

HEADS OF SCHOOL AND TEACHING COMMITMENT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KAGERA REGION, TANZANIA

ABSTRACT

Teaching commitment plays a pivotal role in the success of any education system. In vein, leadership behaviours by heads of schools is instrumental in shaping the teaching commitment. This study aims to examine the relationship between supervisory practices of heads of schools (HoS Practices) and teachers' commitment within public secondary schools in Kagera Region, Tanzania. The study was grounded from transformational leadership theory. The study used positivism research paradigm and cross-sectional research design. The results has consistently demonstrated a strong connection between instructional leadership and teachers' commitment. In the context of Kagera Region, which has witnessed a decline in various aspects of education and human development, resulting in increased poverty, this quantitative case study was conducted to investigate the relationship between the The data were collected through questionnaires from a sample of 240 teachers working across 80 public secondary schools in Kagera Region. The primary hypothesis posited that supervisory practices of heads of schools significantly impact teachers' commitment within the region. This finding raises important questions regarding teacher efficacy and leadership efficacy within Kagera Region's public secondary schools. This research contributes to the existing literature by shedding light on the critical role of heads of schools in enhancing teachers' devotion to teaching activities. The results underline the need for targeted interventions aimed at improving instructional leadership practices to boost teacher commitment, finally improving the overall quality of education in Kagera Region.

Keywords: Teacher Commitment, Instructional Leadership, Teacher Efficacy, Leadership Efficacy.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of education, the commitment and effectiveness of teachers stand as cornerstones for the achievement of educational goals. Teachers who hold positive attitude and deeply committed to their profession; students are more likely to excel in academics and quality education in general, thereby positively impacting the overall learning experience. Consequently,

the role of school leaders particularly heads of schools, becomes pivotal in fostering teachers' wellbeing and commitment and, in turn, the success of the educational system.

Kagera Region like many other regions globally, has witnessed complex challenges in its educational sphere. The challenges are such as inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding and teacher shortages. They have been far-reaching with adverse effects on both educational outcomes and human development. Among these challenges, the commitment of teachers plays a fundamental role in shaping the path of education within the region.

This study embarks on a quantitative case study to explore the critical connection between the leadership practices of heads of schools and teacher commitment within public secondary schools in the Kagera Region, Tanzania. The study investigated two primary research objectives: first, to identify the various methods employed by school heads to supervise teaching activities in these schools and second, to assess the levels of teacher commitment within the region.

Understanding the mechanisms employed by school leaders in supervising teaching activities is essential in comprehending the factors that influence teacher commitment. Effective instructional leadership can inspire and empower educators, finally enhancing their commitment to their profession and students. Therefore, by investigating on the supervisory practices of heads of schools, we seek to shed light on the ways in which school leadership can impact the commitment of teachers in Kagera Region's public secondary schools. Furthermore, assessing the levels of teacher commitment is essential in discerning the current state of the educational ecosystem within the region. It provides valuable insights into the efficacy of the existing educational structures and practices, while also highlighting areas that may require targeted interventions. The commitment of teachers serves as a indicator for the overall health of the education system, making it an essential side to explore in our study. Leaders play a significant role in motivating employees to work effectively and improve the organizations' performance (Eisenberg et al., 2019). Research studies show that leadership entails the ability to influence subordinates so that they can willingly perform organizational activities to achieve common goals (Collins, 2002; Eisenberg et al., 2019).

The research paper also highlights the methodology, data collection instruments, analysis and findings aiming to expose the complex relationship between heads of schools and teacher commitment in the context of public secondary education in Kagera Region, Tanzania. This

research not only contributes to the broader understanding on educational leadership and teacher commitment but also carries implications for policymakers and educators striving to enhance the quality of education.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Leadership

Leadership refers to the process of influencing activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal accomplishment (Urio, 2023). Leaders should have some essential attributes such as vision, integrity, trust, selflessness, commitment, creative ability, toughness, communication ability, risk taking and management, and visibility. Likewise, it achieves partnership that understands and accepts the vision. It motivates and inspires as a way of energizing employees to overcome barriers. Literally, it takes high risk approach toward problem solving in work organizations.

Contemporary leadership theories encompass a diverse array of concepts and frameworks that emphasize various dimensions essential for effective organizational management and goal attainment. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration and innovation (Bass, 1985) shares the stage with distributed leadership which acknowledges the shared responsibility for leadership within organizations (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). Servant leadership emphasizes empathy and ethical stewardship (Greenleaf, 1970), while authentic leadership prioritizes self-awareness and moral integrity (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Adaptive leadership, crucial in navigating uncertainty and change (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002) encourages experimentation and resilience. These perspectives collectively emphasize the importance of visionary, ethical and adaptable leadership practices in driving organizational success, fostering employee commitment and navigating dynamic challenges in today's complex environments work organizations, schools in particular.

2.2 School Leadership

The school leadership plays a crucial role in achieving intended education goals. It refers to a process whereby a person the head of school influences both the educational curricular and extra-curricular activities that seek to improve students' learning outcomes (Pont et al., 2008). School leaders feel a considerable pressure to demonstrate the contribution of their work to school

improvement, which has resulted in the creation of a wide range of literature that addresses leadership in the context of school improvement (Noureen et al., 2020). As such, the proper implementation of educational programmes and policy plans always depends on the nature of the school leadership. School existence very much depends on the good governance of the head of school (European Commission, 2017). How the school leader behaves and the ways through which he or she chooses to supervise others have an impact on how they react in turn, in terms of commitment to the teaching profession (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Masao, 2017; Owen, 1970). Recent literature has emphasized the need for school leaders to navigate complex challenges while fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Harris, 2018). Effective school leadership entails not only setting strategic direction but also fostering a collaborative and supportive environment conducive to teachers' professional growth (Leithwood, Harris & Strauss, 2022). Furthermore, the changing educational landscape necessitates adaptive leadership approaches that empower stakeholders and promote innovation (Day & Leithwood, 2017). Research has shown that the leadership practices of school leaders significantly impact teaching morale, student engagement and overall school performance (Harris & Jones, 2023). Thus, investing on the development of school leaders and promoting effective leadership practices is critical for enhancing educational outcomes and fostering a culture of excellence within schools.

2.3 Teacher Commitment

Teacher commitment refers to the state or quality of being dedicated to teaching; it can also be understood as an engagement or obligation that restricts freedom for other actions (e.g., a highly committed teacher may lack time for his/her family). Michael et al. (2016) emphasized:

“The phenomenon of commitment is a cornerstone of human social life. Commitments make individuals' behavior predictable in the face of fluctuations in their desires and interests, thereby facilitating the planning and coordination of joint actions involving multiple agents” (p. 1).

Teachers make up a significant resource in the education sector for the attainment of educational goals. As such, teachers in public secondary schools need to be committed in order to carry out their teaching tasks with enthusiastic willingness. Accordingly, teacher commitment is a very important element in successful teaching (Mart, 2013). Mart emphasized that motivated and passionate teachers are distinguished by their commitment to their students' achievement (Altun, 2017).

Accordingly, committed teachers recognize and aspire to fulfill their responsibilities. Furthermore, Mart noted: "The degree of loyalty committed teachers have, toward their profession is one of their distinguished characters" (p. 437). In contrast, Firestone and Pennell (1993) explained that low teacher commitment reduces student achievement. As such, Firestone and Pennell emphasized:

Burned-out teachers are less sympathetic toward students, have a lower tolerance for frustration in the classroom, and feel more anxious and exhausted. They develop fewer plans to improve the academic quality of their instruction and are less likely to challenge authority when faced with rules that keep them from teaching in ways they define as effective (p. 493).

Accordingly, committed teachers like working with their students and care about their development. These teachers profoundly struggle for efficiency and effectiveness in teaching and learning through employing different pedagogical approaches. Without indestructible love for the profession, teaching cannot be conducted effectively and efficiently.

2.5 School Leadership and Teacher Commitment

School leadership is a fundamental aspect in any education system because it plays crucial roles in the deliverance of education at the secondary school level in the attempt to achieve national educational goals. School leadership is therefore, a vital process through which the school leader can influence school curricular and extracurricular activities aimed at improving students' learning (Firestone & Pennell, 1993). This important process, yet, is highly driven by teachers. For their noble duties, teachers are often referred to as national builders.

As such, whatever level of development a nation can achieve, it is in part attributed to the involved national education system. Accordingly, whatever success expected from any education

system is mostly built upon teacher commitment. Some scholars, however, have found that various trends in different education systems worldwide are largely reflected by different commitments of the involved teachers in those nations (Edition, 2013).

Accordingly, school leadership plays a critical role in promoting sustainable development. Vaillant (2015) maintained that teacher commitment leads to students' brighter future; with committed teachers, students are guaranteed a strong foundation, which is a product of a quality education. In South Africa, the education system has experienced challenges of different categories. They include behavioural, transformational, and technical types of education, which affects the culture of teaching and learning (Khumalo, 2019).

Lack of teacher commitment aggravates the poor situation, which in fact, results from fragile or inadequate school leadership. There is a high demand for school heads to ensure that teachers deliver on their mandates, particularly, quality curriculum delivery (Bush, 2007). In any school setting, teacher commitment is essential; it plays a significant role in any scholastic achievement. Better student learning outcomes strongly depend on teacher commitment (Schleicher, 2012). In the school context, teacher commitment is critical because there is no student success without teacher commitment.

Committed teachers have a strong belief in the goals or purposes associated with their teaching. The authors asserted that teachers must be willing to devote considerable time and effort in the pursuit of learners' excellence (Schleicher, 2012). Teacher commitment includes performing extra work, and adhering to shared values and goals of the school. As such, teachers must make sacrifices in terms of their time for the sake of learners! The school teachers must exhibit professional morals and behaviours even outside work hours. If school heads can consider teachers to be pleased with their work and doing it passionately without the need to be reminded of their obligations; it can be evident that teachers are firmly influenced by their willingness and self-determination to make a great deal of sacrifice for their professional career and the students they serve.

According to Day et al. (2016), the critical elements of school leadership include developing and communicating a clear school vision by articulating specific goals and priorities; maintaining high performance expectations; and creating a structure that fosters genuine participation in the school's decision-making process. Moreover, relevant inventors of these qualities tend to leave

them to the growth and development benefits of the organization members. Literally, this includes the overall enhancements of their commitment through elevating their goals.

Ngirwa et al. (2013) illustrated that leadership behaviours have been the source of employees' wellbeing, motivation, and commitment to organizational tasks. As such, Cansoy et al. (2020) have established that empirically, there is a strong relationship between instructional leadership and teacher commitment. The authors asserted that instructional leadership behaviors of school leaders affect teachers' collaboration, professional motivation, and commitment. Accordingly, teacher commitment highly depends on the school leadership behaviors that focus on effective instruction for students' academic success.

2.6 Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership in education refers to a type of leadership whereby the school leader influences his/her followers by specifying a vision and mission in determining educational goals. Also, such a school leader develops friendship with teachers, motivates them at work, and makes working environment become pleasant and conducive for teaching activities. This type of a leader, however, is expected to put challenge on the teachers' ability and skills, innovativeness, and creativity. Moreover, a transformational school leader is one who considers teachers' needs, feelings, status, and individual goals (Stone-Johnson & Patrizio, 2014).

Transformational leadership involves the element of an individual's consideration in terms of intellectual stimulation, inspiration, motivation, and idealized influence (Eisenberg et al., 2019). Transformational leaders are among leaders who can identify and articulate a vision, provide an appropriate role model, foster the acceptance of group goals, and set high-performance expectations. The following behaviours encompass the concept of transformational leadership: communicating a clear vision, developing staff, providing support, empowering staff, being innovative, leading by example, and being charismatic (Podsakoff et al., 1990).

Most empirical studies have discussed the positive aspects of the transformational leadership theory. However, there are several weaknesses associated with this theory. According to Yukl (1999; 2010), the transformational leadership theory involves the following weaknesses: ambiguity about underlying influence processes, overemphasis on dynamic processes, ambiguity

about transformational behaviors, omission of important behaviors, insufficient specification of situational variables, insufficient identification of negative effects, and the heroic leadership bias.

3.0 METHODS

3.1 Research Approach

The study employs a quantitative research approach, focusing on the collection and analysis of numerical data to investigate the relationship between supervisory practices of heads of schools and teacher commitment. This approach allows for the examination of patterns, trends, and correlations within the data set, providing empirical evidence to support the study's hypotheses. Quantitative research methodologies offer the advantage of producing measurable and statistically significant results, enhancing the rigor and reliability of the study findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By quantifying variables such as teacher commitment and supervisory practices, researchers can systematically analyze the extent and nature of their relationship, contributing to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing teacher commitment within the educational context (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2017).

3.2 Research Design

The specific research design utilized in this study is a cross-sectional. A cross-sectional design involves data collection at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of the relationship between variables of interest. The case study design focuses on a specific geographical region (i.e. Kagera Region, Tanzania) and involves the collection of data from multiple public secondary schools within this region. Cross-sectional case studies offer insights into the current state of affairs within the educational context, allowing researchers to assess the relationship between heads of schools' supervisory practices and teacher commitment within a defined timeframe (Yin, 2018). By selecting a specific region and sampling from various schools, researchers can capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, enriching the study's findings and enhancing its external validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Generally, the research approach and design of this study emphasize the use of quantitative methods to explore the impact of heads of schools on teacher commitment within the context of public secondary schools in the Kagera Region, Tanzania.

3.3 Sample Selection

The population of interest in this study consisted of teachers working in public secondary schools in Kagera Region, Tanzania. A sample of 240 teachers was randomly selected from a total of 80 public secondary schools in the region. This ensured that the selected sample represented the diversity of public secondary schools within the Kagera Region, thus enhancing the generalizability of the study findings (Babbie & Mouton, 2018).

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires administered to teachers working across public secondary schools in Kagera Region. These instruments likely included items measuring teacher commitment and perceptions of supervisory practices of heads of schools. The data collection process is structured and standardized to ensure consistency and reliability in responses.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis techniques were employed to examine the relationship between the supervisory practices of heads of schools and teacher commitment. Statistical methods such as regression analysis was used to assess the strength and significance of the relationship between variables. Descriptive statistics was also employed to summarize the characteristics of the sample and key findings.

3.6 Measures

The measures used in the study included the instruments to assess both the supervisory practices of heads of schools and teachers' commitment. The subscale measuring *supervisory practices of heads of schools* included items assessing aspects such as instructional leadership, support for professional development, communication effectiveness and organizational management. Moreover, the subscale that measured *teacher commitment* comprised indicators such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and willingness to employ efforts for the betterment of the school community. It could include items assessing factors like loyalty to the school, belief in

its goals and values and intention to remain in the teaching profession. The validity was assessed by examining whether the measures captured the intended concepts, while reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha test for internal consistency. The results demonstrated high reliability for both subscales as follows: the subscale on the practices of heads of schools; included 14 items and yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.934, indicating excellent internal consistency. Teachers Commitment to Teach; the subscale comprised 7 items and had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.923, also indicating excellent internal consistency.

4.0 RESULTS

Table 1: *Practices of Heads of Schools on teachers' commitment*

SN	Subscale	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Min	Max	Mean Score	Std
1	Practices of head of schools	14	0.934	1.29	5.00	3.9536	.73990
2	Teachers' commitment to teach	7	0.923	1.29	5.00	4.1589	.76647

Source: Field data, 2023

The analysis aimed to assess the impact of the supervisory practices of heads of schools (HoS) on teacher commitment in public secondary schools in the Kagera Region, Tanzania. The regression model summary indicates a significant relationship between HoS practices and teacher commitment, with an R-square value of 0.525, suggesting that approximately 52.5% of the variance in teacher commitment can be explained by the supervisory practices of heads of schools (HoS Practices) (Table 1).

Additionally, the reliability of the measures used in the study was high, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.934 for HoS practices and 0.923 for teacher commitment, indicating excellent internal consistency (Table 2). The mean score for HoS practices was 3.9536 (SD = 0.73990), while the mean score for teacher commitment was 4.1589 (SD = 0.76647), suggesting that both variables are perceived positively by the respondents.

5.0 DISCUSSION

The findings reveal a substantial and statistically significant relationship between the supervisory practices of heads of schools and teacher commitment. This supports the hypothesis that effective instructional leadership positively impacts teacher commitment. The results align with previous studies emphasizing the crucial role of leadership in educational settings.

For the case of Leadership and Teacher Commitment, recent literature highlights the transformative role of leadership in enhancing teacher commitment. For instance, Leithwood, Harris, and Strauss (2022) emphasize that effective school leadership fosters a collaborative and supportive environment conducive to professional growth. Similarly, Harris and Jones (2023) demonstrate that leadership practices significantly impact teacher morale, student engagement, and overall school performance. The findings of this study corroborate these insights, suggesting that heads of schools who engage in effective supervisory practices such as providing professional development support and maintaining open communication, significantly enhance teacher commitment. This is consistent with the notion that transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration and support, plays a pivotal role in motivating teachers and improving their commitment (Bass, 1985; Eisenberg et al., 2019).

VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In this study, the validity of the research instruments, including questionnaires assessing the practices of Heads of Schools (HoS) and teacher commitment was established through several key steps including extensive review of existing research on instructional leadership and teacher commitment to identify key constructs and relevant questionnaire items. Consultation with experts in educational leadership and research methodology to review and refine the questionnaire items, ensuring they comprehensively covered the intended domains. Conducting a pilot study with a small sample of participants to test the clarity and relevance of the items, and making necessary adjustments based on feedback. These steps ensured that the instruments accurately represented the constructs of HoS practices and teacher commitment.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were exactly addressed in this study to reserve participants' rights and well-being. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits. They were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants were strictly maintained. The researcher (being a PhD student) obtained research clearances from the Open University of Tanzania and the Regional Administrative Secretary office in Kagera region.

CONCLUSION

The study provides empirical evidence of the significant impact of the supervisory practices of heads of schools on teachers' commitment in public secondary schools. The findings suggest that effective instructional leadership is crucial for fostering teacher commitment, which is essential for achieving desired educational outcomes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

The results underscore the importance of investing in leadership development programs for heads of schools. Targeted interventions aimed at improving instructional leadership practices could significantly boost teacher commitment and, subsequently, the overall quality of education in the Kagera Region. Policymakers should consider implementing professional development initiatives that focus on enhancing the leadership skills of school heads.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need for continuous assessment and improvement of leadership practices within schools. By fostering an environment that supports teacher autonomy, professional growth, and open communication, school leaders can create a more committed and motivated teaching workforce.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. Firstly, educational leaders should prioritize the development of supervisory skills among heads of schools to enhance teacher commitment. Secondly, policymakers should design and implement leadership training programs that focus on key areas such as instructional leadership, professional development support and effective

communication. Lastly, schools should establish mechanisms for regular feedback and evaluation of leadership practices to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with best practices.

LIMITATIONS

The study is limited by its cross-sectional design which captures data at a single point in time, making it difficult to infer causality (Setia, 2016). Additionally, the study focuses on a specific geographic region which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts in Tanzania and worldwide. Future research should consider longitudinal designs and explore the impact of other variables such as socio-economic factors and school resources as influential factors of teachers' commitment in schools.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Basing on the findings of this study, future studies should investigate the impact of teacher autonomy, job satisfaction and work-life balance on teaching commitment in higher education institutions. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the causal relationships between leadership practices and teaching commitment. Additionally, comparative studies across different regions in Tanzania and educational contexts or levels (e.g. primary schools, secondary schools, teachers colleges, universities) would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a broader understanding of the leadership influence in teachers' commitment.

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