

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP STYLES ON TEACHERS' ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the contribution of school head's leadership style to teachers' organisational commitment in Tanzania. It addressed one research question: How do head of schools' leadership style influence teachers' organisational commitment? The study was conducted in four secondary schools in two districts in Shinyanga Region, Tanzania. Focus group discussion was adopted as data collection tool. Results show that leadership qualities among head of schools contribute significantly in maintaining teachers' commitment to their schools and their readiness to invest efforts in realizing a school's common vision. School administrative support given to teachers through care and consideration of their professional and personal necessities, formed a prime base in augmenting teachers' commitment to their work. Committed teachers demonstrated positive feelings about their job, when they feel that their head of school considered them realistically. Teachers' involvement in executing school and professional concerns enhance their attachment to the school, and consequently the intention to work hard. It is recommended that schools should support teachers to keep them in the profession. Also, head of schools should increase teachers' readiness to serve their schools by engaging them in planning, discussing and implementing school plans.

Keywords: Leadership styles, organisational commitment, secondary school teachers, Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

The need to provide quality education in secondary schools forms an important role to facilitate national development in general and to improve learners' skills, behaviours and values, in particular. Teachers' contribution is paramount in realising quality education, especially when school leaders influence school performance through promoting teachers' organisational commitment. As argued by Eboka (2016), school leaders who assist teachers understand that their roles are essential in fostering commitment among teachers. In this, leaders move followers beyond their immediate self-interests through idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Aydin Sarier and Uysal, 2013).

Leadership is defined as the process by which a leader influences a group of employees to achieve the common goal of an organisation (Chandra and Priyono, 2016). It is the leader's personal influence, through specific values and abilities, which achieves what an organisation has set out to achieve (Nazim and Mahmood, 2008). Effective school leadership promotes student learning, teacher performance, collaboration among teachers and teacher job satisfaction (Nadarasa and Thuraisingam, 2014). According to Fessehatsion (2017), leadership is an art and the ability or process of influencing people to make them strive willingly and enthusiastically to attain organisational goals.

The common element synthesised from these definitions is that leadership is a process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group of individuals in an effort to achieve a goal in a given situation. Leadership is considered an important element in directing process, through leader's influence of followers (Chandra and Priyono, 2016). Leadership is a process in which the leader seeks voluntary participation of followers in achieving school success.

Leadership style is the general way a leader behaves towards her or his subordinates for attaining objectives of an institution (Nazim and Mahmood, 2016). It is the degree to which a leader entrusts her or his authority (Chandra and Priyono, 2016). This may be reflected in such behaviours as leader's concern for human relationship at the workplace. Leadership styles are valuable for success of any school because through these a leader fosters commitment of followers towards the school. The leader inspires teachers to enhance their performance. In this, the head of school depends upon teachers' knowledge and talent to attain the objectives of the school (Nazim and Mahmood, 2016). In this way, for effective leadership, a school head needs to adopt a leadership style of his or her (Gorchan *et al.* 2017), to enable followers to have satisfaction and a belief that the leader will lead them towards achieving their destination.

The issue of organisational commitment is an important element to realise organisational goals because when teachers are committed, they increase their performance and devote their time attending their duties at school (Gyasi, Xi and Owusu-Ampomah, 2016). Studies show that leadership styles and practices are associated with work attitudes and behaviours at both individual and organisational levels (Nadarasa and Thuraisingam, 2014; Eboka, 2016 and Nazim and Mahmood, 2016). This is because leaders influence teachers to realise the common school vision and mission and to optimise their potentials to improve students' learning.

Teachers' commitment to the school is related to their expectations of their leaders at the school level as well as their perception of that leader's behaviour (Ogochi, 2014). Leadership in secondary schools plays an important role in directing teachers' efforts to achieve school goals and objectives. This is realised when teachers' working behaviours are influenced by the head of school. According to Eboka (2016), secondary school goals and objectives can hardly be achieved if effective leadership is not provided by head of schools. In this way, the quality of leadership plays an important role in the success or failure of the school.

Effective school leaders give importance to personal development and intrinsic motivation of the followers (Nazim and Mahmood, 2016). In the process, they stress on alignment of needs and aspirations of the followers along with desired outcomes for the betterment of the school. Effective school leaders foster teachers' commitment towards the school and give them inspiration to enhance their performance (Gyasi, Xi and Owusu-Ampomah, 2016).

School leadership has recently been conceptualised as transformational (Nguni, *et al.*, 2006 and Yukl, 2002). According to Werang, Irianto and Asmaningrum (2013), a transformational leader motivates individuals to perform beyond expectations by inspiring them to focus on broader missions that transcend their immediate self-interests. In essence, employees concentrate on higher goals. The transformational leader helps followers rethink the way in which they see the world (Omidifar, 2016).

According to Money (2017), the sort of power a transformational leader possesses leads to the ability to inspire organisational members' commitment. Presumably, teachers working under transformational leaders may be more committed than those working under poor leadership. Moindi, *et.al.* (2016) found that a school head who cultivates a clear vision and

communicates that vision to teachers, students and the community, promotes the confidence and commitment of subordinates.

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It is important for school leaders to pay attention to teachers' organisational commitment if they are to influence these teachers to work together thus, voluntarily accomplish common school goals. However, little is known about the contribution of school leadership style and practices on teachers' organisational commitment in Tanzania. The study addressed one research question: How do head of schools' leadership style influence teachers' organisational commitment?

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study was planned to examine how head of schools' leadership styles influence teachers' organisational commitment in Tanzania. This kind of research provides an opportunity for respondents to express their feelings and views about the issue under investigation.

Study Sites and Participants

The study was conducted in Shinyanga Region, Tanzania. This Region was purposely selected because the area is among the Regions that lag behind in terms of access to secondary education. The study was conducted in four secondary schools in the Region. The Two districts with different environments were selected to be representative of rural and urban locations in the study. Thus, Shinyanga Municipality was purposely selected to represent the urban setting while Kishapu district was selected from the three districts to represent the rural schools.

Four secondary schools were selected to participate in the study, two public and two private ones in both rural and urban settings. For government secondary schools, both old-established and new community schools were chosen. For private schools, both Christian and Moslem schools were chosen. Some were operated by the Tanzania Parents' Association, Trust Funds and Cooperatives. Some were individually owned. This wide range of schools characteristics enabled the researcher to discover varying teachers' views, feelings and considerations as they related to the teaching settings.

Teachers' selection in the focused groups ensured an inclusion of Males and Females, teachers' education level and teaching experience. Only teachers who had worked at the school for at least three years were picked for the study. This aimed at getting complete data in that teachers had to have worked long enough to observe the school leader.

Focus group discussion was the main data collection tool. Between eight and twelve teachers in each selected school were asked to participate in these groups, and they agreed to do so.

The advantage of focus groups is that participants can interact with each other rather than with just the researcher. The role of the researcher was to guide the proceedings of the discussion. Semi structured questions were prepared before hand to guide the discussion. Teachers' interaction in the focus group discussions created a chance for their engagement in a conversation regarding the topic under investigation. This ensured confirmability of the data.

Dependability of the data was ensured through the following means: selecting a lengthy data collection period, conducting focus group discussions in teachers' natural settings, using a tape recorder to tap information and transcribing these data verbatim as well as presenting respondents' quotes in results. Research ethical issues were ensured through obtaining informed consent of schools and participants. Permission to record the discussions was requested. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.

Data Management and Analysis

A tape recorder was used to record teachers' focus group discussions and then, they were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts in Kiswahili were translated into English and they were printed for further analysis. Data were analysed following a thematic analysis framework, using NVivo version 7.0-computer software for analysing qualitative data. Three experts in the areas of both qualitative research and organisational behaviour in education read the transcript and together with the author, decided the emerging themes. Participants' quotes were selected to illustrate the emerged themes and topics for discussion. The next section summarizes the findings and quotes some respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data regarding the influence of school leadership style on teachers' organisational commitment emerging from the inquiry were clustered into three categories: first, leadership qualities and practices; second, administration support; third, teachers' involvement in deciding on school issues.

Leadership Qualities and Practices

Respondents indicated that leadership qualities and practices contributed to teachers' commitment to the teaching profession in particular, in internalising school values and teachers' readiness to work hard so as to realise school goals. According to most respondents, team-work played a significant role in enhancing teachers' input in realising their school goals and objectives. One respondent had this to say,

We set goals together so everybody knows what these goals are and how to implement them. Thus, during the implementation stage, every teacher knows the expected results in a way that makes everybody participate in implementing them (Teacher, School B, Shinyanga Municipality).

Leadership qualities and practices displayed by the school head in the daily management of school affairs contributed to teachers' dedication to the teaching profession. Such practices focus on promoting co-operation, cohesion and teamwork among staff members that inspired them to work hard to realise school growth. According to Nguni, *et. al.*, (2006), a good identity among teachers is achieved when school goals are ideological in nature.

Complementing the above argument, Githiari (2017) states that school head's practices that aim at identifying new opportunities for school development through stakeholders, especially teachers who are the primary implementers of teaching and learning activities among learners, foster teachers' commitment. It is possible through the influence of individual goals,

such as encouraging individual teachers' adoption of school goals in a way that makes such goals clear and attainable. It shows that the inspirational nature of the school vision by the school head heartens teachers' emotional arousal that promoted co-operation.

In general, almost all teachers mentioned that the school leadership influenced teachers to achieve what had been planned. This helped teachers to feel that they were part of the school in that they owned the plans and implementation strategies. One teacher, for example, confirmed that teachers were committed to their school because they were doing their duties promptly and were ready to correct themselves. They did not wait for the school head to do so. This respondent affirmed that:

As teachers, we have developed a sense that whatever duties or roles we perform at school is for our own good and that of the school. For example, we report for our duties early and attend all classes. We feel that we are facilitators of learning and not people who work merely for salaries (Teacher, School D, Kishapu).

Teachers' enthusiasm to work was reported in schools whose head promoted co-operation among teachers in executing their duties. Teachers counted themselves as actual implementers of school goals. This is in line with Kiboss and Sirma-Jemiryott (2014) findings that teachers who have a friendly, co-operative and supportive relationship with each other and with supervisors display a strong positive commitment in their schools. This is due to the strong support of leaders that increases the clarity of what followers need in order to perform their duties.

All in all, the head of school leadership style influences teachers' context of beliefs which resulted in their acceptance of and owning such goals and values in a way that attached them to the school. The findings of this study agree with those by Nyamubi (2017b) that leaders who articulate attractive visions of the future state of the school and its members inspire enthusiasm and optimism among teachers, resulting in their positive commitment to the school and the teaching profession.

This kind of leadership, it was argued, enhance teachers' confidence in working with their leaders and performing duties without close supervision and so, they are responsible as well as accountable for the daily execution of school responsibilities. However, the head of school makes decisions basing on amendments, reductions and additions in already decided decisions according to the situations to yield the best (Gorchani, et al. 2017).

Study findings revealed that school head who creates and maintains a culture of work pattern energised teachers to be creative in the accomplishment of their daily duties and generally work harder. Technically, what school leaders were doing was regarded as giving support for the teaching and learning process. This study agrees with Fessehatsion's (2017) argument that educators who establish a framework for effective leadership ensure sustainable school improvement and teachers' continuing devotion. Such head of schools strive to lead in a way that shows teachers that the school succeed through the collaborative efforts of stakeholders such as the school management, teachers, students and parents.

In reference to leaders' inspiration and intervention in addressing teachers' individual and school needs, the findings showed that leaders who actively intervened to solve problems regarding the school or individual teachers were perceived by teachers to be effective. This encouraged teachers' commitment to the school. Thus, this cultivates and nurtures mutual support among teachers at the school, which increases their sense of connectedness and attachment to the school. This is in line what was found by Abdon et al. (2017) that head of

school's leadership qualities and effective management inspire teachers in a way that creates team work.

The findings further revealed that effective head of schools exemplary and regular feedback inspired teachers to effectively perform their duties, as one discussant put it:

Teachers are encouraged to have a professional disposition. Systematic follow-up is provided to let teachers know what they should do or get from their work, and their work inputs are recognised. All these help teachers to be committed to the teaching profession and feel that they belong to this school (Teacher, School C, Kishapu).

The findings showed that leaders in schools who were innovative and led through teachers, made the teachers feel that they were part of the realisation of those innovations. According to the teachers, this resulted in devoting time and energy to help their school succeed.

Also, the findings of this study showed that teachers' knowledge of the head of school's innovation and positive supportive behaviours promoted their commitment to the school. Such actions by the head of school had an influence on teachers' values and understanding, which resulted in a corresponding positive change of attachment to their schools. These findings support those by Lokuruka (2017) who found that when leaders' actions, especially their innovation on how teachers perform their duties are appreciated and valued by teachers, they elevate teachers' enthusiasm to work.

Arguing in a similar vein, Marshall (2014) suggests that the process by which leaders arouse enthusiasm in followers is an important component in explaining leaders' articulation of an appealing vision. Such a vision taps the conscious and unconscious values and feelings of followers, which, in turn, augments their respect for their leaders' actions about what to accomplish (Malela and Gathumbi, 2016).

Administration Support

It was found that if teachers were supported by their school administration in terms of how to effectively perform their duties, they would be more devoted to working hard to realise school objectives. That support took the form of facilitating their promotion and getting teachers' demands met by their employer. One of the interviewees said that,

The school administration helps teachers who are eligible for promotion by endorsing their application and forwarding it to the promotion agency, which is the District Teacher Service Department, and make close and regular follow-up of the application. This helps teachers to get promoted at the required time, which makes them eager to stay working at the school (Teacher, School A, Shinyanga Municipality).

Teachers' support from the school administration when they performed their duties promoted their commitment to the school. A potential result in this study revealed that in most schools teachers were supported to effectively perform their duties through the provision of teaching and learning materials. These efforts resulted in teachers' attempts to support students' learning. In this way, teachers' perception of their leaders' supportive practices and decisions influenced their commitment to work harder in a way that increased their enjoyment.

Also, teachers have a desire to willingly make extra efforts to work for students' academic growth. Similar to this, Werang, *et al.* (2013) subscribe that the desire to please an employee towards whom one feels a strong affection in a work relationship setting is an important source of leadership capacity to influence his or her followers' support. What is stressed here

is the fact that head of schools' managerial behaviour displays awareness and it challenges what teachers face in their daily activities, which at the end, promotes teachers' devotion in performing their duties.

It was further disclosed that the head of schools supported their teachers by facilitating them in obtaining loans from financial institutions. This helped teachers to meet their economic needs, such as building houses, buying furniture and cars and the like. In this regard, teachers with high levels of perceived school support devote their time willingly to engage in any duty, because they perceive their leaders to be concerned about their professional and individual needs at their workplace. In support of the social exchange perspective, the research revealed that perceived organisational support relates positively to job attendance (Rahim and Razzak, 2013) and the tendency to offer constructive suggestions for organisational improvement (Kose, 2016).

The respondents further explained that their employers financially supported their endeavours through providing salary advance and soft loans, depending on the school's financial ability. Most private schools, for example, provided the requisite facilities that enabled teachers to perform their duties diligently. Support was given in relation to teachers' output and performance.

An explanation of this is that the head of school's capacity to stimulate supportive attachment in their teachers lies in his or her ability to create a work environment that results in teachers' feelings of a sense of accomplishment in performing assigned duties. Thus, when the leaders in schools sought to make the school a good place for teachers, they provide them with support (Abdon *et al.*, 2017). This at the end makes teachers perform their job diligently and develop a strong desire to work enthusiastically for the school's growth.

It was further reported that parents were responsible to support teachers regarding students' attendance and academic development. Thus, most respondents felt that there was a need for parents to play their part in contributing to school development by following up students' discipline and academic progress. One teacher remarked that,

Parents help teachers by encouraging their children to study hard. But now most parents do not respect teachers, unless in some situations where a parent knows the importance of his or her child's education (Teacher, School C, Kishapu).

Regarding the contribution of teachers' perceived parents' support to their devotion to their school, the findings of this study show that it was associated with their experience of a positive mood at their workplace. This was possible in relation to the way teachers are valued, treated and supported, especially when parents encourage students to work hard. It is argued alongside Malela and Gathumbi (2016) that teachers who experience strong levels of perceived school and parents' support feel the need to reciprocate the favourable treatment they receive with attitudes and behaviours that benefited the society.

Teachers' Involvement in Decision Making on School Issues

Regarding teachers' involvement in planning, discussing, deciding on and implementing school goals, data indicated that teachers felt eager to work hard to achieve school objectives when their voice was heard and respected. It was reported that schools had various meetings in which teachers participated fully and meaningfully by discussing and making decisions on school issues. The findings disclosed that teachers had an equal chance of contributing and being heard. One respondent reported that,

Staff meetings and other kinds of meetings help teachers and leaders alike to dialogue and reach a consensus amicably. If issues need the attention of the school Board, they are forwarded at once and feedback is provided to teachers (Teacher, School B, Shinyanga Municipality).

A potential result of this study shows that teachers' involvement in setting up and executing school plans give them confidence in their leaders. In other words, teachers were given the opportunity, through various meetings or committees, to be involved in deciding on pertinent school issues. This democratic form of governance gives teachers confidence in their school leaders so that their devotion to executing their assigned duties was enhanced. It led to improved quality of service provision.

Similar to this, Money (2017) links decision-making with professionalism by affirming that teachers need to be involved in any plan to strengthen teaching as a profession, through making decisions that affect the conduct of their professional practices. Thus, a shared and informed consent to educational decisions at school level would guarantee that teachers would abide by such decisions.

It was reported that teachers' involvement in discussing and deliberating on school issues gave them confidence in their leaders, which enhanced the realisation of school goals as a team. One of the respondents commented that,

Every teacher participates in discussing issues and, at the end, teachers feel that they are part of the team in implementing the plans. This is better than planning from the top and making teachers implementers of school issues already decided on. This, as you can see, sustains teachers' spirit of hard work (Teacher, School D, Kishapu).

Teachers' involvement in decision-making augmented the flow of ideas and their sense of commitment through ownership. Teachers who are better informed about issues they are supposed to implement within their jurisdiction contribute positively to the realisation of such concerns. This study agrees with what is propounded by Ogochi (2014) that employees work well when they are properly briefed on what was expected from them.

Thus, what is achieved by holding regular staff meetings as well as consulting each individual section of the school on relevant matters before effecting changes is very important in promoting teachers' teamwork and attachment to their school. Indeed, staff meetings and consultations result in clearing away doubts about the work and in helping to instil confidence in teachers. According to Khairita et al., schools leaders need to give extra attention to the school environment to achieve organisational objectives.

The findings further indicated that teamwork was a strong device that head of schools used to involve teachers at various levels of planning, discussing and implementing planned activities. Each teacher was reported to have a role in managing school resources according to his or her ability. In one school, it was disclosed that,

I believe that teamwork renders us success because no school head can work all alone and be completely successful. Here, teachers are given duties and responsibilities that allow them to work together to conduct school activities. Teachers' talents and abilities are used for the betterment of the school (Teacher, School A, Shinyanga Municipality).

In managing school resources, teachers' involvement in relation to their abilities and areas of specialisation or feedback are tools for effectively carrying out their responsibilities. This enhances teachers' work morale. In this way, teachers' talents became of great use for school

growth, especially when the head of school opted for leadership strategies that facilitated optimal use of teachers' expected inputs. This argument is similar to what Rahim and Razzak (2013) espouse that leadership practices that focus on followers' involvement in school issues, relate positively to their commitment. In this, leaders create a work environment that emphasises participation, teamwork, empowerment and effective communication with the aim of creating committed and satisfied employees.

The underlying premise here is that teachers and leaders' meetings enhance openness in discussing plans or reports regarding issues within their daily jurisdiction of duties and in implementing planned actions and activities for the betterment of the school and its community members. This implies that teachers' involvement in managing school issues that need their attention not only makes them assume an active role in implementing them but also it sustains their spirit of hard work.

Most teachers agreed that their involvement in discussing school issues enhanced their morale and devotion to their work. They stated that their school's yearly calendars indicated meetings, which were always held as scheduled. They further affirmed that during the meetings, teachers and leaders sat together to discuss issues and reflect on the extent to which they had fulfilled their action plans. Effective management practices help the head of school to handle conflicts among employees (Abdon, *et al.* (2017)

In managing daily school issues, decision-making is a fundamental administrative process that promoted efficiency in managing a school. In this context, head of schools are expected to make their decisions within frameworks that are in line with the prescribed systems of the school owners. Such a process at school level builds collaborative structures among stakeholders, teachers included, to realise school goals. Thus, the head of school provides opportunities for teachers to participate in deciding on issues affecting their duties for which their knowledge is important. According to Nyamubi (2017a) such teacher involvement contributes to their belief that they are able to shape the context for the school's growth and meet their own needs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidence from the study shows that leadership qualities among head of schools contribute in sustaining teachers' commitment to their schools in such a way that teachers' willingness to give efforts in realizing a school's common vision is enhanced. Teachers' allegiance to their schools is evident in schools whose leaders provide feedback, creates mutual trust in the work environment, guide teachers to adhere to agree upon school values and that who help teachers to feel a sense of ownership of their schools.

School administrative support given to teachers through care and consideration of their professional and personal needs, form a prime base in enhancing teachers' commitment to work. When teachers perceive this support they devote their energy to work harder for students' learning. Teachers feel eager to work diligently when they are heard and respected in planning, discussing as well as implementing school and professional issues. It nurtures a belief in teachers that they could shape the context for their school growth. Thus, it enhances their attachment in implementing the decisions. This sustains teachers' spirit to work hard.

It is recommended that schools should support teachers to keep them in the profession. This will promote teachers' committing to teaching. Second, committed teachers demonstrate positive feelings about their job, especially when they feel that their head of school cares for them realistically. This, in turn, facilitates their urge to be accountable to the school. So, to

increase and maintain teachers' commitment, head of schools should increase teachers' readiness to serve their schools. Thirdly, engaging teachers in planning, discussing and implementing school issues regularly will increase teachers' devotion to their employer.

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