

# **The Effects of Teachers' Practice of Management roles on Pupils' Academic Progress in Iringa, Tanzania**

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## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to understand primary school teachers' knowledge of their management roles, practices and its effects on pupils' learning progress. The study involved 12 teachers and 48 pupils who were purposively selected from Iringa Municipality, Tanzania. The teachers were identified based on their official assignment of specific class teachers' management roles by school leaders while pupils were identified based on their class academic performance. When learning about teachers' roles, each participant teacher was treated as a case study. The teachers were interviewed while pupils participated through focus group discussion (FGDs). Documentary review guides was used to learn about pupils' learning progress and data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis procedures. The findings of this study revealed that, participant teachers had a limited knowledge of their management roles as each teacher attributed class management roles more to teaching in the classroom context than management roles. The teachers did not perform management task as expected by education circular and hence their roles did not advance pupils' learning academic progress. The teachers revealed that teachers' management roles that had effects on pupils' academic progress to be extra teaching, guidance and counseling. Since teachers had limited knowledge of their management roles, it is recommended that in service teachers' training that are geared towards updating their professional knowledge on management roles should be put into effects. Teachers' appointment of class teachers should highlight teachers' specific roles for management of pupils' academic progress.*

**Key words:** Teachers, management roles, academic progress

## **Introduction**

Traditionally teachers' roles have been maintaining an orderly learning environment in the classroom for pupils to achieve learning and teacher's planned goals (Marei & Mustafa, 2009). In Tanzania, teachers are assigned management roles with an assumption that they have skills and knowledge from their professional training before their recruitments. They are equally assumed being able to manage students' learning on behalf of the education stakeholders. At school level, pupils' learning diversity are explained in many ways including their learning progress and academic performance. Debates on teachers' management of students' learning progress are raised when the academic results are not as expected. In Tanzania for example, there has been a concern from stakeholders on whether or not teachers are performing their expected management duties when academic reports indicates that, there are pupils who complete primary school education level without mastery of reading, writing and other expected class competencies at a particular class level (Twaweza, 2015). Although, the variation in pupils' learning progress and performance may be related to a number of students' characteristics such as students' attitudes, motivation, learning background, readiness and learning environment, teachers understanding and practice of management roles as a variable was thought to be taken into account in explaining the variation in pupils' learning progress in schools. In a study by Drang (2011) on preschool teachers' knowledge and practices of management roles, language was found to be a tool that teachers employed to manifest classroom management roles. In the study by Drang (2011) likewise, the study by Al Kaabi (2015) revealed that, teachers practiced more authoritative role than coaching pupils for academic excellence. In Tanzania, teachers' in-service training and waiving of tuition fees to pupils in public schools has not improved pupils' learning progress and academic performance to the expected level at primary school leaving examination indicating that the pupils' academic performance is not improving. This is raising concerns on how accountable are teachers in schools in terms of their management roles. Since the school is the lowest level in the management of pupils learning, the purpose of this study was twofold; to assess teacher's knowledge of their assigned management roles, their practices the effects on students' learning progress in Tanzania.

## **Literature review**

The study was guided by Kreitner (1986) and Havanal (2011) theories which have identified three levels of management to be the top, middle and lower level of management or supervision

as shown in Table 1. At a school as organization management roles are in a hierarchal order with relationship of management levels of superior-subordinates relationship. The head teacher in school performs five managerial functions; informal and formal planning and decision role), organizing, interpersonal such as staffing, directing or informational role and controlling (Havanal, 2011). The relative importance of these functions varies along the managerial levels and there may be as many levels in the organization as the number of superiors in a line of command.

**Table 1: Levels of management**

| <b>Level</b>        | <b>Members</b>                                    |
|---------------------|---|
| Top                 | Board of directors, chairman, chief executive     |
| Middle              | Department Heads, Divisional Heads, Section Heads |
| Lower (supervisory) | Senior supervisor, Frontline supervisors          |

**Source: Havanal (2011) and Kreitner (1986)**

The teachers' management roles in school in Tanzania fall at the middle and the lower levels of school management hierarchy (MANTEP, 1995) and includes monitoring of students' learning progress, disciplines, attendance, and pupils' self-awareness. Steen (2011) has categorized these teacher's management roles in a number of categories; classrooms advisors with roles of managing pupils' attendance, academic matters and other affairs. The other is, discipline masters or mistress management roles with duties of managing the entire school disciplines. Another category is formed by academic masters or mistresses with a duty of coordinating academic matters. At the top level in the chain of management of school tasks are head teachers and assistant head teachers who have a role of managing both academic and non-academic issues.

Kountz and Weihrich (2003) have described management roles to be more human resource based that include designing and, maintaining an environment in which individuals work efficiently to accomplish selected aims. In this study, the study defines teachers' management roles as more of designing and modifying a learner's learning environment in a way that learners feel best to learn and accomplish planned learning goals (Steen, 2011). Teachers practicing class advisors roles are expected to give help to learners in the areas of disciplines in academic and general learner's welfare (Dachi et al., 2010).

The available literature on teachers' knowledge and management roles shows inconsistent results with more evidence that teachers are more involved in management of pupils' disruptive

behaviors in schools (Randazzo, 2011). The study by Schiffler (2016) revealed that teachers' management roles added stress on teacher's career. In a study by Wilson (2012) teacher's classroom management skills associated with communication were more valuable than collaboration and instructional support to their classroom management roles. Gablinske (2014) explored the affective domain of teacher-student relationships that are acquired through training are love and close follow up of pupils' academic affairs to be potential to students' learning. The study by Little and Akin-Little (2008) in Sowell (2013) on teachers' implementation of their management roles revealed that, teachers' management roles fall in four major areas; classroom rules, enhancing conducive learning environment, reinforcement of teaching strategies, and reductive procedures of indiscipline behaviors. Verbal warning in response to classroom problems, verbal praise, revoking students' freedom and corporal punishment are used to deal with chronic offenders. Taila (2009) in Sowell (2013) study demonstrated a wide range of teacher utilization of rule and procedures in many classrooms indicating that rules and procedures had positive effects on classroom disciplines.

### **Material and methods**

This study employed case study design to purposively select and collect data from primary school teachers with class management roles in schools. Each individual teacher was treated as a case study. The Iringa Municipality in Tanzania was purposively selected based on its big students' population, however with the smallest primary school pupil's teacher ratio (PMORALG, 2020). The Pupils Teachers Ratio (PTR) in the district is 1:41 and is smaller than the recommended PTR of 1:45. Selecting teachers in schools with acceptable teaching load was thought to be a criterion when assessing effects of teachers' management roles on pupils' learning progress a classroom context of manageable classroom of a teacher. Participant teachers and pupils were purposively chosen from 6 primary schools whereby 3 schools were in the category of high performing schools with the other three in low performing schools in the standard seven primary school living examination results in the previous 5 years. Structured interview and focus group discussion guides for teachers and pupils respectively were used as tools for data collection. Documentary review guides were used to collect data on pupils' learning progress for two years beginning when pupils were in class three to class four. Selection of data considered the need to answer research question to a point of saturation. In the process of collecting data, participant teachers were asked to keep records of pupils' academic progress,

their management activities that were linked to academic progress of pupils in a portfolio. During data collection process, data was recorded both in a notebook and in digital form.

Three focus group discussions were conducted at each participating school with the first at the beginning of the year which marked the plans at beginning of the school year. The other one was at the middle of the year and another one at the end. At each school eight pupils formed one group discussion. During the discussion, the researchers were non-participant observer with a role of recording data as they imaged from the discussion. The researcher appointed a moderator who led each discussion and at the end the researchers shared with the moderator before data analysis process was conducted. Nieuwenhuis (2007) suggests that, sharing is a useful strategy for ensuring that description from the researcher is understood in the same way the participants interpret meaning

Each focus group discussion session was organized based on academic levels. Since the number of pupils in one category was more than eight at each school, the researcher prepared cards with a number 1 and 0 to aid making decision of participants in group discussion. A number 1 signified involvement while a 0 exclusion. The pupils' participation was based on meeting achievement level and nothing else. Before data analysis began, the researcher organized, classified and read repeatedly the e data from interviews and documents so as to understand the data and later on interpret it thematically. The analysis based on each case study and finally themes from each case study were reported as theme with respect to objectives of this study. All respondents were assured with confidentiality whereby English alphabet letters were used to preserve their identities and members had freedom to respond and refrain from participation.

## **Findings and Discussions**

The findings with regard to teacher's knowledge of their management roles revealed that, when teachers assumed their management roles, they had knowledge that, they were responsible for holistic roles which included personal, social, and academic affairs' roles. This contention is revealed by the following responses from teachers;

*My role is to monitor pupils' academic and discipline, to make sure that pupils attend schools regularly, to provide reports to parents and the school in general" (Interview, TBI). I have to know each pupils' ability, cleanliness, to understand sources of pupils' problems, to be aware of pupils' learning progress, to know*

*their learning problems, to treat them with love (interview, TD1). I provide guidance and counseling education and daily needs, I ensure academic matters goes well, cleanliness and to maintain the relationship between teachers and the pupils (interview, TA2)*

The participant teachers practiced their management roles by monitoring of pupils' attendance, hosting meeting with individual pupils or groups. On some occasions, teachers volunteered for extra time help beyond class hours. The following extracts from teachers' responses revealed;

*I ask the pupils about their short life history and of their homes, I call upon pupils, when it is serious I call upon pupils' parents (interview, TE2). I use class and school meetings, where I involve pupils' to solve their academic problems (interview, TA2). I call students by their names and make follow up on their disciplines, academic ability and learning (interview, TF2)*

Pupils' opinions revealed that, they are given freedom to express their views with their class teachers privately upon prior arrangements. The following views from teachers revealed;

*I and others in the class arrange with our teacher, sometimes during weekends or after lesson hours and sometimes in the office (FGDs, S1A). The teacher's advices depend on how we listen to their advices, we discuss about our academic progress. During teaching in the class, the teacher provides advices and encouragement on studies. I ask the teachers if has a time to meet and discusses about my studies. Our teacher is cooperative. Not often the teacher, but we also ask the teacher when she has time (FGDs, S3E).*

With regard to the effects of teachers' practices of their management roles, the findings revealed that it is not easy to prove their effectiveness directly as learners varied in their learning progress. Remedial teaching whereby teachers worked on voluntary basis was among evidences of their management supportive roles. The following statements revealed;

*I believe, that pupils' academic performance in primary school leaving examination is a result of my leadership. It is almost two years now, I have got no say, and the head teacher knows and can speak about (interview, TC1). My leadership has helped students improve in the English language subject when compared to the time I was assigned a class teacher (interview, TD2). My follow up has identified that, some pupils do not have the skills in the three Rs" (Reading, writing, and arithmetic) due to scarcity of teaching material. However, I insist that pupils should be inquisitive to learn from their teachers by asking questions to their teachers (Interview, TC2). Absenteeism has decreased and*

*pupils' attitudes towards private studies have risen. When you insist about discipline and study behavior students' academic progress improves"* (Interview, TB1).

Although teacher described that, they had knowledge of class management roles, their management performance as indicated by documentation indicated that they performed more class tasks than the task related to management of academic progress of the pupils. Randazzo (2011) study on teachers' management roles has also indicated that, such teachers needed professional support. Since teachers at school level needed support there was evidence of teachers' lack of professional support in the area of management of pupils' learning. In the study by (Schffler, 2016), lack of knowledge on management support teachers hindered teachers effectiveness in management responsibilities, hence it was difficult to gauge their effect when practicing management roles. Therefore, the findings in this study have uncovered teachers' low understanding of their management roles to be among the reasons for students who face challenges to mastery of skills at a particular level of study.

As stated by Downey (2008), teachers in this study had knowledge that, classroom management roles are similar to their management roles and had enable them to reduce pupils' absenteeism. With this knowledge, teachers sought that encouraging each pupil to perform individual or private study at home had always positive effects on each pupils' progress at school level and in the classroom. Based on that contention, teachers insisted that each pupil's attentive to each teacher's exercise and activities had a positive influence on pupils that teachers performed to influence pupils' learning progress at school level. This implied that participant teachers were more sensitive to orderly learning environment than management in a holistic way.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In the view of teachers' knowledge in management roles, it is concluded that, teachers' limited knowledge on management roles, led to teachers limited levels of helping pupils to advance in their academic affairs. The teachers' limited knowledge of their management roles led to their ineffective in their practices of management roles and hence did not have expected effects on students learning progress. Teachers were knowledgeable of few aspects related to their management roles such as pupils' behaviors and attendance which lead to their ineffective way to practice their management roles. In the context of the kinds of teachers' management roles and practices, this study concludes that teachers' close assessment of pupils' academic affairs

such as school work, tests results, curbing absenteeism, love, and encouraging pupils to love academic work are keys to pupils' learning progress. Since teacher's knowledge and skills in management roles are of significance to pupils' academic progress, the study recommends that management organs at different levels of education in Tanzania should provide management guidelines on board to help teachers when performing class management roles. There is a need for a cross-sectional study to assess teachers' knowledge and practices of their management roles and its effects on pupils' learning progress.

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