual feasibility. The high level of strong disagreement on this item mirrors the pattern observed in the first statement. It suggests that the same subset of teachers who are excluded from goal-setting are also those most likely to experience poorly defined or unrealistic professional targets. During interviews, one head teacher remarked:

“A goal that is vague or disconnected from what a teacher actually faces in the classroom is not a goal at all; it is a bureaucratic formality. When I work with teachers to set development goals, I insist that every goal must be tied to a specific classroom challenge, measurable within a defined period, and realistically attainable given our school's resources. When goals meet these criteria, teachers approach their professional growth with genuine seriousness rather than treating goal-setting as a mere exercise on paper.” (HT 2, May 2026).

A central finding of this analysis establishes goal quality as inseparable from goal ownership. When teachers collaboratively design their professional development targets with supervisors, the resulting goals are more likely to be context specific, realistic, and personally meaningful, preconditions critically identified here as foundational for both goal commitment and job satisfaction. This interpretation is reinforced by Meshack et al. (2025), whose findings demonstrate that regular, specific, and inclusive feedback mechanisms, which parallel collaborative and clear goal setting, significantly enhance teacher satisfaction by fostering personal alignment and professional clarity.

Critically, the documentary analysis further reveals substantial variation across schools in the clarity, specificity, and achievability of collaboratively set professional development goals. In certain schools, records demonstrate clearly written goals, complete with precise targets linked directly to classroom challenges, established timelines, and specified expected outcomes. Such documents often utilize structured planning formats, wherein teachers and supervisors jointly define measurable, realistic objectives, a practice that strongly indicates a prioritized emphasis on practical implementation. In stark contrast, other school records indicate vaguely stated, overly generalized goals that lack clear ties to specific teaching contexts or available institutional resources. In these latter cases, the documentation notably lacks measurable indicators or clear timelines, rendering progress and feasibility assessments inherently difficult. Such a pattern suggests a formal, compliance driven approach to goal setting, as opposed to a meaningful, developmental process. This variation critically implies that the effectiveness of professional development planning is strongly contingent upon the rigor with which goals are formulated and documented at the school level (Odanga & Aloka, 2024).

Supporting this position, Deng et al. (2023) identified goal clarity and alignment as key dimensions that positively predict satisfaction among school teachers. Anchoring these findings within Transformational Leadership Theory, specifically the dimension of inspirational motivation, underscores the critical importance of leaders articulating a compelling, coherent vision. Such a vision connects individual professional aspirations to collective school goals, thereby rendering goal pursuit personally meaningful and professionally fulfilling (Bush & Glover, 2020). Consequently, a practical imperative emerges: head teachers in public primary schools must deliberately invest in the quality of the goal setting process itself, ensuring that all collaboratively set goals remain explicit, achievable, and directly relevant to each teacher's professional context.

Supervisory support and resource provision for goal achievement

Regarding the third statement, 66 teachers (71.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that their supervisors provide the necessary support and resources to help them achieve the goals set together, with 54 (58.7%) agreeing and 12 (13.0%) strongly agreeing. However, a notable 26 teachers (28.3%) strongly disagreed or disagreed, with 24 (26.1%) strongly disagreeing and 2 (2.2%) disagreeing, and none remaining neutral. This pattern reveals that while a substantial majority of teachers perceive their supervisors as providing adequate support

for goal achievement, more than a quarter of respondents experience a critical gap between the goals that are set and the actual resources and guidance made available to fulfil them. This discrepancy between goal expectations and supervisory support is a well-documented source of professional frustration and reduced job satisfaction in educational settings. During interviews, one head teacher elaborated:

“Setting goals with a teacher is only the beginning of the supervisory responsibility. I make it my personal duty to follow up consistently to check whether a teacher has the materials, time, peer support, and mentorship needed to actually work toward what we agreed. If a teacher lacks access to professional development workshops, relevant teaching resources, or adequate guidance from experienced colleagues, the goals we set together become nothing more than empty promises that breed resentment rather than growth.” (HT 3, May 2026).

This finding is interpreted here as signifying that collaborative goal setting cannot be fully effective as a driver of teacher job satisfaction unless it is accompanied by consistent and substantive supervisory support. The high proportion of strong disagreement on this item is taken to suggest that, in a significant number of schools, the collaborative goal setting process ends at the setting stage, without the follow through support that teachers need to make meaningful professional progress. This finding carries direct negative implications for job satisfaction, given that unmet professional development expectations are, on this account, more demotivating than having no goals at all. Supporting this interpretive stance, Idowu (2025) established that goal setting significantly improved school effectiveness and teacher satisfaction by providing direction and motivation, but only when accompanied by the institutional structures and leadership support necessary for goal pursuit.

Similarly, the documentary records examined here indicate strong follow up systems in which supervisors actively provide teaching materials, mentorship, peer support, and continuous monitoring aligned with agreed upon goals. Conversely, records from other schools show limited evidence of such support, with documentation focusing mainly on initial goal setting and lacking clear records of follow up actions or resource provision. Overall, the present findings are interpreted as revealing a clear gap between schools that offer sustained, practical supervisory support and those that offer minimal support, highlighting that effective goal achievement depends heavily on continuous guidance and resource availability beyond the planning stage. This observation is confirmed by Kiprop Marakis (2021), who asserts that such sustained support is a core feature of effective instructional leadership and is strongly associated with improved teacher performance and goal attainment.

These findings are further anchored in Transformational Leadership Theory, which, in this analysis, emphasizes individualized consideration as the mechanism through which transformational leaders provide tailored mentorship, resources, and support to each follower, thereby enabling personal and professional growth that translates into higher job satisfaction (Asbari, 2020). Therefore, it is concluded here that head teachers must treat supervisory support not as an optional follow up but as an integral and inseparable component of the collaborative goal setting process itself.

Feeling valued through the collaborative goal-setting process

Regarding the fourth statement, a total of 78 teachers (84.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that the collaborative goal-setting process makes them feel valued as professionals, with 67 (72.8%) agreeing and 11 (12.0%) strongly agreeing. Only 14 teachers (15.2%) disagreed or

strongly disagreed, with 12 (13.0%) strongly disagreeing and 2 (2.2%) disagreeing, and none were neutral. This finding represents one of the stronger positive patterns in the section. It indicates that when collaborative goal-setting is practiced, the majority of teachers experience a meaningful sense of professional recognition and validation. The feeling of being valued is a foundational component of job satisfaction, as it connects teachers' professional identities to their schools' institutional culture and signals that their expertise and perspectives are genuinely respected by school leadership. During interviews, one head teacher explained:

“When I sit with a teacher and listen carefully to their professional struggles, classroom experiences, and personal ambitions before we jointly draft their development targets, I am sending a powerful message: that their voice matters, their experience is valued, and their growth is a shared institutional priority. Teachers who experience this kind of genuine professional recognition from their head teacher are consistently more energized, more committed to their work, and far less likely to express feelings of professional alienation or dissatisfaction.” (HT 4, May 2026).

This analysis reveals that the psychological and relational dimensions of collaborative goal-setting are at least as important as the technical dimensions of goal quality. Specifically, the process of being invited into a genuine professional dialogue with one's supervisor appears to foster a sense of institutional belonging and professional worth, thereby directly enhancing job satisfaction. Supporting this interpretation, Muzanila (2020) found that the quality of processes in goal-setting, which reinforce feelings of professional recognition, positively influenced teachers' professional experiences. Similarly, Cheng and Brady (2025) demonstrated that collaborative professional environments improved teaching practices and professional wellbeing by enhancing teachers' sense of professional engagement and agency. These findings can be understood through the lens of Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that idealized influence, whereby leaders demonstrate through their conduct that they genuinely value and respect their followers, builds the trust and mutual esteem essential for transformative professional relationships (Bush & Glover, 2020; Chaplin, 2021). Consequently, it is argued here that head teachers must approach the collaborative goal-setting process as an opportunity to affirm the professional worth and dignity of every teacher, as this relational quality is directly linked to sustained job satisfaction in public primary schools.

Relevance of collaboratively set goals to classroom challenges

Regarding the fifth statement, 79 teachers (85.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that the professional goals set collaboratively with their supervisors are relevant to the specific challenges they face in their classrooms, with 71 (77.2%) agreeing and 8 (8.7%) strongly agreeing. Only 13 teachers (14.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, with 11 (12.0%) strongly disagreeing and 2 (2.2%) disagreeing, and none were neutral. This is one of the most positively received statements in the section and reflects a widely shared perception among teachers that the collaborative goal-setting process in their schools produces professionally meaningful, contextually grounded targets. When professional development goals are anchored in teachers' lived classroom realities, they are experienced not as bureaucratic obligations but as genuine instruments of professional growth and practical problem-solving. During interviews, one head teacher offered the following account:

“The most effective professional development goals I have ever set with teachers are those born directly from their own classrooms. When a teacher tells me that

students consistently struggle with English comprehension or that classroom management is overwhelming due to large class sizes, I use that specific challenge as the starting point for collaborative goal-setting. Goals rooted in real teaching problems are goals that teachers genuinely pursue, because they can immediately see how achieving those goals will make their professional lives more effective.” (HT 5, May 2026).

This analysis indicates that the perceived relevance of goals to classroom practice is a critical driver of both goal commitment and job satisfaction. Specifically, when professional development goals address the pedagogical challenges teachers encounter daily, teachers appear more likely to engage seriously with the goal-setting process, invest effort in pursuing goals, and experience professional growth that translates into personal satisfaction. Conversely, it is observed that when goals are imposed without reference to teachers' classroom contexts, they tend to generate resentment, compliance without commitment, and ultimately reduced satisfaction. This interpretation is supported by Ketsman and Reeves (2025), who found that only instruction-focused collaboration connects professional planning to classroom practice and produced measurable positive effects on teacher job satisfaction.

Turning to the documentary evidence, the records reveal that many goals are explicitly derived from teachers' identified instructional challenges, such as learner comprehension difficulties, classroom management issues, and subject-specific performance gaps. In these cases, the planning records demonstrate a clear linkage between classroom diagnostic information and the agreed development targets, suggesting that goal-setting is grounded in actual teaching contexts rather than being abstract or standardised. This pattern resonates with Wang's (2023) finding that the alignment of professional goals with teachers' work realities was positively associated with job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness. From my perspective, such alignment is not incidental but reflects a deliberate effort to anchor professional development in everyday practice.

These findings can be productively understood through Transformational Leadership Theory, particularly the dimension of intellectual stimulation, which emphasises empowering teachers to critically analyse and creatively address the challenges they face in their own classrooms, rather than merely implementing externally generated prescriptions (Deng et al., 2023; Khan et al., 2020). It is therefore argued here that the contextual grounding of goals is not merely a technical choice but a relational and motivational one, with direct implications for how head teachers design and facilitate collaborative planning processes in public primary schools.

Collaborative goal-setting and overall job satisfaction

Regarding the sixth and final statement, a combined total of 80 teachers (87.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that collaborative goal-setting with their supervisors increases their overall job satisfaction as teachers in their schools, with 74 (80.4%) agreeing and 6 (6.5%) strongly agreeing. Only 12 teachers (13.0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, with 11 (12.0%) strongly disagreeing and 1 (1.1%) disagreeing, and none were neutral. This item received the highest level of agreement among the six statements in the table and provides an important overall confirmation that collaborative goal-setting is widely recognized by teachers as a significant positive contributor to their professional satisfaction. The high agreement rate on this summary statement, despite notable disagreement on specific sub-components such as active involvement and goal clarity, suggests that partial experiences of collaborative goal-setting are sufficient to generate positive satisfaction outcomes and

gains which exists where the full collaborative process is consistently implemented. During interviews, one head teacher offered a reflective account of this relationship:

“There is a clear and consistent pattern I have observed as a head teacher: the teachers most satisfied with their jobs when they feel that they have a genuine stake in their own professional development. When teachers leave a goal-setting meeting feeling that their perspectives were heard, that their goals are meaningful and achievable, and that their supervisor will support their professional journey, the transformation in their enthusiasm, their classroom energy, and their commitment to the school is remarkable and unmistakable to all who observe it.” (HT 6, May 2026).

This findings insist on collaborative goal-setting, when practiced consistently and substantively, represents one of the most accessible and cost-effective mechanisms available to head teachers for improving teacher job satisfaction in resource-constrained public primary school environments. The strong overall agreement on this statement, combined with the more mixed findings on individual sub-components, suggests a clear direction for school improvement: strengthening participation, goal clarity, supervisory support, professional recognition, and contextual relevance is likely to yield significant and sustainable gains in job satisfaction. Meshack et al. (2025) found that regular, specific, and inclusive mechanisms integral to goal-setting processes significantly enhanced teachers' job satisfaction by fostering clarity and professional alignment.

A review of school documentary records shows a consistently strong link between collaborative goal-setting and overall teacher job satisfaction. The records indicate that, in most schools, teachers report higher satisfaction when they are actively involved in setting their professional development goals with supervisors. These documents suggest that collaborative planning processes, when documented through joint meetings, agreed action plans, and follow-up notes, are associated with improved teacher morale, stronger engagement in instructional tasks, and a more positive perception of the school working environment. Idowu (2025) similarly established a substantial positive relationship between collaborative goal-setting and school effectiveness, noting that direction and motivation derived from joint professional planning directly enhanced teacher satisfaction.

Noah and Kitula (2023) further demonstrated that processes embedding genuine professional recognition and trust between teachers and supervisors, hallmarks of authentic collaborative goal-setting, significantly boosted job satisfaction. These findings are firmly anchored in Transformational Leadership Theory, which, through its emphasis on inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence, provides a comprehensive explanatory framework for how transformational supervisory relationships translate collaborative professional engagement into heightened teacher satisfaction, organizational commitment, and educational quality (Deng et al., 2023). Therefore, head teachers in public primary schools must champion collaborative goal-setting not merely as an administrative requirement but as a transformational supervisory practice that is foundational to teacher professional fulfilment and sustained job satisfaction.

Continuous monitoring and follow-up of agreed goals

Continuous monitoring is the ongoing supervision carried out by school heads after teachers and supervisors have agreed on professional development goals. A documentary review shows that in some schools, follow-up is conducted through classroom visits, informal check-ins, and progress discussions, whereas in others it is weak or absent. This

suggests an inconsistency in sustaining the goal implementation process beyond planning. One head teacher explained:

“After we agree on professional development goals, I make sure I continuously track each teacher’s progress through regular classroom visits and informal discussions. This helps me understand whether the agreed strategies are being applied and where further support is needed. Without consistent follow-up, teachers lose direction, and the goals become meaningless documents rather than tools for professional growth and improvement.” (HT 7, May 2026)

This indicate that continuous follow-up strengthens accountability and ensures that agreed goals translate into real instructional change. When monitoring is weak, teachers are less supported and less likely to sustain improvement efforts. OECD (2020) emphasizes that effective teacher development systems require continuous feedback cycles, while Leithwood et al. (2020) argue that leadership impact depends on sustained implementation support beyond planning. Transformational Leadership Theory also supports this through individualized consideration, where leaders provide ongoing attention to teachers’ development needs (Bush & Glover, 2020). Therefore, continuous monitoring is essential for converting collaborative goals into improved teaching practice and job satisfaction.

Teacher involvement in evaluating progress toward goals

Teacher involvement in evaluating progress refers to the extent to which teachers participate in assessing their own achievement of agreed professional goals. A documentary review shows that in some schools, teachers and supervisors jointly review progress using classroom evidence, while in others, evaluation is mainly conducted by supervisors alone. This variation reflects differences in how participatory reflection is institutionalized. One head teacher noted:

“I always involve teachers in evaluating their own progress because it helps them reflect critically on their teaching. We sit together, review lesson evidence, and discuss what has improved and what still needs adjustment. This shared reflection builds ownership and makes teachers more responsible for their own professional growth.” (HT 8, May 2026)

This reveal that participatory evaluation strengthens reflective practice and increases teacher ownership of professional development. When teachers assess their progress, they are more likely to internalize feedback and adjust their instructional strategies. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) emphasize that reflection is central to teacher learning, while Timperley et al. (2021) show that collaborative inquiry improves instructional effectiveness. Transformational Leadership Theory explains this through intellectual stimulation, which encourages critical thinking and self-evaluation in professional practice (Deng et al., 2023). Therefore, involving teachers in evaluating progress enhances both professional growth and job satisfaction.

Recognition of achievement in the goal-setting process

Recognition of achievement refers to how supervisors acknowledge teachers when collaboratively set goals are successfully achieved. A documentary review shows that in some schools, teachers receive verbal appreciation, encouragement, or informal recognition after meeting agreed targets, while in others recognition is limited or

inconsistently documented. This indicates variation in how achievement is reinforced within the supervisory process. One head teacher stated:

“When teachers achieve the goals we set together, I always take time to recognize their effort either privately or in staff meetings. This appreciation is important because it shows teachers that their hard work is noticed and valued. When teachers feel recognized, they become more motivated to continue improving their teaching practice and take pride in their profession. (HT 3, May 2026)

This means that recognition reinforces motivation and strengthens teacher commitment to professional development. Without acknowledgment, the motivational impact of goal achievement may be reduced. Noah and Kitula (2023) emphasize that recognition improves teacher satisfaction by strengthening professional trust, while Adeoye (2025) shows that supportive leadership practices enhance morale and commitment. Transformational Leadership Theory also highlights inspirational motivation and idealized influence, where leaders reinforce effort and achievement to strengthen commitment and satisfaction (Bush & Glover, 2020). Therefore, recognition is a key component in sustaining the positive effects of collaborative goal-setting on teacher job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that collaborative goal-setting has a positive influence on teachers' job satisfaction in public primary schools. The findings demonstrated that involving teachers in setting professional development goals, establishing clear and achievable objectives, providing supervisory support and resources, making teachers feel professionally valued, and aligning goals with classroom challenges contribute to improved job satisfaction. The high proportion of teachers who agreed that collaborative goal-setting increased their overall job satisfaction further confirms that participatory goal-setting strengthens professional ownership, motivation, commitment, and positive perceptions of the school working environment. Qualitative findings also indicated that continuous monitoring and follow-up, teacher participation in evaluating progress, and recognition of achievements strengthen the effectiveness of collaborative goal-setting. Therefore, collaborative goal-setting should be regarded not merely as an administrative activity but as an important leadership and supervisory practice for improving teachers' professional well-being and satisfaction in public primary schools.

The study recommends that head teachers in public primary schools to strengthen collaborative goal-setting by actively involving teachers in identifying professional development needs, setting clear and achievable goals, and ensuring that agreed objectives are relevant to teachers' classroom challenges. Head teachers should provide continuous supervisory support, adequate teaching and learning resources, regular feedback, and follow-up to help teachers achieve collaboratively established goals. Teachers should also be involved in monitoring and evaluating progress toward agreed objectives so as to strengthen ownership and professional responsibility. Furthermore, head teachers should establish consistent mechanisms for recognizing and appreciating teachers who successfully achieve their professional goals, as recognition can enhance motivation and job satisfaction. Education authorities should support these practices through leadership training, professional development programmes, and regular monitoring of participatory school management practices to ensure that collaborative goal-setting is consistently implemented across public primary schools.

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