

**Effects of Decentralisation of Educational Management on Academic Performance among  
Secondary Schools' Students in Iringa Municipality**

Amina S. Kinunda

Ruaha Catholic University

Email: aminakinunda626@gmail.com

and

Festo W. Gabriel

Ruaha Catholic University

**Abstract**

*The study explored the effects of decentralisation of educational management on academic performance of secondary school students in Iringa Municipality. The study employed a mixed-methods research approach with a cross-sectional research design. The study involved 45 respondents who were obtained through purposive sampling and simple random sampling technique. Data were collected by using questionnaire and interview. Qualitative data were analysed by using thematic analysis, whereas quantitative data were analysed descriptively by using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26.0. The study findings revealed that decentralisation of educational management leads into effective supervision of secondary school students. Decentralisation of educational management has also led to an increase in academic performance of the students. It is recommended that the government in collaboration with the Ministry of President's Office-Regional Administration and Local Government should ensure that good performers among students in public secondary schools are recognized in all Councils in Tanzania.*

**Keywords:** Decentralisation, Management, Secondary School, Performance

**1.0 Introduction**

Decentralisation has been embraced by many researchers (Androniceanu & Ristea, 2014; Busemeyer, 2012; Urbanovic & Patapas, 2012). It refers to passing power to the local communities so that they make their own decisions on policy aspects and practices concerning provision of social services, including education (Androniceanu & Ristea, 2014).

Decentralisation of educational management is an important phenomenon when it comes to planning and executing educational issues. Globally, decentralisation of educational management has been associated with ensuring participatory approaches in the school governance, which, in turn, ensures its management and contributes to empowering citizen and democracy (Cleaver, 1999 as cited in Majaliwa, 2014; Welsh & McGinn, 2019). According to Hanson (2007), decentralisation of educational management fosters a greater sense of ownership among educators and other stakeholders. Furthermore, Galabawa (1997) asserts that in the education sector, the local

governments were given a mandate to own and manage primary schools. In addition, there is ample evidence of positive results of decentralisation in the literature, such as King and Ozler (2000) who found that greater autonomy in decision-making about pedagogical and administrative matters in schools produces a positive effect on student performance.

In Africa, decentralisation of education takes place in the context where there is lack of access to quality education (Majaliwa, 2014). In Tanzania, decentralisation as a policy has been linked to the Philosophy of Ujamaa – Socialism in 1967 when was introduced to promote good governance and give people freedom to make decisions (URT, 2004). That is, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania believed that decentralisation would empower the schools to adapt changes in their external environment and be more responsive to the needs of learners and the community, and therefore increase students' performance (Malale, 2004).

In 1972, the central government of Tanzania transferred some of its powers and functions to the local authorities. During that time, a system of governance was promoted to the local localities to give people more freedom to make decisions and participate in matters affecting their lives. The Government abolished the local authorities and established decentralisation field offices in administrative districts and regions (Mniwasa & Shauri, 2001), which were accountable for the provision of basic public services at the local levels. Failure of de-concentration field offices to deliver services (Mukandala, 1998) and the economic crisis of the late seventies and eighties (Mniwasa & Shauri, 2001) led to the re-enactment of the Local Government Act and re-establishment of the local governments in 1984. This was followed by the launching of the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) in 1996 and consequently the introduction of Decentralisation by Devolution (D-by-D) policy, which aimed at strengthening the local government authority (URT 2004).

Despite the efforts to decentralise public services including education, many scholars reported negatively the outcomes of decentralising education in Tanzania, and few of them show the strengths and prospects of decentralisation. For instance, it was reported that under the decentralised system, some teachers are less favored in the process of promotion (Kayombo, 2007; Therkidsen, 2000). Decentralisation has also been blamed for lack of support for teachers to develop professionally (Nkumbi et al., 2007) and lack of adequate teaching and learning facilities (Balwitegile, 1991; URT, 2004). This jeopardizes the performance of secondary schools, a situation that has led to unsatisfactory performance of many secondary schools in the country. No other study was conducted by focusing on decentralisation of educational management on academic performance of secondary school students in Iringa Municipality. One of the studies was conducted in the United States of America by Jimmy (2017) whose findings revealed that among of the effects of decentralisation of management in education is the increase in accountability and responsiveness to students' needs that fosters better use of resources, thus, improving conditions for students. Furthermore, closer parent-

school partnerships can also improve learning in both the classroom and home environments, which can elicit commitment to self-made decisions and greater accountability on the part of teachers and principals, who are better able to make the best decisions for improving school operations and learning.

This article, therefore, explores the effects of decentralisation of school management in secondary school performance in Iringa Municipality.

## **2.0 Theoretical Framework**

Theoretically, this study was governed by Souffle Theory, which was advocated by Vincent La Chapelle in 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The theory describes three major elements of decentralisation, namely: administrative, fiscal, and political decentralisation (Parker, 1995). Administratively, the central government transfers some of its responsibilities for planning, financing and management to the local level authorities to respond effectively to the local needs (World Bank, 2008). The local authorities can, therefore, make changes and enforce regulatory decisions to govern various systems at local offices, such as the procurement system and human resources management including recruitment and performance management.

Fiscal decentralisation gives local government authority and power to generate revenues and decide on expenditures (Ghazia, 2009), including cost recovery through user charges and expansion of local revenues through property or sales taxes, or indirect charges. Nevertheless, there should be fiscal policies and procedures to govern the practices of local officials; checks and balances must also be built into the system (Kerr, 1998).

Political decentralisation transfers policy and legislative powers from central government to elected local authorities to show clearly the division of responsibilities between the central government and the local authorities (Azfar, 1999). However, the allocation of the power of decision-making to local authorities is not enough to create successful decentralisation if local officials are not accountable to the local population (Elsageer & Mbwambo 2004). Local accountability might be promoted through various mechanisms such as third-party monitoring by media and NGOs, extensive participation and central government oversight of local governments.

The Soufflé Theory is relevant to this study since it incorporates the aforementioned elements as they related to outcomes of educational decentralisation. The awareness of these elements of decentralisation has equipped teachers with knowledge regarding some aspects to be identified for studying the strengths and prospects of decentralised educational system.

### **3.0 Materials and Methods**

The study employed a mixed-methods approach with a cross-sectional research design. The study was conducted in Iringa Municipality involving four public secondary schools. The respondents of this study consisted 1 Academic Officer from Municipal Secondary Education Office, 4 Heads of school and 40 secondary teachers. The head of schools and Academic Officer from Municipal Secondary Education Office were purposively selected by virtue of their positions as managers that they have sufficient information about the study. Teachers were randomly selected because of having the character of possessing related information about the study. Data which were collected through questionnaires and interviews were analysed by descriptive statistics and thematic analysis respectively.

### **4.0 Findings and Discussion**

Teachers were asked to fill in the questionnaires to indicate their views on the effects of decentralisation of educational management in Tanzania secondary school academic performance by showing their level of agreement and disagreement through rating on either strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed. Nevertheless, Heads of Schools and Academic Officer from Municipal Secondary Education Office were interviewed.

#### **4.1 Effects of Decentralisation of Educational Management in Tanzania on Students' Academic Performance**

The findings in Table 1 show that, 74% of teachers opined that the decentralisation of educational management leads to ensure the supply of students' desks, whereas 22% of teachers disagreed with the said statement.

**Table 1: Effects of Decentralisation of Educational Management in Tanzania on Students' Academic Performance (N=45)**

| S/N       | Statement   | Strongly Disagree | Disagree        | Neutral        | Agree         | Strongly Agree | Total          |
|-----------|---|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
|           |   | <b>Fq.(%)</b>     | <b>Fq.(%)</b>   | <b>Fq.(5)</b>  | <b>Fq.(%)</b> | <b>Fq.(%)</b>  | <b>Fq.(%)</b>  |
| <b>1.</b> | It ensures the supply of students' desks            | <b>1(2)</b>       | <b>9(20)</b>    | <b>2(4)</b>    | <b>21(47)</b> | <b>12(27)</b>  | <b>45(100)</b> |
| <b>2.</b> | Promotion of teachers to higher grade level on time | <b>19(42.2)</b>   | <b>16(35.6)</b> | <b>5(11.1)</b> | <b>2(4)</b>   | <b>3(7)</b>    | <b>45(100)</b> |
| <b>3.</b> | Purchasing of books for                             | <b>2(4)</b>       | <b>7(16)</b>    | <b>0(0)</b>    | <b>23(51)</b> | <b>13(29)</b>  | <b>45(100)</b> |

|    |   |               |               |              |                |                 |                |
|----|---|---------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|    | students  |               |               |              |                |                 |                |
| 4. | Effective supervision of students                       | <b>0(0)</b>   | <b>2(4)</b>   | <b>9(20)</b> | <b>23(51)</b>  | <b>11(24)</b>   | <b>45(100)</b> |
| 5. | Teachers get financial support when permitted for study | <b>18(40)</b> | <b>20(44)</b> | <b>2(4)</b>  | <b>4(9)</b>    | <b>1(2)</b>     | <b>45(100)</b> |
| 6. | Payment of salaries to newly employed teachers          | <b>0(0)</b>   | <b>0(0)</b>   | <b>0(0)</b>  | <b>5(11.1)</b> | <b>40(88.9)</b> | <b>45(100)</b> |

However, the findings from the interview sessions with Heads of Schools revealed that decentralisation of educational management is helpful in increasing public secondary schools' academic performance. Nevertheless, the Heads of Schools claimed on the issue of the way it works to ensure schools' academic performance. Head of School D explained that:

*Decentralisation of educational management is a good plan, according to the purpose of its formation. It has made possible for the community to contribute and/or donate desks to schools. As a result, it increases students' academic performance as they attend and stay in classes comfortably when sitting on desks (Interview with Head of School D, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*

Another Head of School C had this to say:

*Nowadays, it is possible to reach the community easily. Through this policy [referring decentralisation of educational management], we usually request the graduates and other interested in local community members, who are key education stakeholders, to contribute to the school furniture and their response to this is very positive (Interview with Head of School C, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*

Generally speaking, the findings obtained from questionnaires and interview revealed that, the community has understood its role, which among others, to donate the school furniture, especially desks for students. In consistency with the finding, the URT (2004) insists that decentralisation of educational management was meant to promote good governance and give people the freedom to make decisions and take appropriate actions, which results into development. On top of that, Salah (2018) admits the practice of decentralized significantly affects secondary education service delivery.

Salah adds that there is a significant positive effect on increased students' performance in the decentralised system than it was before because each school manages to budget and use the available resources for the benefits of the schools in general and students in particular.

Also, the findings in Table 1 indicate that, 68.1% of teachers disagreed that the decentralisation of educational management ensures the promotion of teachers to higher grade level on time as opposed to 11% of teachers whose view was against the statement. Generally, it signifies that about two-thirds of teachers do not view positively the decentralisation of educational management in helping their promotion to higher grade level on time.

Contrarily, the findings from the interview sessions with Heads of Schools revealed that decentralization of educational management has been supporting the promotion of teachers, however, with no specific exactly time. Head of School A explained that:

*Just like other public servants, teachers need to be promoted on time. When we [teachers] are not promoted on time, it is because the government – which is the main employer – prepares the good environment to its workers. With decentralisation of educational management, Teachers' Service Commission [TSC], which is found in each district plays a role of supervising teachers and suggest their promotions, especially those who deserve (Interview with Head of School A, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*

In addition to that, Academic Officer from Municipal Secondary Education Office said:

*Promotion of teachers is not something, which is a political decree, no! There are seculars stipulating promotion of civil servants. Usually, the government states clearly its intent of promoting workers, including teachers. Therefore, they are promoted, however, not in time (Interview with Academic Officer from Municipal Secondary Education Office, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*

The findings indicate that, majority of teachers believe that decentralisation of educational management decreases their working morale, because they are not promoted on time, a situation which negatively affects students' academic performance. Currently, teachers are promoted, however, the situation was different in the past six years where there was no promotion to civil servants due to the fact that the government said it had no finance as promotion goes with increase in salary. When teachers remain unpromoted, it affects the academic performance of students because teachers will keep teaching without morale.

Similarly, Naidoo (2015) indicated that teachers are not only promoted on time but also that delays to process their rights, which may be attributed to lack of data management or the incompetence of human resources at the district level. The extent to which decentralization improve the

teachers' promotion in South Africa municipalities was reported to be questionable and it had accelerated the promotion of teachers.

The findings are also inconsistent with Saviour (2019), who avows that teachers' working morale is influenced by the way teachers will be motivated. He further added that decentralisation of educational management is much silent towards teachers' expectations, a situation which demoralise them and lead to decrease of working morale. Furthermore, Godda (2014) finds that decentralisation accelerates the promotion of teachers. This is true because the promotion is done by the office of Teachers' Service Commission, which was formerly known as Teachers' Service Department, which operates at the bottom level as each district in the country has its office. Therefore, promoting good performers among teachers is very possible under decentralised management system, which is different from the former centralised management system where everything was centralised to the Ministry of Education.

However, Welsh and McGinn (2019) view decentralisation as the most important phenomena to come on to the educational planning agenda whose purpose is to increase efficiency in management and governance. Nevertheless, the government is required to make sure teachers' needs are considered to increase their working morale that affects positively the students' academic performance. In so doing, it ensures the efficiency of teachers to boost their working morale.

Nevertheless, the findings in Table 1 indicate that, 80% of teachers have an overview that through decentralisation of education management has enabled schools to purchase books for students as opposed to 20% of teachers, who viewed differently, indicating that the decentralisation of educational management has not aided schools to purchase for students' books.

Similarly, the findings from the interview sessions with Heads of Schools revealed that decentralisation of educational management has enabled the schools to purchase students' books as explained by Head of School C:

*The amount of fees students pay are used to purchase learning materials, including books. This is only possible because the central government permits the local government to collect its revenues and plan for them. Basically, each year we prepare the list of books, which are most important to students. Previously, before the introduction of decentralisation everything was centralized within the ministerial level (Interview with Head of School C, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*

The study found decentralization of educational management has increasingly helped secondary schools to purchase students' books, which are mostly wanted. This, in turn, affects the performance of students positively as the students get opportunities of increasing knowledge through the books they read.

Nevertheless, Naidoo (2015) shared South African experience that it takes about three months after the commencement of the new government financial year for all qualified teachers to be promoted to their respective new grades. When teachers submit all the required documents to support their promotions, it hardly takes long time more than six months for them to receive their new salaries after being promoted. Sometimes, they are not promoted at all and when they concert the authority for the progress of their concerns, they find their documents missing in their files. Godda (2014) reported that decentralisation of secondary school management in Tanzania has mainly improved the working conditions of teachers in many aspects including living conditions such as accommodation, health facilities, or coordination of teachers to have effective SACCOs to solve individual financial problems, through local community participation. Furthermore, realities on the ground might be different because not all teachers are accommodated. The usual experience shows that teachers rent houses and those teachers who manage live in their built-houses.

Furthermore, the findings in Table 1 show that, 75% of teachers have an overview that the decentralisation of educational management leads to effective supervision of students when they are learning as opposed to 20% of teachers who remained neutral with the statement.

Equally, the findings from the interview sessions with Heads of Schools revealed that decentralisation of educational management is helpful in increasing public secondary schools' academic performance. Due to the nature of the management and supervision under decentralisation, teachers are teaching students regularly without skipping their lessons. Head of School B explained that:

*Through decentralisation of educational management, teachers are managed in attending all of their lessons. There is no any chance left to them for skipping lessons even for the notorious ones. This is because, they fear of being caught by the close supervisors, Ward Education Officers, District Secondary Education Officers, and the like, who can bring the feedback to the employer, the Municipal Executive Director and the TSC for immediate actions. As a result, such effective supervision increases schools' academic performance (Interview with Head of School B, 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*

Head of School D added that:

*Decentralisation of educational management has become a policy of creating fear to lazy teachers. Teachers are attending all lessons they are assigned and prepared lesson plans, schemes of works and teaching aids. By doing so, the lessons are proceeding in the required manner leading to maintaining educational standards and academic performance among students (Interview Head of School D, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*



Generally, the opinions and beliefs of respondents indicate that, the majority of teachers in public secondary schools believe that decentralization of educational management has shown positive effects towards students' academic performance, because teachers attend their lessons regularly, which automatically enhances students' academic performance in public secondary schools.

The findings in Table 1 show that 84% of teachers have an overview that decentralisation of educational management allows financial support to teachers when released for study, whereas 11% of teachers disagreed with the statement to mean that no financial support teachers get when released for study.

Similarly, the findings from the interview sessions with one Academic Officer from Municipality Secondary Education Office revealed that decentralisation of educational management is acting as an enabling environment for staff development. In more elaboration, Academic Officer said that:

*No one opposes that decentralisation of educational management has enabled teachers to be helped easily as opposed to the past where the teacher has to write a letter to the Secretary of the Education Ministry explaining his or her desire to pursue studies. It took so many days for the letter to be replied. See how simple it is now, a teacher requests for study and the letter is brought to the office. If permitted, the teacher is replied instantly. However, financially, there is a bottleneck where teachers are encouraged to prepare themselves before they think about the request (Interview with Academic Officer from Municipality Secondary Education Office, 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*

The findings show that, there is a challenge of teachers being supported financially when they are eagerly permitted to study in the higher learning institutions. The supervisors, AOME and HoS know that it is hard for teachers to be supported financially. However, fewer teachers who agreed that there is a financial support the government offers to its workers, they might have been supported.

The findings in Table 1 shows that, 100% of teachers have an overview that the decentralisation of educational management leads to payment of salaries to newly employed teachers, which enhances students' academic performance because teachers become settled once they are employed in the local localities.

Likewise, the findings from the interview sessions with Heads of Schools reveal that decentralisation of educational management ensures newly teachers are paid their salaries. Head of School A explained that:

*For the case of salary to workers, I can assure you that no one employed by the central government and located to the local government authorities suffers from salary issues. When a teacher is employed and report to the respective employing authorities [as the*

*case Municipality], she or he has to bring copies of his or her certificates for verification. Therefore, same teacher will report to the teaching station meanwhile subsistence allowance for fourteen days is given. Simply, same teacher gets the salary if all documents were recorded correctly and sent to treasure main office (Interview with Head of School A, 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*

In addition to that, Head of School C had this to say:

*When we compare students' academic performance before and after decentralisation of educational management, obviously it evidenced that at least after decentralisation students' academic performance has increased because even teachers are not in a position of being permitted going to the higher offices [in the Ministry] to make a follow-up of their arrears. Therefore, when a teacher is employed, almost all procedures are prepared. In my school I have never received any complaints from newly teachers on salary payment (Interview Head of School C, 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2023).*

The findings indicate that, the majority of teachers in public secondary schools believe that decentralisation of educational management leads to the payment of salaries on time the newly teachers, which in turn, increase in students' academic performance in comparison to the performance during centralisation. Therefore, the findings obtained from questionnaires and interview revealed that decentralisation of educational management has positively contributed to schools' academic performance. The findings are in line with Jimmy's (2017) who revealed that among the effects of decentralisation of management in education is the increase of accountability and responsiveness to student needs, which is directly related to the increase in schools' academic performance.

## **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is therefore, concluded that decentralisation of education has an effect to school academic performance. The majority of teachers in public secondary schools believe that decentralisation of educational management has positive effects towards schools' academic performance. This is because it helps students to be taught regularly by ensuring a conducive learning environment to learners as well as working environment to teachers. To students, this has been possible with the purchasing of books as well as supplying of students' desks as they sit comfortably and are able to write down what is being taught. To teachers, this has been possible with their promotion to higher grade level on time, financial support when released for study as well as payment of salaries to newly employed teachers.

The study recommends that the Ministry of President's Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) to ensure that good performers among students in public secondary schools are recognized as part and parcel of management practice in all Councils in Tanzania.

## REFERENCES

- Androniceanu, A., & Ristea, B. (2014). Decision-making process in the decentralized educational system. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 149, 37–42.
- Azfar, O. *et al.* (1999). Decentralization, governance and public services: The impact of institutional arrangements. *International journal of Strategic Decision Sciences (IJSDS)*, 8(1), 46–64.
- Balwitegile, F. S. (1991). *The management of primary education under the local government system in Tanzania*. Unpublished MA (Education) Dissertation. Dar es Salaam: University of Dar es salaam.
- Banele, S. D. (2014). *Effects of decentralization on secondary schools in Ilala Municipality*. Published Master of Education (Administration, Planning and Policy Studies) dissertation. Dar es Salaam: The Open University of Tanzania.
- Busemeyer, M. (2012). *Two decades of decentralization in education governance: Lessons learned and future outlook for local stakeholders*. Presentation delivered at the OECD Conference ‘Effective local governance in education’, in Warsaw, 16 April 2012. [www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/50293543\\_Two\\_decades\\_of\\_decentralization\\_in\\_education\\_governance.pdf](http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/50293543_Two_decades_of_decentralization_in_education_governance.pdf). Accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022)
- Elsageer, A., & Mbwambo, J. (2004). *Does decentralization have a positive impact on the use of natural resources?* A Paper for Interdisciplinary Course, International Doctoral Studies at University of Bonn. Retrieved on 14 November, 2022, from [http://www.zef.de/fileadmin/downloads/forum/docprog/Tempapers Ahmed pdf /2004\\_3c\\_Mbwambo](http://www.zef.de/fileadmin/downloads/forum/docprog/Tempapers_Ahmed_pdf/2004_3c_Mbwambo)
- Ghazia, R. (2009). *A framework to assess administrative decentralization*. Social Development Notes, No.129, June 2010.
- Godda, H. G. (2014). Decentralization of secondary school management in Tanzania: Strengths and prospects. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(37), 116–117.
- Hanson, M. E. (2007). *Educational decentralization: Issues and challenges*. London: UNDP.
- Hossain, A. (2000). Administrative decentralization: A framework for discussion and its practices in Bangladesh. Retrieved on Retrieved on 14 November, 2022, from <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/unpan/unpan019445.pdf>
- Jimmy, N. (2017). *What is the impact of decentralization on students’ achievement?* The facts on education. Brunswick: The University of Brunswick.

- King, E. M., & Berk Ozler. (2001). *What's decentralization got to do with learning? Endogenous school quality and student performance in Nicaragua*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.
- Kayombo, R. (2007). *The impact of decentralization on public primary school teachers' welfare Management in Tanzania*. Unpublished MEMA dissertation. Dar es Salaam: University of Dar es Salaam.
- Kerr, B. (1998). Decentralization and rural services: Messages from recent research and practice. *Journal of Education and Practical*, 3(5), 236–241.
- Nkumbi, E *et al.* (2007). *Capacity of school management for teacher professional development in selected primary schools in Tanzania*. Dar es Salaam: Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.
- Parker, A. N. (1995) *Decentralization: The way forward for rural development*. Washington, D.C: World Bank.
- Therkidsen, O. (2000). Contextual issues in decentralization of primary education in Tanzania *International Journal of Educational Development*, 20(2), 407–421.
- Urbanovic, J., & Patapas, A. (2012). Decentralization reforms of educational management: Theoretical and Practical Issues. *Public Policy and Administration*, 11(4), 659–671.
- Welsh, T., & McGinn, N.F. (2019). *Decentralization of education: Why, when, what and how?* Paris: UNESCO.
- World Bank, (2008). *What is school based management education*. Washington, DC: Human Development Network.