



Original Article

Challenges Faced by School Heads in Maintaining Students' Academic Performance in Private Secondary Schools in Tanga and Korogwe Districts, Tanga Region Tanzania.

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The study investigated challenges faced by school heads in maintaining students' academic performance in Tanga and Korogwe districts. Three specific objectives were formulated to guide the study. The study was guided by Administrative Management and Scientific Management Theory founded by Henry Fayol and Fredrick Taylor, respectively. A mixed research approach and convergent parallel research design were adopted. A sample size of 39 was obtained using proportionate purposive and simple random sampling techniques; questionnaires and interview guides were used in data collection. The validity ensured through member checking methods and through research expertise and supervisor check as well as the reliability ensured through the split half method. Quantitative data were analysed through SPSS software version 20 and presented through frequencies, percentages, figures, and tables, while qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis and presented through quotation and narration. The findings revealed that major roles of school heads were planning, supervising, coordinating, and monitoring, while challenges they faced were inadequate funds, competition, low enrolment, fee-free policy, and high taxation by TRA, while strategies they used to overcome challenges were; motivation of teachers and students, marketing schools and monitoring discipline. The study concluded that challenges school heads face are: inadequate funds, lack of motivation and low enrolment of students. It is recommended for school owners to find other sources of funds and put clear policies which would guide private secondary schools as well as reduce the high taxes.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is an important aspect of the development of any individual, society, and the nation at large, which depends on the quality of education provided to students. Secondary schools are to be well supervised so that learners can be well equipped with knowledge and skills to help them become productive members of their families, societies, nations, and the world at large (Lyimo, 2017). That is why the international agenda on education through Sustainable Development Goal number 4 (SDG 4) insists on quality education for all by 2030 (Lugonzo, 2020). However, as the world is struggling to ensure equitable education for all, a lot of challenges face school heads of private schools that have to supervise effective teaching and learning for maintaining the performance of their students (Hysa, 2018).

There is a very big relationship between the challenges faced by school heads of private secondary schools and students' academic performance (Chua & Mosha, 2015). It should be noted that secondary schools are organisations that are always setting their academic performance standards and wish to attain them. While this is true, the presence of heads of schools are vital in maintaining the best students' academic performance in their schools, and any obstacle that hampers heads of schools to perform their duties

well would directly affect the students' academic performance negatively. Charles and Mkulu (2020) add that the challenges faced by school heads affect the fulfilment of their daily duties including maintaining students' academic performance.

The focus of this study was on private secondary schools which are not financed directly by the government. It is expected to equip youths with the best social values, skills, and knowledge to become better adults. So, they are supposed to have a good learning environment for better academic performance (Likando, 2017). Strong school leadership is taken as the most important aspect for the effectiveness of the organisation which goes hand in hand with the improvement of teaching and learning environment to ensure availability of enough teaching and learning materials as well as being accountable for leadership roles (World Bank, 2018).

Globally, the academic performances of private schools show that these schools are performing better than government schools. Such schools perform better, but leadership challenges are still hindering the heads of schools to fulfil their duties of maintaining good academic performance for all students. For instance, in India, the situation shows that, although the private schools perform better, the school heads face different challenges in maintaining the good academic performance of

students, including the presence of incompetent teachers (Khan, 2019).

In Nigeria, students' academic performance in private secondary schools is well maintained because most schools perform highly compared to government secondary schools due to the teamwork of the school's heads and teaching staff (Kalagbor, 2016). Similarly, Begna (2017) pointed out that academic performance in private schools is more achieved in Ethiopia compared to government schools because of the improved working environment. School heads are part and parcel of their achievements.

In East Africa, the situation of academic performance of private schools shows that some secondary schools are performing better, but some are not. The presence of different challenges to school administration such as students' discipline, affect the fulfilment of leadership roles which is the course of poor performance in private schools. For instance, the performance of private schools in Uganda shows that in some schools, academic performance is good, while in some, performance is very good and others fairly good (Generous, 2018). Likewise, the academic performance of Kenyan private schools shows that even some schools perform poorly, some average, some above average; some are good while others are excellent (Chelanga, 2016). This suggests that there is a need to have effective leadership to impose the best administrative strategies for the best students' academic performance.

Since independence, the Tanzanian government has undergone different strategies to restructure and improve access to secondary education including the Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP). The purpose of this plan was to make sure that all children from different family backgrounds have access to secondary education regardless of their gender, geographical location, and disability. This increased students' enrolment in secondary schools. For example, in 2012, a total of 1,602,752 students were enrolled in secondary schools (Lyimo, 2017). A large number of students became a challenge for the school heads of that time to accommodate them and maintain students' academic performance. Therefore, the academic performance of these schools has been decreasing from 2008 to 2012. The percentage of failure in government schools was 33 per cent and in private schools was 15.9 per cent (Lyimo, 2017).

The private schools in Tanzania comprise 24.9 per cent of all schools in Tanzania (BEST, 2020). Although the government is working hard to improve the performance of both private and government secondary schools, a lot of challenges interfere with these strategies. The performance of some students is still poor and this is because of different challenges including administrative challenges like dropouts, pregnancy, indiscipline, and repeaters. For instance, in 2020, the number of repeaters in private schools was 1954, which is equal to 6.1 per cent of all students in Tanzania (BEST, 2020). *Table 1* illustrates the academic performance of secondary schools' examination in Tanzania for five years from 2015 to 2019:

Table 1: The Performance of Secondary Schools National Examination (CSEE) Since 2015-2019

Year	Division (in %)				Percentage Passed	Percentage Failed
	1.	2.	3.	4.		
2015	2.8	9.0	13.6	42.6	68%	32%
2016	2.7	9.3	15.6	42.8	70.4%	29.6%
2017	2.5	10.5	17.2	47.4	77.6%	22.4%
2018	3.8	11.1	16.9	47.5	79.3%	20.7%
2019	4.5	11.3	16.0	47.6	79.4%	20.6%

Source: Basic Education Statistics of Tanzania (BEST, 2020)

The situation of academic performance for the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination indicates that from 2015 to 2019, the performance

of students has been increasing. However, the percentage of students who scored division one to division three from 2015 to 2019 was very low

(below the average of 50 per cent) (i.e., between 2.8 percent to 4.5 percent for division One, 9.0 percent to 11.3 percent for division two, and 13.6 to 16.0 percent for division three). This performance is highly below average. Table 1.1 includes performance for private secondary schools. As a consequence, the majority of these students join form five with very low grades, despite their poor performance. For example, although the selected candidates to join Advanced Secondary Education were 25.6 per cent, in the year 2017-2018, and in 2018-2019 the percentage dropped to 21.2 per cent. This scenario includes private secondary schools in the Tanga region. The presence of poor-performing students, to some extent, is determined by the situation of leadership in a given school (Faustin, 2015).

In the Tanga region, the performance of form four national examinations in 2018 was 74.42 per cent, while in 2019, the performance was 72.97 per cent. This shows that the academic performance of secondary schools in this region declined by 1.45 per cent between 2018 and 2019. This performance includes that of private secondary schools in the Tanga and Korogwe districts (URT, 2019). This is supported by the findings of the study by Gaspar (2015), which reveal that the performance in secondary schools is declining.

Ashfaq et al. (2018) conducted a study in Pakistan on administrative problems of headteachers at the secondary school level. The study used a descriptive survey method with a sample of 82. It involved female and male headteachers from private secondary schools. The findings revealed that the headteacher faced several problems such as shortage of teaching and learning materials, political interference, and shortage of funds as well as parents' attitudes. The current study filled the gap by employing a mixed research approach so that qualitative and quantitative would complement each other. The study was conducted in Tanga and Korogwe districts in the Tanga region, Tanzania.

A study by Olorunsola and Belo (2018) looked at administrative challenges in Ogun State Secondary Schools in Nigeria. The study used a descriptive method with a sample of nine hundred teachers as participants. The study findings revealed that school administrators faced a problem in finance and they

failed to get money for buying teaching and learning materials. However, the researcher used only teachers in the study as participants. Perhaps if the author had used varieties of participants, he would have got different results. This study used different participants such as school heads, academic masters, teachers, and school board members to get reliable information.

A similar study by Galafa and Lucas (2018) examined the challenges of educational administration and management in schools in Malawi. The methodology used was a qualitative method of data collection and analysis. The findings revealed that there was insufficient funding which led to a lack of enough resources in the school, lack of cooperation between the communities surrounding the school and management. The schools' heads were not committed to their administrative duty, embezzlement of funds, lack of in-service training to the administrator, and the teachers as well. Nevertheless, the qualitative method cannot be generalised to the whole population. The present study used a mixed research approach to overcome the weakness of each approach.

Charles and Mkulu (2020) conducted a study on finding the management challenges facing school administrators and pupils' academic performance. The findings indicated that there were leadership challenges faced by school administration in maintaining the academic performance of students such as; inadequate funding, lack of cooperation with education stakeholders, over enrolments of students, infrastructure, and adequate teachers. However, these challenges hinder the school heads of private Secondary schools to fulfil their duties effectively to maintaining students' academic performance in private secondary schools in their districts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed research approach to organize the qualitative and quantitative data so as to deal with the research problem. Convergent parallel research design which allowed a researcher to collect both forms of data concurrently, analyse them independently, the thematic approach was used to present the qualitative data.

Population and Sampling

A sample size of 39 was obtained using proportionate purposive and simple random sampling techniques, questionnaires, and interview guides were used in data collection.

Instruments and Validation

Data was collected through a questionnaire and the interview schedule. The validity ensured through member checking methods and through research expertise and supervisor check, as well as the reliability, ensured through the split-half method.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that all ethical standards had been followed before data collection, as seeking

permission from the Vice-Chancellor of St Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT). The researcher also requested a permit from Regional Administrative Secretary (RAS) and District Administrative Secretary (DAS) in the Tanga region, Tanga and Korogwe districts and other procedures from other authorities were followed. Anonymity and confidentiality were considered to avoid the identification of respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher intended to know challenges faced by school heads in maintaining students' academic performance in private secondary schools in Tanga and Korogwe districts. To obtain the desired findings, the researcher collected data through questionnaires, interviews, and documentary reviews. The findings obtained are presented below.

Table 2: Challenges Faced School Heads

Variable	SA		A		N		SD		D		n
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Mobilisation of more funds from different sources is the best way of alleviating challenges faced by school heads of maintaining the academic performance of students	15	56	8	30	0	0	2	7	2	7	27
Lack of funds is the major challenge at this school	9	33	11	41	0	0	3	11	4	15	27
One of the major challenges that school heads faced from students' misbehaviour	6	22	15	56	0	0	3	11	3	11	27
One of the basic challenges that the school head faces in her/his role is to employ teachers who are incompetent enough to do the work in various classes	7	26	6	22	0	0	4	15	10	37	27
Low enrolment of students is a challenge to the school head to run the school effectively	14	52	6	22	0	0	4	15	3	11	27
The establishment of new private secondary schools becomes a big challenge to the existing schools	10	37	8	30	0	0	2	7	7	26	27

Key: SA = strongly agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree

Resources Mobilisation

The findings in *Table 2* revealed that eighty-six (86) per cent of teachers agreed with mobilisation of funds as the best solution to alleviate the challenges faced by school heads. Fourteen (14) per cent of respondents strongly disagreed with the

mobilisation of resources to be the best way to alleviate the problem. However, the findings showed that there is a need for the school head to have different sources of income in order to overcome the challenge of inadequate funds to run the school. This was supported by eighty-six (86) per cent of teachers who agreed that mobilisation of

more funds from different sources is the best way of alleviating challenges faced by school heads in maintaining the academic performance of students.

Galafa and Lucas (2018) argued that there was a lack of knowledge in mobilising resources and maintaining the existing ones, which caused insufficient funds and hence failure to run the school effectively. This implies that dependant on only one source of school income causes difficulty to run the school. For that reason, there is a need for the school institution to have various sources of income that could support the operation of the school. The study suggests that school heads, together with owners of the schools, should provide different sources of income in order to solve the challenges school heads face to improve academic performance.

In addition to that, the findings corresponding with the information provided during the interview with the school heads C, who commented that:

In my school, I face a challenge of mobilising the resources. As the school administrator, I set different strategies to ensure the availability of the resources in my school through the management of the resources. However, maintenance is still a challenge due to that, during their practical studies, teachers and students destruct some resources available (SH C, 2021).

Furthermore, from the interview with the school A board member, the interviewee explained that:

The school faced a challenge in the mobilisation of the education resources. The challenge encountered was due to the reason that the school did not involve students in the mobilisation of resources like buying and keeping books. Thus, they do not manage the available resources effectively, hence becoming a challenge in school (SBM A, 2021).

This implies that the mobilisation of resources in school did not involve both school administrators, teachers, and students, thus becoming a challenge in the school to ensure effective resource mobilisation. Therefore, there is a need for the school heads to involve the students and teachers in the mobilisation of the resources for ensuring effective academic performance.

Lack of fund

The findings showed that school heads in private secondary schools had inadequate funds to run different activities in schools such as academic issues examples; teaching and learning materials, building facilities, salaries, food, and taxes. This was supported by seventy (74) per cent of teachers who responded to the questionnaire that the heads of schools had not enough money to run the schools. On the other hand, twenty-six (26) per cent of the teachers disagreed that lack of funds is the major challenge to the school heads because they had no knowledge of the challenges heads of schools faced. Furthermore, they think that there is a lot of money paid by the parents. The implication of lack of funds is the failure of the school head to run the school effectively. The study found that lack of funds would lead to the failure of the school head; to pay salaries, to improve the school learning environment, to motivate teachers, and it would negatively affect the students to learn effectively and hence low academic performance.

The findings supported with the information provided with the school head C, who quoted that:

There are many challenges, such as parents do not pay school fees on time. Therefore, it is forcing us to send the students back home to collect school fees. When they come back from home, they lag behind the syllabus, which is a big challenge to teachers and students to cover the syllabus intended. Good discipline goes hand in hand with academic excellence. Therefore, bad discipline wastes a lot of time" (SH C, 2021).

This implies that the lack of funds in school is caused by the delay of the payment from parents and the student's guardian. The schools faced challenges in the implementation of different school activities due to the lack of funds in schools

Student Misbehaviour

The findings in table 2 show that students' discipline is one of the administrative challenges found in private secondary schools. The findings from Table 2 show that seventy eight (78) per cent of teachers responded that discipline to some students is a challenge to the school heads while

twenty-two (22) per cent of teachers disagreed that discipline of some of the students was not a challenge to the school heads. The researcher indicates that discipline contributes to students' academic performance. This means that there is a relationship between discipline and academic performance (Semali & Vumilia 2016). This implies that discipline has a positive contribution to students' academic performance. The majority of these findings revealed that lack of discipline leads to poor students' academic performance. Therefore, this challenge faced school heads in Tanga and Korogwe districts. Therefore, the school head, as the engine of the school should ensure that discipline is well maintained by students, teachers, and non-teaching staff. This can be done by making daily follow-ups and by taking measures against those who misbehave. Through monitoring the behaviour of students, it would raise the performance of students because they would be able to spend most of their time studying hard. The management of students' discipline in school occurred due to the poor follow up of the teachers in the behaviour of the students in schools. Therefore, the school head is responsible for making daily and close monitoring of students' discipline in order to raise academic performance.

The study sought to establish the challenges faced by school heads in maintaining private students' academic performance in Tanga and Korogwe districts. In the interview with the head of school, A had the following to say:

Sometimes some teachers show bad behaviour for not dressing properly (dressing code). Therefore, I have to call them and remind them to follow the dressing code. Also, some students misbehave. For example, they take other people's things. Once they are found, we punish them not to repeat. The implication of dealing with discipline cases wastes a lot of time to the school administration and to the students themselves as well as to the school board members when the case becomes critical. In addition to this, the number of periods are wasted and it is not easy to replace them. Generally, students' academic performance would be affected (SH A, 2021).

Furthermore, some of the parents do not show good cooperation with the school, especially when there is a discipline case for their children. This shows that parents do not know much about their children. Therefore, the school administration should involve parents in attending different meetings for discussing and finding a solution to the problems so as to help students to raise their academic performance.

Incompetent Teachers

The findings show that some of the school heads faced such a challenge of employing some teachers who are incompetent to teach some of their classes. This was reported by forty (48) per cent of teachers who agreed that incompetent teachers were a challenge, while fifty-two (52) per cent disagreed with the claim that incompetent teachers were a challenge to the heads of schools in ensuring the private secondary schools' academic performance. Lack of training for teachers became a big challenge faced by incompetent teachers. The implication of using incompetent teachers is that the teacher would fail to teach their classes effectively; students would lose morale of learning; as a result, it would lead to poor student performance. In a more similar point of view, interviewee B claimed, "Some teachers are not competent in some topics, they don't cover the syllabus in time this makes students not to perform well". (Interviewee B, 2021)

These findings mean that some of the teachers do not have experience in teaching and some are newly appointed teachers fresh from school. Therefore, the school head is responsible for mentoring them by providing seminars and in-service training.

The results are in line with those in the study by Moshia (2012) showed that teachers need to be restructured every time to keep them up to date with any curriculum reform because they are the key to curriculum implementation. Lack of training for teachers became a big challenge faced by competent teachers. This means that a big number of teachers lack meaningful training in the teaching profession. Therefore, the school head should organise seminars, workshops, in-service training for helping the teachers to gain knowledge but also after training, the performance of students would be improved.

Low Enrolment rate

The findings from Table 2 show that the low enrolment of students is a challenge to the school heads. This was evidenced by seventy-four (74) per cent of teachers who responded that the major challenge for the school head was low enrolment and twenty-six (26) per cent of the respondents disagreed that low enrolment of students was a challenge to the school heads. Since the schools' major income depends on school fees, the small number of students would lead to small income to be collected for running the schools. As a result, the heads of schools would fail to run the schools without money. The implications of low enrolment to the school heads would make teachers not receive their salaries on time, no teaching and learning materials would be purchased, no motivation to teaching staff and non-teaching staff, and government taxes would not be paid. Furthermore, other things would not run smoothly as it is required to be, such as; lack of fuel for running cars, electricity bills, water bills, insurance for cars and buildings. These would lead to the poor academic performance of the students and the closure of the schools.

Based on the result of the study, the low enrolment was a challenge to the school head because few numbers of students mean low income to the school to run the school. The results concur with those in the study by Ngare (2018), which stated that the fees charged by schools and that charged by its challengers had an impact on students' enrolment. Parents also considered the quality of teaching offered when looking at their children. However, the conceptual framework signifies the same thing that challenges faced by school heads are lack of funds, low recruitment, and lack of training. Generally, these findings mean that reasonable school fees charged face to face marketing, cleanliness of the school and quality of education provided by the school would attract parents and students to join the school.

Establishment of New Secondary School

The findings from Table 2 showed that the newly opened schools are a challenge to the existing schools. This was supported by the sixty-seven (67) per cent of teachers who agreed to the statement,

while (33) of the respondents disagreed that the newly opened schools were a challenge. This was caused by the rapid increase of private secondary schools of different status, policies, missions, and visions towards the provision of education in Tanga and Korogwe districts. This leads to high competition among private secondary schools to work under pressure to compete with other schools. Moreover, due to the increasing number of private secondary schools, the students could sit for an interview for many schools as much as they could; for this reason, they would end up opting for the school they wanted. For the school heads, this would be a big challenge because the best students they selected in their schools would not report. As a result, the best students would go to schools with big names. Moreover, other students would opt to go to the improved government schools. Some of them would go to the government schools because of the fee-free policy introduced by the government.

Some of them are interested in the government schools because of loans offered by the government after completing form six as the government put priority on students who studied in its schools. This was also reported by the teachers that are a challenge to school heads. As a result, they do not get the best performers intended. Furthermore, school head A said, "A level student was a challenge to their school because they stay home for eight months soon after completing form four" (SH A, 2021). This makes them forget everything they learnt, and parents do not make follow up on them. Some of the students tend to run away to government establishment schools. This is because they are promised to get loans when they join universities and other higher learning institutions. The implication of this is that private schools get average students and some few A's and B's students. During the Corona virus period, the parents decided not to pay the fees. This affected private schools financially, and as a result, they failed to pay salaries and other bills for the school. The implication of this is that some students delayed reporting to school, and those we owe decided to shift to other schools.

The government does not consider private schools in many things. In the interview with the school head B, this was said:

Challenges encountered in performing my responsibility are that teachers lack intrinsic motivation, thus pulling down the morale of others if it is not handled immediately with prudence. As an institution, we need to sing the same song in the same tone and dance in the same style. Most of them need to be pushed now and then” (SH B, 2021).

Academic master of school C also commented on challenges facing the school heads as follows:

We get poor support from parents during the selection of combinations in form three classes. Parents prefer their children to select subjects in which they are not competent. The implication on this is that the students perform poorly at the end” (ACM C, 2021).

Poor relationship between teachers and parents was also seen as a challenge. For example, when students misbehave, some of the parents tend to side with their children because they do not know them. So, it is difficult to help the student who is misbehaving in school without involving the parents of that student. Likewise, a psychological problem of students from home was mentioned as a challenge. The academic master commented that these challenges are associated with family factors that play a role in a teacher’s ability to teach students. For example, violence, single parents, poverty, divorce, bad friendship, and many other issues are all challenges that a student brings to school every day; these would affect students’ academic performance. While some teachers and administrators try to work with children in less than perfect family environments, they can do much, especially when parents are often willing to cooperate with the school to provide help for the children. There is a need for the school heads to find a way of establishing a strong bond with parents, teachers, and the school administration in order to educate the parents concerning the progress of students’ academics and choice of their carrier in order to improve the academic performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section gives the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Conclusions

In order to promote effectiveness in the education sector, there also should have effectiveness among the school head and all educational stakeholders. The study revealed that the major challenges school heads faced were inadequate funds, lack of motivation, low enrolment, newly opened schools, fee-free policy and misbehaviour to some students. These challenges hinder the school heads to perform their duties effectively. However, there should be involvement of teachers in decision making, providing seminars, workshops and in-service training, motivation, availability of teaching and learning materials, involving parents in decision making, monitoring student’s behaviour, and looking for other sources of income. This in return, students’ academic performance would be achieved effectively.

Recommendations

The study recommends that school heads of private secondary schools should perform their duties effectively while involving teachers, non-teaching staff and students in fulfilling their roles. School heads are required to plan and implement in-service training for the teachers to improve their skills to deliver lessons to students effectively, especially the newly appointed teachers. School heads have an important role to play in facilitating the in-service training by promoting collective ideas for change and supporting the programme by involving other stakeholders in the school for improving academic performance. Finally, schools’ heads should prepare a good school fees scheme for payment of fees to be in three to four phases, in order to help the parents who could not be able to pay the whole amount of money.

However, the teachers are part and parcel of the school community. The challenges that school heads face also affect them in implementing their duties effectively. Therefore, teachers should take action to find the solution by working hard to teach their lessons effectively. Teachers can organise themselves and start implementing strategies assumed in this study, for example, to conduct remedial classes to help slow learners, peer teaching, sharing ideas from other schools who are performing better and conducting joint

examinations. This would attract many students to join the school hence raising the academic performance of the students. Lastly, the government policymakers should formulate the policy on private secondary schools to reduce some of the restrictions and regulations which seem to be a challenge for the school heads to run these schools, such as high taxes and limiting the school fees to be paid in private schools.

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