The Influence of Head Teachers' Managerial Practices on Teachers' Working performance in Sumbawanga Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract

This paper describes the influence of head teachers' managerial practices on teachers' working performance. The study involved two head teachers and eight primary school teachers in Sumbawanga District, Tanzania. The study employed purposive sampling technique to select teachers and head teachers in primary schools. Data were collected through interviews and documentary review. Thematic data analysis was employed in the process of data analysis. The findings in this study revealed that head teachers' communication strategies, recognition of teachers' efforts and professional support that involved teachers in the form of collaboration were head teachers' managerial practices that positively influenced teachers' working performance. The findings further revealed that teachers work harder when there is effective communication and their supervisors recognize their efforts. The study recommends regular professional and training to head teachers on leadership aspects to equip them with managerial practices necessary for running day-to-day activities at their schools.

Keywords: Teachers' Work performance, Managerial practices.

1.0   Introduction

Teachers' working performance in Tanzania's primary schools is noted to be low and contrary to education stakeholders' expectations. This teacher's low working performance is related to head teachers' managerial practices (URT, 2012). In addition, the noted teachers' performances are related to head teachers' instructional leadership (Adeyemi, 2006). According to Olorisade (2011), head teachers with managerial skills are likely to manage schools properly and acceptably. Head teachers' managerial skills have effects on their managerial performance in schools. The effects include effective communication and reduced conflict among school teachers and workers' general performance.

Historically, managers' managerial practices can be dated back to Plato and Aristotle (Tony, 2007). In later years, management theories emerged, such as those by Frederick Winslow Taylor and others. Taylor (1856–1915) developed principles of managerial practices that managers should perform so as to assume their responsibilities. These responsibilities include selecting, training and developing employees (Anthony, 2004; Robins, 2010). Efforts such as formal preservice and in-service training are always made by authorities to enable leaders in their working conditions integrate a variety of managerial skills to manage institutions effectively. These efforts are meant to provide leaders with managerial skills for increasing their working performances. In the education sector, leaders and their subordinates, such as teachers are trained to promote work efficiency in education institutions. In schools, leaders' managerial skills are very essential in improving teachers and students' performance. With the rapid growth of science and technology achievement of learning outcomes cannot be

realized if school leaders are not strengthened to provide quality education (Tanzania Institute Education [TIE], 2007). School managerial practices are the key to improving school performance, particularly teachers' working performance and students' academic performance.

Head teachers' managerial practices enhance their ability to address general issues at school which may arise in the day-to-day management of their schools. When head teachers possess managerial skills, they are likely to practice their management skills without causing damage to their organization (Norton, 2003). Leaders' managerial practices help them address issues that hinder their performance and those of their subordinates (Mgaiwa, 2017).

Working performance is advocated by Motowidlo, Borman and Schmit (1999) to be a mental condition or attitude of individuals and groups which determines their willingness to work to their maximum levels. In addition, Latif (2002) defined work performance as workers' motivation to work. In schools, working performance is determined by the motivation to work, taking responsibilities, working even when unsupervised and teamwork attitude by teachers and other subordinates. Working performance is also measured by the level to which teachers accomplish their planned goals. Julius (2017) has noted that, workers' working performance is influenced by factors such as the organization itself, the level of satisfaction by employee and the level of supervision received by an employee. Employee self-conception, worker's perception of past rewards and future opportunities, the age of employee, the employee's occupational level and off job activities are the other factors. Meanwhile, in school contexts, some indicators that manifest teachers' working performance include attending in classrooms,

teaching preparations, attendance to school, management of teaching workload, record keeping and teachers' management of responsibilities. This study answered two research questions: Which head teacher's managerial practices enhance teacher's working performance? How do head teachers' managerial practices influence teacher's work performance?

2.0 Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Sumbawanga Municipality, one of the four districts in Rukwa Region in the Southern highlands zone of Tanzania. Other regions found in Southern Highlands zone of Tanzania include; Iringa, Mbeya, Njombe and Songwe. Rukwa was purposively selected due to being in periphery areas with a noted disadvantage of having good number of teachers but it is among of the ten least academic performing regions in Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) in Tanzania. Sumbawanga Municipality was purposively selected because in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 PSLE results, Sumbawanga Municipality was a district which was ranked 1st, 3rd, 2nd, and 2nd respectively. This was an indication that, although national wise Rukwa was ranked low in academic, Sumbawanga municipality was leading in the region. Based on this data, the key participants in the study provided the required information needed to address the research questions.

The study employed a qualitative research approach whereby a multiple case study design was employed. Each teacher was treated as a case study. The unit of analysis was each participant. The key participants in this study were two primary schools' head teachers and eight primary school teachers. In this study, the head teachers are identified as HTB and HTC meaning that HT stands for a head teacher while the last letter identifies a school name B and C respectively. Each teacher is

identified by a letter T, a school letter and a number. For example, TB4 stands for a teacher number 4 at school B. Each head teachers had at least five-years of leadership experience while teachers had at least a five years working experience. Since the study explored participants' opinions we recorded data in digital devices to preserve originality before transcriptions. The original data in the form of text were then subjected to participants to judge whether they reflected participants' opinions. This ensured credibility of the findings. Data collection began with two weeks of normal visit to respective schools for familiarity and asking each head teacher to maintain a leadership portfolio for this study only. This was followed by documentary review analysis for the researchers to konw each head teachers' leadership practices. The procedures are documented to address the issues of dependability and transferability of the findings. After documentary analysis, interview with head teachers and teachers followed. Analysis and writing went simultaneous so as to keep track of the needed data to address the research questions. In data analysis, Braun and Clerk (2006) nine steps of thematic analysis procedures were adopted.

3.0 Results and discussion

The findings from this study revealed that head teacher's communication styles and recognition of individual teacher's efforts were head teachers' managerial practices that influenced teachers' work performance at primary school level. Regarding communication, head teachers' noted that, effective communication with teachers when they show performance beyond expectation have always contributed to teacher's improvement in doing work. In this aspect, a head teacher at school C (HTC) has this to say:

I see how my teachers feel when I recommend them for a good job done. It is through a simple verbal comment but said from the heart. I see the effect on their work performance. Our district is ranked low, but my school is different. Teachers are working harder and harder, mainly communication. They know what will happen after the results, but my message matters and impacts their performance. This is why I never let the efforts of a hard-working teacher to go unnoticed (Interview with HTC).

The study findings further disclosed that communication climate at school influenced teachers' working performance. During interviews with head teachers, communication style was identified to positively influence teachers' work performance. For example, a head teacher from school B (HTB) revealed that updating the teaching staff with information on every step that the school is heading has added a significant thing to school academic performance. The HTB added that when teachers have all the information about the school, they flexibly put effort to maximize their performance. The HTB had this to add on the influence of communication style and teachers' work performance:

I make sure that I communicate whatever I have to my staff. Everything that is going on at our school is always known. When we receive cash and when we don't have is known. I also allow them to communicate with me freely on different school issues. We also use both formal and informal communication channels at school. We conduct staff meetings, and sometimes I call them individually to discuss any issue that might be important to discuss at an individual level. This has made my staff feel free and work in a positive mood. I have witnessed

> *how communication mechanism is a key to enhancing teachers' working morale* (Interview with HTB).

A response from a teacher from school B (TB1), who taught in three different schools before joining school B reported that, in previous years, the head teachers in school that TB1 worked had such behaviours of communicating with staff in such a smooth atmosphere. This made the teachers feel segregated, which affected their work performance. This led to lower participation in school activities not only in the classroom but also in extra-curricular activities. During an interview with a researcher, TB1 revealed:

> *Our academic environment is different. Shifting from previous schools to here has made me realize that if the head teacher is communicative to the staff, the teachers are motivated, and they work even harder to support their head teachers. Unlike the other school, I was working before coming here. I noted the head teacher being selfish. No one could tell what the head teacher was going to do next, nor the plans the head teacher had for that school. It was so demoralizing that I had to seek for a transfer to another school* (Interview with TB1).

With regard to communication style as a head teacher's tool for effective teacher's working performance, this finding from this study indicates that, when head teachers utilize effective communication style on a regular basis, it influences teacher's working performance. Teachers need to be informed of what is happening, where the school is heading and challenges to reach there, if any. Klann (2007) has pointed out that communication is a tool for leaders to build relationships and maintain their smooth condition in the working environment. Wadhwa and

Parimoo (2016) further showed that for a leader to have all subordinates be with same message, a leader must be a communicator. Vision of the organization as Bass (2010) put, without proper communication, an organisation's vision cannot be realized. It is a responsibility of a leader to create a communication mechanism. Ineffective communication breaks down relationship and destroys working atmosphere (Robins, 2010). This implies that, in a school setting head teachers require to possess a set of managerial skills to enhance their managerial practices when managing schools. The findings in this study further add that the head teachers' communication style influences teachers' work performance in a way that teachers' working performance in schools may encourage teachers to work openly and be ready to receive feedback from their head teachers.

It was further revealed that, recognition has impact that is more positive on teachers' working morale than the negative effects. Interviewed teachers in all the schools showed that, there is support and recognition by their head teachers. The majority of the teachers interviewed felt that the school leadership supported their professional development and this has resulted in all the feeling that the managerial practice by the head teacher motivates them to work hard.

Responses from participants indicated that recognition motivates teachers to work hard as they feel that their efforts are being recognized. This indicates that recognition is very important component of leading. The finding of this study concurs with Rose (2001), who argued that recognition processes acknowledge success. They are based on the belief that taking steps to ensure that people's achievements and contributions are recognised effectively motivates them. With

the same opinions, Armstrong (2007) attests that recognition should be a natural part of the daily routine. The organization should aim to develop a recognition culture nurtured by senior managers' management style and permeates the organization through each level of management so that it becomes 'the way we do things around here'. Managers can be encouraged to adopt this style but this should be more by example than by precept, not the subject of a scheme, process, or system.

Head teachers' recognition of teachers' work performance was revealed to have influence on teacher's work performance in schools. The response from head teachers indicated that teachers' work performance was influenced by ways head teachers recognized their efforts. Teachers worked harder when they perceived being recognized by their head teachers. At school C, for example, there was a day in a year normally at the end of academic year whereby all teachers and their head teacher had time to sit together and make a reflection of all their effort before beginning a new year. On this day, a formula was set to award each teacher's effort in whatever amount of new or improved academic work. The reference had been performance in national examination results. Teachers are awarded with both certificates and cash. This has added a significant impact on teachers working attitudes. As it noted by TC3:

> *Sometimes I and other teachers feel jealous when our fellow is awarded as due to good performance; our head teacher always has good reasons for such behaviours. Of course, you never know, there might be teachers who are not happy. But most of us are happy and are encouraged by other teachers through head teachers' recognitions. Finally, teachers work hard to support their head teacher* (Interview with TC3).

Teachers noted that head teacher's involvement of teachers in school issues to be a reason for their work performance. For example, a teacher at school C (TC4) noted that, they were involved in every school matter. The reason for their involvement had been to help each other understand what is happening. TC4 put it this way:

> *I do not have any management responsibility, but I know what will happen tomorrow. Every one of us knows the responsibilities, whether academic or non-academic issues. There is a job description, but we sit together each work to discuss challenges. It is hard to go away without challenges. We are involved. During the middle of the last week we had a meeting special for reflecting on our plans. We were sorry when we noted that some of us are behind planned dates of accomplishment. But as usual we planned to revamp* (Interview with TC4).

These findings in this study indicated that head teachers, who appreciated teachers' efforts, influenced teachers' performance. In addition, head teachers who involved teachers in school matters significantly influenced teachers' work performance. These findings imply that when a subordinate teacher is appreciated and involved in school issues, the behaviour by a head teacher influenced the individual teachers' work performance. Robbins (2010) has noted that when a leader appreciates subordinates' effort, it is significant to their future performance.

4.0   Conclusion and Recommendations

Regarding the influence of head teachers' managerial practices on teachers' working performance, it is concluded that, recognition, communication and teachers' involvement play an

essential part in affecting teachers' motivation towards school tasks. By appreciating teachers for their work done and involving them in school matters, teachers' effort and performance is influenced.

It is recommended that head teachers should ensure that teachers' efforts are recognized and rewarded where necessary. This will help to enhance the working performance of teachers. Head teachers should employ effective communication practices when communicating to their subordinates on matters related to their work responsibilities at work. There is a need for regular training to remind head teachers on their special leadership responsibilities. For further studies, a study be conducted to assess on the relationship between managerial practices by the head teachers and school performance in general.

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