

PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADS APPOINTMENT QUAGMIRE IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT:

The study sought to understand the factors that lead educational authorities in Tanzania to appoint unqualified school teachers to head public primary schools. The findings presented in this paper are based on a cross sectional survey conducted between December 2009 and April 2010 in Morogoro, Lindi and Tabora, three of 30 Tanzania's regions (provinces). Interviews conducted with nine DEOs and 77 head teachers generated the qualitative data used in this report. The study findings reveal that there was inadequate numbers of qualified head teachers in the public schools of the regions under review. The District Education Officers (DEOs) charged with the responsibility of identifying these heads were looking for the right persons with right credentials to manage primary schools as the management of primary schools is a complex process involving keeping and handling of confidential information, examination and financial management. Generally, the Certificate in Education, experience in teaching, gender, school location were some of the key requirements for one to make headship in Tanzania. However, on the basis of problems identified with getting the right person, the study recommends effective utilisation of Teachers Resources Centres (TRCs), short courses and in-service training as some of the strategies that could help to improve the skills and knowledge of the public primary school head teachers for effective and efficient management of primary schools to evolve on a wider scale.

KEYWORDS: Head teachers, public primary schools, management, training, appointment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the real world of management, the appointment of a school teacher to head a primary school entails the appointment of a professional in school leadership and management with impeccable credentials; however, as this paper will demonstrate things can be different on the ground. Generally, Gupta (2008) argues that the professionalisation of management in organisation depends on two inter-related and important dimensions: induction of competent managerial personnel who have the requisite qualifications and expertise acquired through education and training; and management of an organisation by application of modern theoretical knowledge, techniques and approaches of various relevant disciplines for handling its activities.

A recent review established that a variety of approaches are made in various countries to recruit head teachers of good calibre. In fact, the process of recruitment of head teachers in different countries can be categorised into three approaches. The first approach refers to those countries that strictly adhere to the professional qualifications in school leadership during the recruitment of head teachers. This approach is evident in countries such as United States, Lesotho and South Africa. In the US, the recruitment policy requires principals (head teachers) to have at least three years of teaching experience and a post-graduate degree at least at the Masters level in addition to having completed mandatory programmes of study leading to the receipt of a teaching licence to serve in that capacity and have to complete internship in the field of administration prior to receiving that state's approval to practice (Daresh & Male, 2002).

In Lesotho, school head teachers or principals are selected by school management committees. Aspiring head teachers are required to have a qualification in school leadership and acceptable minimum teaching experience; however, in rural schools many of the appointed head teachers do not meet these requirements (Phamotse et al, 2005). In 2006, South Africa through the Department of Education introduced a national qualification for school leadership. This compulsory professional qualification for first-time principalship was the Advanced Certificate in Education, without which no educator would be eligible for appointment (Van der & Van Vuuren, 2007).

In the second approach, administrative qualifications in school leadership are not a consideration in the appointments for school leadership. In Botswana, for example, the possession of a degree or diploma as well as a three or more years of experience as a deputy head teacher or head of department is part of the appointment criteria (Ministry of Education 1994: 12 as cited in Pheko,

2008:74). A similar procedure is also followed in Turkey where most of the educational administrators do not take any course related to the position to which they were being appointed. For Turkey, pre- and post- service training of principals is insufficient (Gumuseli, 2009). In Nigeria, years of teaching experience are used as a yardstick when appointing school principals (Arikewuyo, 2009). In Cyprus, where there the general belief is that a good teacher can become a good manager and leader of the school without any preparation (Nicolaidou & Georgiou, 2009), teachers are appointed to school leadership without any specific qualifications or particular skill for leadership in management.

The third approach has to do with where the system of strictly adhering to the recruitment criteria. As a result, many primary schools may end up functioning without head teachers in the absence of those with the right qualifications. A good example is Bangladesh where more than a quarter of public primary schools have been forced to operate without a head teacher for over two years now, hence jeopardising primary school education in a country struggling to eradicate illiteracy. According to the Bangladeshi Government Department of Primary Education (DPE), some 10,000 of the country's 37,672 public or government primary schools were in this position due to a long-standing wrangle over the qualifications needed for promotion to head-teachership. In a bid to sort out the mess, the government in 2006 decided to freeze all promotions to the position of head teacher (IRIN, 2009). According to IRIN (2009), the DPE in 2003 made it mandatory for all primary school teachers to have a Certificate in Education (C – in Ed) to be considered for promotion to the post of head teacher in any public primary school. Obtaining a C– in Ed requires an additional six-months training. This mandatory requirement disqualified teachers with university degrees, such as Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and even higher degrees such as Masters of Education (M.Ed) from becoming head teachers of public primary schools in that country (IRIN, 2009).

In Tanzania, according to Hiza (2009), the process of appointing primary school head teachers has for a long period been largely intuitive rather than systematic. As far back as 1965, a six-week course for primary school heads prepared by the Ministry of Education was seen as enough for the heads of schools appointed intuitively by their employer. At that time, what really mattered were the knowledge and competence which the appointees had acquired during and after training. And currently, despite the existence of the 1995 Education and Training Policy

(ETP) of 1995¹, which direct District Education Officers (DEOs)² to adhere to the set guidelines when appointing teachers to head public primary schools, the guidelines simply go begging: they are rarely followed. In fact, a study conducted by Galabawa and Ndalichako (2000) established that the majority of the primary school heads (49%) were given responsibility to head schools without having ever undergone any professional training in educational management and administration.

In Tanzania, the promotion of head teachers resembles the approach being used in countries such as Botswana, Turkey, Nigeria and Cyprus where a school teacher is appointed to leadership position and then allowed to develop his or her leadership skills and experience while on the job. This system is liable to allow for the appointment of persons to positions for which they have no requisite training or experience. After all, there is no guarantee that the appointee will eventually develop these requisite skills while on the job. As a result, many a school has been exposed to poor management, which in turn eroded the teachers' morale, undermined pupil performance, and ability of the teachers and supporting staff to work as a team. As such cases were not isolated in Tanzania's public primary school, this study was designed to investigate the factors influencing educational authorities to appoint unqualified teachers to head primary schools contrary to the 1995 ETP directives. This understanding can help educational policy-makers and administrators become aware of the extent to which educational authorities adhere to the ETP and its provisions during the appointment of head teachers and the challenges associated with such a process as well as the strategies that can be deployed to overcome them.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To realise the research agenda, the study relied on the following objectives:

- a) To establish whether the criteria employed by District Educational Authorities to appoint head teachers conform to the stipulation of the 1995 Education and Training Policy.

¹ The Section 29 of the 1995 Education and Training Policy clearly stipulates that Educational managers at the ward and primary school levels should have at least a Certificate or Diploma in Education, as well as professional training in Educational Management and Administration from a recognised institution.

² District Education Officers, or DEOs, in Tanzania are civil servants responsible for the superintending all primary schools within the district; they manage and handle all complaints from head teachers, teachers and other staff. They also appoint head teachers and represent the Ministry of education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) at the district level.

- b) To establish the factors influencing these Educational Authorities to appoint unqualified teachers to head primary schools.
- c) To explore mechanisms put in place to ensure that those unqualified head teachers were upgraded so as to meet the criteria stipulated in the 1995 ETP.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The findings reported in this paper stem from the outcome of a cross sectional survey conducted in three regions of Tanzania: Tabora (Tabora Municipality, Tabora Rural and Nzega district); Morogoro (Municipality, Morogoro Rural and Mvomero district) and Lindi (Lindi Town Council, Nachingwea and Ruangwa districts) between December 2009 and April 2010. The study was mainly qualitative, supported by quantitative data. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from nine DEOs (District Education Officers) and 77 head teachers. These were interviewed mainly face-to-face in a bid to get a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study. Both the DEOs and head teachers were purposively selected because of their strategic positions, which accorded them with rich information directly related to the objectives of this study. The DEOs, for example, were involved in the study because they are responsible for appointing head teachers and overseeing the whole primary school management process. The head teachers, on the other hand, were involved because, as the appointees, the head teachers were qualified to talk about their academic and professional qualifications and whether they possessed any additional credentials in the management and administration of an educational institution.

Before conducting the main study, a pilot study was conducted in ten public primary schools in Dodoma Municipality. This measure was necessary to enhance the validity and reliability of the study findings. Indeed, this pilot study enabled the researcher to improve the research instruments by improving the framing of the questions on the basis of the preliminary findings. Furthermore, participants and location triangulation was employed to compare results from one time and place to another in a bid to check for consistency of the information to be collected. Also, in line with the country's research procedures, permission for conducting research in each of the districts visited was obtained from the Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS), District Administrative Secretary (DAS) and eventually the DEOs, who gave a go-ahead to visit the schools under study. For ethical reasons, the respondents were also informed about the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntary since they could pull out at any time if

they so wished. To make them at ease and stop wondering about what would happen to the information they provided, the respondents were assured that the information they provided would remain confidential and used for the intended purpose. Moreover, the names of the participants were withheld to ensure that their identities remained anonymous to those reading the report produced based on the findings.

4. KEY FINDINGS

The findings of this study were presented and discussed on the basis of the research objectives as follows:

4.1 Criteria Employed by Educational Authority to Appoint Head Teachers

Data pertaining to this objective was obtained through interviews held with both the DEOs and the head-teachers. The criteria mentioned by the DEOs have been presented in summary form in Table 1.1:

Table 1.1: Criteria Deployed by DEOs to Appoint School Heads

Criteria Used	Frequency N=9
Certificate or Diploma in Education	9
Experience in teaching profession	7
Ability of the teacher to maintain school community relation	4
School inspector report	4
Being a deputy head teacher	2
Certificate in Education management and Administration	2

Source: Field Data (2010)

Information contained in Table 1.1 suggests that the majority of the DEOs consider holders of Certificate or Diploma in Education first before factoring in their teaching experience and finally a few of the DEOs considered teachers who had served as deputy heads of school since these were more likely to possess a Certificate in Education Management and Administration. The implication is that the majority of DEOs did not observe the criteria stipulated in the 1995 ETP, particularly in section 29 when appointing head teachers. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies by Van der Westhuizen and Van Vuuren (2007), Pheko (2008), Galabawa and Ndalichako (2009) and Arikewuyo (2009), which found that such appointments were made without adhering to the laid down criteria.

To crosscheck information obtained from DEOs, the 77 head teachers, who took part in the study, were asked to state their credentials in terms academic and professional qualifications as well as the experience in the teaching profession. In addition, they were asked to indicate whether they had ever served as deputy head teachers prior to their appointment as school heads and whether they possessed certificate in education management and administration. Finally, they were asked to assert whether they had ever received any orientation before or after being appointed to their present positions as school heads. The following were the responses:

With regard to their academic credentials, the majority (84.41%) of the 77 head-teachers interviewed had Ordinary Level (O-Level) qualification. These were followed by a small number (9.09%) who had an Advanced Level (A-Level) certificate. The least (6.49%) merely had the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) qualification. In terms of their professional qualifications, the majority (84.41%) of the 77 head-teachers were Grade 111A Certificate in Education holders, a minority (9.09%) possessed Diplomas in Education and an even smaller number (6.49%) were Grade B Certificate in Education holders. The study established that these head-teachers had varied teaching experience: 25.97 percent had been teaching for two to five years; 37.66 percent for six to 10 years; 14.28 percent had been working between 11 and 15 years; 11.68 percent for between 16 and 20 years; and only 10.38 percent had been in the teaching profession for more than 20 years.

A simple (50.01%) of the 77 head-teachers had served as deputy heads prior to their appointment as school heads whereas a significant minority (49.09%) had never been deputy heads prior to their present appointment as to head primary schools. Additionally, 20.7 percent of the head-teachers had benefited from orientation whereas the remaining majority (76.2%) had not received from such induction. Their responses also indicate that only a minute number of the head-teachers (12.98%) possessed a certificate in Education Management and Administration with the vast majority (87.01%) having no such credential. In other words, only a few head-teachers met the criteria as stipulated in the 1995 Education and Training Policy. The responses from the head-teachers tally with those of the DEOs. Both sets of responses confirm that very only a few head-teachers qualified for their posts if one went by the standards set by the 1995 ETP. Similar results were also found in Turkey, Nigeria, Cyprus and Botswana, where the majority of school heads were appointed without their having professional qualifications in school leadership (See Gumuseli, 2009; Arikewuyo, 2009; Nicolaidou & Georgiou, 2009; Pheko,

2008:74). The onus is, therefore, on the school authorities to ensure that schools are administered by professional principals or heads otherwise the ill-qualified school managers may lose their credibility (Gumuseli, 2009), particularly if they fail to deliver the goods as expected

4.2 Criteria Used by Educational Authorities to Appoint Head-Teachers in relation to the 1995 ETP Stipulation

The 1995 ETP provides clear guidelines under section 29 for educational authorities to follow when appointing head-teachers for country's schools. Despite the existence of such guidelines, through interviews with both the DEOs (the appointing authorities at the local level) and the head-teachers (appointed by these DEOs) revealed that the ETP stipulated criteria were not necessarily used as the yardstick across board during the appointment of the head-teachers. Apart from taking cognisance of the certificate or diploma in education and teaching experience, the educational authorities appeared to ignore qualifications in education management and administration. This brings us to Taylor's view to the effect that a well-organised selection requires the selection of the right people for various jobs so that their productivity and efficiency will be high (Gupta, 2008). The findings of this study demonstrate that many of the head-teachers' appointment did not meet this requirement, the 1995 ETP notwithstanding. This raises another question: why do the educational authorities appoint unqualified school heads?

4.3 Why do the Authorities Appoint Unqualified School Teachers to Head Primary Schools

During the study, the responses obtained from the 77 head-teachers, who took part in the study, revealed that only 12.98 percent of the appointments conform with fidelity to the criteria stipulated in the 1995 ETP. Elaborating on the factors that influenced the educational authorities to appoint unqualified teachers to head primary school the responses were as follows:

First, the head-teachers blamed the inadequate number of teachers who meet the qualifications as stipulated in the 1995 ETP. As Table 1.1 indicates, the majority of the DEOs were forced to appoint head-teachers with certificate or diploma in education as well as teaching experience since the possibility of their having additional qualifications remained doubtful.

Second, the head-teachers mentioned the unfriendly or hostile working environment. As a result, less qualified teachers tended to work in rural-based schools or simply remote area, with the qualified teachers hankering for and generally tending to work in urban-based schools. The

qualified teachers found in hard-to-reach areas tended to be newly-employed and still on probation. These head-teachers also tended to have served in the teaching profession for less than two years, meaning they also lacked sufficient experience in teaching. Another drawback was that the majority of experienced teachers in rural-based schools were trained at the relatively low Grade B level, with very few having Grade III A qualifications. In some circumstances, the DEO might desist from appointing a female teacher with good qualifications to a rural outpost due to the nature of environment unless she happened to be married to a village member. This implies that the majority of rural-based primary schools are not managed by female head-teachers.

It was also established that getting the right person to be a head-teacher was a problem DEOs had to contend with. Indeed, the management of primary school is a complicated process: it involves keeping confidential reports, handling of both local and national examinations that require top secrecy and financial management. As a result, the DEOs are supposed to appoint a head-teacher who is honest, transparent and accountable, that is in addition to other basic educational and professional credentials. When the better educated lack these qualities, the DEOs were left with the choice of sometimes going for less qualified but honest candidates.

4.4 Mechanisms Put in Place to Ensure Unqualified Head-Teachers Upgrade to Meet the 1995 ETP Stipulated Criteria

It is always difficult to recruit and select properly trained professionally attuned employees. The majority of the newly-employed persons do not know how to perform their jobs. When workers with little knowledge are selected, they require rigorous training to help them deliver efficient performance on the job (Gupta, 2008). During the study, it was revealed that there were three strategies employed by the DEOs to help improve the knowledge and skills of the head-teachers in managing their primary schools:

i. Effective Utilisation of Teachers' Resources Centres (TRCs)

During interviews, both the head-teachers and DEOs revealed that the TRCs were utilised in Lindi Town Council and Tabora Municipality to improve the knowledge and skills of head-teachers. In the Lindi Town Council, where nine head-teachers were interviewed, six (66.6%) of them indicated that they had attended a one-week orientation seminar at Likotwa TRC. They said this seminar was of great importance to them since they did not have any accreditation in Educational Management and Administration. The following remarks by some participants can do for illustrative purposes:

Since 2003 I have been working as a head-teacher using my little experience. In 2009, I attended a one-week seminar at Likotwa TRC. The seminar provided orientation in areas such as documentation, delegation of authority, monitoring of teaching and learning, school community relations and financial management. (A head teacher in Lindi Town Council 14/01/2010)

At Likotwa TRC, we were accompanied by 13 other head-teachers and Ward Education Officers (WECs). At last ... after serving for about 13 years as a head-teacher, I attended this training for one week. At least, now I have developed confidence and an idea of my roles and responsibilities, including on school management, management of human resources, management of funds and documentation. But the seminar was too short. (Female head-teacher in Lindi Town Council 20/01/2010)

Similarly, two of the DEOs cited the effective utilisation of these TRC as one way that could help improve the head-teachers' knowledge on financial management. Specifically, the Municipal Education Officer (MEO) of Tabora Municipality explained:

...other teachers, especially female teachers were not ready to assume responsibility after we appointed them to head primary schools. They were afraid of being associated with embezzlement of PEDP funds. This was due to their lack of financial skills. To address the situation, we established TRCs at Town School to train head-teachers in financial management. The Municipal Planning Officer and an accountant were facilitators. We have already trained the first batch for three days. We are now arranging to train the second batch. Generally, we use case studies of the problems that head-teachers face as they manage PEDP funds. (The MEO, Tabora Municipality (24/03/2010).

ii. Short Courses

The findings of the present study established that the DEO of Mvomero district in Morogoro region has made efforts to train the head-teachers through the use of short-courses. The district had organised an Aga Khan University programme on school leadership and management for the 2009/2010 cohort. The university provided soft drinks, tea, and lunch, as well as teaching materials and facilitators but no accommodation. The course content for this six-month programme last was broken into three modules: the first module was a three-week face-to-face session for the head-teachers; the second module involved a five-month action research; and the third module was another three-week face-to-face classroom session. On completion of this

programme, successful participants were conferred with a Certificate in Education Management and Administration.

According to the Mvomero DEO, they have managed to train 35 stakeholders, 31 of whom were head-teachers, one TRC teacher and three WECs. The first batch of this training was offered at Turiani. Another training for all head teachers had been planned but the exercise was largely unsuccessful because some of the primary schools such as those in Kibati ward—Msolokelo, Dibruma and Pandambili—were in hard-to-reach areas, hence their heads were unable to attend the course as they would require paid-for accommodation cost and meals. Alternatively, the head teachers who had benefited from such training could train their colleagues, said the DEO, but they would not be awarded any certificate.

iii. In-Service Training

Some of the districts such as Uyui (Tabora Region) were found to have financed four teachers to attend training at the Bagamoyo-based Agency for the Development of Education Management and Administration (ADEM). Similarly, Ruangwa district in Lindi region financed two teachers to undertake a Diploma course at ADEM. It costs up to Tsh. three million to train one teacher at ADEM. Such was a great demand for training in education and management among teachers that in Nachingwea district in Lindi region some teachers took their own initiative to benefit from training at ADEM. In fact, during field study, four teachers at Nachingwea had already completed their studies at ADEM by paying from their own pockets. However, they were at the time still mere teachers still awaiting appointment to education management. Explaining why their promotion were slow in coming, the DEO said that the office did recognise their individual efforts and plans were afoot to appoint them to primary school headship they deserved; however, the office lacked funds for effecting the appointments, particularly for paying them the transfer allowances and other appropriate remunerations that go with the appointment.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that the majority of head-teachers in the sample did not possess appropriate qualifications in education management and administration as stipulated by the 1995 Education and Training Policy. It was also noted that the DEOs were looking for a honesty and accountable candidates to exercise transparency in their operations in addition to considering their basic qualifications, teaching experience and exposure to training in education management and administration. Also, the complex nature of managing primary school that

involves keeping and handling of confidential reports, managing local and national examinations and prudent and transparent financial management meant that the public primary schools required the very best for them to run smoothly. Generally, this study's findings demonstrate that the factors considered by the DEOs for candidates with potential to make effective school heads in Tanzania included basic qualifications in education, teaching experience, gender, school location and individual merit when it came to whether one was the right person for the job with added managerial and administrative responsibilities. These prerequisites make the criteria followed in Tanzania similar to the approach countries such as Nigeria, Cyprus, Turkey, and Botswana employ. Indeed, in these countries school teachers are appointed to leadership positions without prior training in school management and administration just as it is the case for the majority of cases in Tanzania's public primary schools. To redress the situation, the study found that effective utilisation of TRCs, short courses and in-service training were the three strategies employed by DEOs to help improve the knowledge and skills of the head-teachers appointed to school management to manage their primary schools much more effectively. On the whole, the inadequate number of trained head-teachers with impeccable credentials made the appointment of head-teachers a nightmare for the appointing authorities, and this had implications for the provision of quality education in Tanzania's primary education sub-sector.

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