

Impact of School Head Leadership Style in Enhancing Teachers' Work Performance in Public Secondary Schools: A Case of Ilala City, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of school head leadership styles on teacher performance in public secondary schools in Ilala City, Tanzania. Centered on transformational leadership theory, the research identifies the predominant leadership styles of school heads and examines their influence on teachers' performance, the challenges encountered in enhancing job performance, and the strategies employed to overcome these challenges. Utilizing a qualitative research approach and a descriptive case study design, data were collected from 42 respondents, including six school heads and 36 teachers, through interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary reviews. The findings indicate that school heads face challenges such as resistance to change, limited resources, heavy workloads, and a constantly evolving educational landscape. To address these challenges, school heads adopt strategies such as creating supportive work environments, setting clear goals, recognizing efforts and achievements to motivate teachers, and ensuring the availability of necessary resources. The study recommends the establishment of supportive work environments, the development of change management strategies, advocacy for adequate resources, and the provision of training, mentoring, and coaching to enable school heads to adopt effective leadership styles and enhance teachers' job performance.

Keywords: school head leadership style, teachers' work performance, transformational leadership theory, Tanzania, leadership styles.

INTRODUCTION

The leadership style of school heads is pivotal in shaping the overall functioning and success of educational institutions, as it directly impacts the attainment of goals and provides guidance towards those goals. Effective school leadership ensures that students perform well academically and facilitates the transformation of schools from low-performing to achieving higher levels of success. Transformational leadership, for instance, seeks to foster strong teacher commitment and engagement towards the school's mission. Given the increasing range and complexity of leadership responsibilities in schools, the role of the head teacher has evolved beyond being the sole leader to being a collaborative figure who can inspire and motivate others (Michel and Peter, 2007).

In Tanzania, as in other developing countries, there is growing concern over teacher demotivation, leading to declining teaching performance and ineffective learning outcomes (Aunga & Masare, 2017). Enhancing the quality of education heavily relies on improving teacher performance (Rowland, 2008). Effective management of human performance is essential for achieving organizational objectives, as emphasized by Hayward (2005). Consequently, heads of schools must cultivate a positive climate in their schools, clearly articulating the school's vision and purpose. They can do this by encouraging and recognizing excellent performance from teachers and students through rewards and other incentives to boost motivation (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Mbiti, 2007; Nkosha & Mwanza, 2009).

The challenges facing teachers, such as low morale and welfare, often compel them to work at multiple schools (Namirembe, 2005). Increasing indiscipline in public secondary schools further complicates the quality of education outcomes. Namirembe (2005) also noted that many public secondary schools struggle to meet necessary achievement standards, primarily due to inadequate funding, poor facilities, and suboptimal leadership styles. This study addresses the pressing need to explore the impact of public school heads' leadership styles on teacher performance and student achievement. The results of the study will shed light on how different leadership styles influence school performance and how they can be adapted to various school environments. Moreover, the study will offer insights into how school heads and teachers navigate democratic principles within school management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study employed Transformational Leadership Theory as its guiding framework, focusing on the process of fostering change and inspiring followers within an organization. Transformational leadership has gained prominence in the business world due to its ability to create a cohesive environment where leaders and followers collaboratively work toward common organizational goals (Islam et al., 2021). This leadership style emphasizes building interdependent relationships based on mutual trust and a sense of belonging, thus promoting effective teamwork and goal attainment (Rolfe, 2011). In the context of education, transformational leadership is instrumental in guiding schools to higher levels of performance, with school heads leveraging this approach to cultivate teacher commitment and drive improvements in student outcomes.

The growth and development within the educational system pose significant challenges, particularly when school leaders are tasked with managing skilled and well-qualified teachers. As educational institutions, schools have specific goals and performance standards they strive to achieve, necessitating effective management practices to enhance performance (Kapolessya, 2010; Nzigilwa, 2010). School leadership competences play a vital role in facilitating various responsibilities, including employing practical intelligence, wisdom, and projection to navigate challenges. Leaders use these abilities to maintain a conducive school environment and establish behavioral styles that promote healthy relationships within the school.

In public secondary schools, different leadership styles such as autocratic, democratic, transformational, and laissez-faire have been identified (Chepkonga et al., 2015). Autocratic leadership is often self-centered, minimizing subordinate participation in decision-making. In contrast, democratic leadership is more people-oriented, valuing participatory contributions (Mgbodile, 2012). Transformational leadership emphasizes supporting subordinates' growth and proactive guidance (Ibrahim, 2014). Laissez-faire leadership allows free contributions of ideas without leader interference, suitable for skilled and experienced staff. In Tanzania, transformational leadership has been successful in motivating teachers to remain in their working stations, strengthening positive relationships between school heads and teachers, and thus decreasing the risk of teacher attrition (Nguni et al., 2014).

Factors affecting teachers' job performance include both external and internal elements (Akram et al., 2011). External factors comprise the community, school system, school policies, and students' expectations. Internal factors encompass teachers' beliefs about effective learning methods, teaching methodologies, and resource availability. Public secondary schools in Tanzania face resource shortages and inadequate facilities, which hinder effective teaching and learning (Owoko, 2010). To enhance educational quality, schools must provide sufficient teaching materials, physical facilities, and human resources (Okongo et al., 2015). These include material resources such as textbooks and laboratories, as well as human resources like qualified teachers and support staff.

Leaders in educational institutions face challenges such as resistance to change, which can arise from fear of the unknown, fear of losing their position, or inadequate information (Gravenhorst et al., 2003; Paton & McCalman, 2000). Communication barriers, lack of performance measurement, and low motivation contribute to resistance (Ngigi, 2014). Furthermore, teachers' level of dedication, professional progress, school climate, and support from supervisors, learners, and parents significantly impact their performance (Nsubuga, 2008; Akhlaq et al., 2010). A lack of adequate resources, organizational culture, and performance appraisal can lead to poor teaching outcomes.

To address these challenges, school heads must strive to create a supportive work environment for teachers and students. By focusing on recognizing and rewarding good performance, school heads can enhance motivation and morale among staff (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Mbiti, 2007; Nkossa & Mwanza, 2009). Clear communication of the school's vision and purpose can help align teachers with institutional goals. Overall, the study underscores the importance of effective leadership styles, appropriate resources, and supportive policies in achieving optimal teacher performance and improving student outcomes.

The study was guided by Transformational leadership theory which is based on the process of bringing renewed change to both leaders and followers within an organization. Recently, transformational leadership has evolved into one of the most prominent leadership styles in the business world (Islam et al., 2021). This concept fosters the creation of a unanimous environment where leaders and those subject to their leadership aim to attain a specific and similar organizational goal. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an interdependent relationship that nourishes reciprocal trust and a sense of belonging between these two groups (Rolfe, 2011).

The growth and development within the educational system can be challenging, especially when school leaders work with well-qualified teachers. Schools as organizations have set goals/performance standards that they want to achieve, and therefore, management becomes the key aspect through which these goals can be achieved for enhanced performance (Kapolesya, 2010; Nzigilwa, 2010). Although implementing educational and school management policies can be challenging, school leadership competences can offer a variety of roles by using 'practical intelligence' and practical wisdom, or projection, to generate leadership maintenance through 'psychological, sociological and physiological (PSP) parameters' and by generating a 'mirror effect' to create conducive environments in schools to which the leadership behavioral style of relations.

METHODOLOGY

Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches and a Case study design were employed to select six public secondary schools to obtain deep insights into how school head leadership style enhances teachers' performance. The Purposive random sampling technique was used to obtain sample of targeted respondents (head of schools and teachers) when the researcher employs extensive searches in the population to locate most specific participants on a particular topic and select them. The targeted population in this study included heads of school as well as secondary school teachers in the Ilala Municipality. Therefore, respondents were six (06) heads of school and thirty-six (36) teachers from six (06) public secondary schools who were normally giving or given directives in accomplishing their daily tasks. The study employed multiple data collection methods. Primary data were gathered from respondents through interviews and group discussions while secondary data were extracted through documentary analysis. The data were analyzed under thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study main objective was to investigate the impact of school head leadership style in enhancing teachers' performance in public secondary schools. Participants were asked to identify the main school head leadership style employed in public secondary schools.

The findings revealed that the collaborative leadership style was perceived as the main leadership style employed by the school heads in Ilala Municipality. This style to a large extent influenced teachers' performance, as it gave them the opportunity to share their views, for voice to be heard and to feel that they were part of the school decisions-making machinery. Furthermore, the above findings were in line with the submission of Haruni and Mafwimbo (2014), which asserted that the collaborative leadership style was the most dominant leadership style among school heads in primary schools.

Additionally, the findings revealed that school heads who employed a participative leadership style tended to build a sense of autonomy, trust and engagement of teachers, which positively influenced their performance. Furthermore, the participative leadership style promoted a culture of collaboration, trust, and open communication among teachers, which positively impacted their job performance. The findings also revealed that the school head leadership style ultimately could inculcated a culture of excellence and high expectations. In addition, it was evident that when the school head leadership style underline clear goals and

expectations, the subordinates had a clear purpose and focus that motivated them to struggle to improve their teaching and learning methods for better outcomes, which were students' academic performance. Moreover, it was revealed that teachers' resistance to change and adapting to new methodologies was a challenge that school heads faced when trying to enhance teachers' job performance.

Managing workload has also been identified as the challenge school heads face in improving teachers' performance. School heads also failed to release their teachers to attend different professionals' development and growth programmes, such as workshops and seminars, which could improve their job performance because one is bearing an enormous workload as the result of teachers being few in number. The findings indicate that the school head was also facing the challenge of managing the workload. Most of the schools that were visited, the classes were overcrowded, hence increasing the workload. When there is a demanding and overwhelming workload, it tended to create stress and burnout among teachers thus reducing the quality of teaching, limiting the time for teachers' self-development and improvement, negatively impact teachers' emotional well-being and leading to teachers leaving the teaching professional.

It was also revealed that the school head faced a challenge of keeping up with the rapid changes that occurred in the educational arena. The findings suggested that the education system was constantly evolving and that teachers were required to adapt to those changes. Therefore, the emphasis here was on the importance of acknowledging the dynamic nature of the education system and its impact on teachers' performance. The ability to effectively circumnavigate through these changes and still maintain a high standard of teaching was essential for ensuring a successful and progressive education system. Teachers' efforts to stay informed, collaborative, and adapted to changes should lead to affirmative outcomes for both teachers and students in this ever-evolving educational landscape.

Establishing clear goals and expectations for teachers was also identified as a technique used by SHs to enhance teachers' job performance. The above quote indicated that SHs were supposed to establish clear goals and expectations by providing a framework that outlined performance expectations, instructional strategies and assessment methods. This could enhance teachers' job performance, as it would create clarity of purpose, motivation and engagement, alignment with school mission, performance evaluation, professional development, accountability and effective time management. The findings were in line with the path goal theory by *House (1990)*, who stressed that the path-goal approach helped improve the performance of subordinates (teachers), thus enhancing goal achievement as follows: when subordinates were confused, the school head should tell them what to do and show them the clear path to follow. When the path is shown, the subordinates (teachers) should become satisfied and motivated, so they could accept school heads' behaviour, thus perform effectively.

Furthermore, recognizing and acknowledging teachers' efforts and contributions enhances their motivation and dedication, positively impacting their job performance. Likewise, the quotation highlights the importance of recognition and appreciation from the school head as a significant factor in improving teachers' job performance. The findings suggested that participants in the focus group discussion (FGD) viewed this measure as crucial and impactful. The school head should actively recognize and acknowledge the efforts and achievements of the teaching staff. This recognition can take the form of celebrating successes and publicly appreciating their hard work. The findings also underscore the importance of fostering strong relationships between school heads and teachers, grounded in trust and mutual respect. Such relationships can facilitate open dialogue and provide teachers with a sense of belonging within the school community. This aligns with *Rolfe's (2011)* emphasis on developing an interdependent relationship between leaders and their teams to achieve shared organizational goals. When teachers feel supported by their school heads, they are more likely to embrace change and contribute positively to the school's success.

Furthermore, the study highlights the value of mentorship and professional development opportunities facilitated by school heads. By creating spaces for peer learning, workshops, and other forms of training, school heads can empower teachers to enhance their skills and remain current with best practices in education. This focus on continuous improvement aligns with *Haruni and Mafwimbo's (2014)* assertion that school heads play a crucial role in providing teachers with the resources and opportunities necessary for their professional growth. The emphasis on clear goal-setting and accountability also has significant implications for educational

practice in Ilala Municipality and beyond. By establishing transparent performance expectations and regularly monitoring progress, school heads can help teachers stay focused on key objectives and improve their instructional methods. This focus on outcomes supports Maclean's (2018) perspective on job performance and can lead to more targeted and effective teaching practices that benefit students' learning.

The study also reveals the importance of balancing work-life demands for teachers, as excessive workloads can lead to burnout and diminished job performance. School heads who prioritize teacher well-being by providing support and resources to manage workloads can foster a more positive and productive teaching environment. This approach aligns with the work of Atsebeha (2016), who noted that supporting teachers' work-life balance can enhance their job satisfaction and commitment to their profession. Additionally, the study's focus on resistance to change highlights the need for school heads to be skilled in change management and communication. By addressing teachers' concerns and providing clear information about proposed changes, school heads can help ease transitions and encourage teachers to adopt new methodologies and approaches (Paton & McCalman, 2000). This ability to navigate change effectively is critical in a rapidly evolving educational landscape.

The findings of the study have implications for policy development in Ilala Municipality and Tanzania more broadly. Educational authorities should consider investing in leadership training programs for school heads to help them cultivate the skills necessary for effective school management and teacher support. Additionally, policies that prioritize teacher professional development and create opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing can enhance overall teaching quality and student outcomes. The study emphasizes the pivotal role of school heads' leadership styles in shaping teachers' performance and the overall success of schools in Ilala Municipality. By adopting collaborative, supportive, and transformative leadership practices, school heads can create an environment that promotes teacher growth and improves educational outcomes for students. These findings point to the importance of investing in school leadership development as a means of elevating the quality of education across Tanzania

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study found that school heads encountered various challenges while striving to enhance teachers' job performance, which often hindered their efforts. These challenges included resistance to change, limited resources, excessive workload, and the rapidly changing educational landscape. Overcoming these obstacles is crucial for school heads to effectively support and empower their teachers, as teachers play a fundamental role in shaping student outcomes and the overall success of educational institutions. The study also identified several strategies employed by school heads to boost teachers' job performance. These strategies included fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment, establishing clear goals and expectations for teachers, recognizing and acknowledging their efforts and achievements (motivation), and ensuring the availability of necessary resources. By implementing these approaches, school heads can create an environment conducive to teachers' growth and success.

Based on the discussions and findings, the study concluded that school heads in Ilala Municipality public secondary schools primarily employed participative, transformational, and results-oriented leadership styles. These leadership styles positively influenced teachers' performance by promoting collaboration, open communication, motivation, and a culture of excellence. The study underscores the significance of these leadership styles in fostering a positive and productive school climate that can lead to improved educational outcomes.

However, despite the positive influence of these leadership styles, school heads still faced challenges such as teachers' resistance to change, limited resources, increased workloads, and evolving educational landscapes. These obstacles require school heads to be adaptive and innovative in their leadership approaches. By remaining flexible and responsive to teachers' needs, school heads can navigate these challenges and create a supportive environment for their staff. To address these challenges, school heads implemented different strategies, including fostering a collaborative work environment, setting clear goals, recognizing and celebrating teachers' achievements, providing necessary resources and support, and promoting a positive

school culture. These strategies not only help teachers perform at their best but also contribute to their professional satisfaction and job stability.

The study's findings have implications for the theory and practice of education in Ilala Municipality and beyond. For instance, the emphasis on participative and transformational leadership highlights the importance of inclusive decision-making and support for teachers' professional growth. Additionally, the study's insights into the challenges faced by school heads suggest the need for targeted professional development and support for educational leaders to address resource limitations and changing educational demands. The study demonstrates that effective leadership styles play a pivotal role in enhancing teachers' job performance in Ilala Municipality public secondary schools. By navigating challenges and implementing supportive strategies, school heads can foster an environment where teachers thrive, ultimately benefiting students and the broader educational community. The findings also emphasize the need for continued investment in leadership development and resources for school heads to sustain and improve educational outcomes in the region.

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