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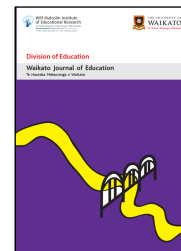
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Teachers' multiple roles and perceived loss of professionalism in Tanzanian secondary schools

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Abstract

The rapid increase in Tanzanian primary school enrolments in the last decade was prompted by the government to develop the Secondary Education Expansion Policy. My study, therefore, explored the impact of this policy on teachers' professional lives. A qualitative approach was adopted to gain detailed insights into the phenomena under investigation. Data were collected from 30 participant teachers from four community secondary schools in Tanzania through interviews and document analysis. Overall the findings revealed that the government's shortcomings in hiring support staff prompted teachers to perform extra duties alongside teaching. It also found that the lack of the government's commitment to rewarding teaching quality exacerbated teachers' engagement in other income-generating activities. Teachers' engagement in these non-teaching tasks both in school and out of school affected their own professional identities which subsequently impacted on their teaching competence beliefs. These findings recommend that in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, the government of Tanzania must improve teachers' welfare by employing enough support staff to assist in teaching and learning.

Keywords

Teachers' multiple roles, teacher professionalism, teacher identity, teacher self-efficacy

Introduction

Secondary education is considered a fundamental tool to improve peoples' livelihood, promote a country's socio-economic development and cope with global market changes (The United Nations, 2015). Like other countries, secondary education in Tanzania acts as a pathway to tertiary level, vocational training, professional training or the world of work. In recognising this, in 2004, Tanzania



adopted the Secondary Education Development Policy. Its priority areas included increasing access of students to education, improving equity and enhancing the quality of education. The implementation of this policy markedly increased the number of schools and enrolment rates. Between 2005 and 2009, community secondary schools and enrolments increased by 135% and 178% respectively (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2012). The data also showed that from 2004 to 2011 the enrolment rate increased by 418.05% (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2011). This rapid increase in enrolment, however, created problems related to the provision of sufficient teaching staff. Both Kuluchumila (2013) and Mwaisumo (2016) suggest that because of budgetary deficits during the implementation of the expansion policy, the government placed more attention on recruiting teaching staff rather than support staff. In this article, support staff refers to individuals who are employed in school to assist teachers and school principals. Their roles include providing technical, secretarial and administrative assistance. The scarcity of these crucial non-teaching staff has the potential to compromise teachers' abilities to help students learn. This is because a shortage of support staff means teachers will need to perform multiple roles. Without people available to cover classes, teachers are unable to undertake professional development, nor are given time to learn. This appears to negate the purpose of the national expansion policy itself.

Although the government is dedicated to enhancing the quality of secondary education delivery, the sector continues to suffer shortages in teaching resources and opportunities for professional development. This can result in low levels of teachers' motivation. The deficient budget allocated to the education sector is a prime cause of the issues the profession faces. In the 2011/2012 financial year, for example, the budget for the education sector was 17.2% (UNESCO, 2011). This, however, declined to 16.3% in 2014/2015 (UNESCO, 2011; URT, 2016). The education budget is yet to meet the 20% recommended by the Global Partnership for Education (URT, 2008).

Rural and urban divide

There is a variation in working conditions between rural and urban teachers in the five African countries that Mulkeen and Chen (2008) examined. Rural teachers are concerned with inadequate housing, local language problems and their vulnerability to disease. This is true of Tanzania, where most rural teachers suffer from a shortage of houses, poorly maintained classrooms and medical issues such as vulnerability to diseases (International Labour Organization, 2016). Because of these challenges, many teachers migrate to urban schools where there is greater access to social services. This leaves fewer teachers in rural schools and these teachers end up with high teaching workloads. Despite these problems, however, it appears that the government has expended little effort in attracting teachers to, and retaining them in, rural (or all) schools. For example, through incentives such as hardship allowances, housing allowances and travel allowances.

Studies carried out in various countries of the world have found that they too face similar challenges which impact on teachers' perceived wellbeing (Mulkeen, Chapman, DeJaeghere, & Leu, 2007). Little is known, however, about how these challenges affected teachers in the Tanzanian contexts. Therefore, this study investigated the extent to which teachers' multiple roles affected their sense of professionalism. The study was framed by two specific research questions:

- i. What challenge(s) in the context of the implementation of the Secondary Education Development Policy prompted some teachers to perform multiple duties?
- ii. How does teachers' engagement in these duties affect their view of themselves as educational professionals?

Initially, I surveyed studies and literature about multiple roles performed by different professionals including teachers, and how this has an impact on their lives, their organisations and other people they are responsible for. Next, findings from these reviewed studies identified crucial factors linked to

teachers performing multiple roles, and finally, this article demonstrates how such roles contributed to the reduction of their perceived professionalism.

Literature review

Performing more than one role is common to most people. Medical doctors in hospitals, for example, may carry out a range of other duties when not attending sick people, such as undertaking medical research and offering health education to the surrounding community. Barnett (2004), for example, suggests that multiple roles always bring about negative consequences for professional individuals. Parents who work full time may feel guilty about neglecting their children, especially when their children need support. A number of researchers examining how multiple roles affect women's livelihood revealed that multiple duties can exacerbate psychological strains such as stress and depression (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989), and anxiety (Ahrens & Ryff, 2006), contributing to exhaustion and isolation (Malone, 1998). In schools, teachers and principals also undertake a range of roles. Teachers not only teach but also manage behaviour, undertake administration and take on the role of an examiner (Adelmann, 1994). School principals may have responsibilities beyond working with staff and students, of leading school boards or committees and writing funding proposals from various community agencies (International Literacy Association, 2015). Although these duties may not be explicitly stated in their job description, they are part and parcel of the Tanzanian principal's role.

A critical question teachers, parents and students may ask, is how teachers can perform additional tasks without compromising the quality of teaching and learning? Mason (2002) asserts that the balance of multiple roles can be addressed by managing time effectively and managing stress. Although teachers may create task schedules, adjusting to a wide range of roles is extremely difficult (Aitken, 2008; Arulraj & Samuel, 1995). This can result in overall poor work performance or adverse effects on one particular role (Anthon, 2015; Arulraj & Samuel, 1995). To cope, teachers may focus more attention on tasks they feel are beneficial to them and ignore duties contributing less to their professional life (Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005). For example, if teachers are inspired by teaching because it is rewarding, they will dedicate their time to lesson preparation in order to improve student outcomes. However, if such teachers experience no reward in their teaching, they may become unenthusiastic in the classroom.

In past research, Rosenblatt (2001) found that multiple roles in an Israeli context were detrimental to teachers because they compromised teachers' abilities to teach well. When teachers are too busy, they may not plan well or sufficiently, and may then lose confidence in their teaching and develop negative attitudes about teaching, regardless of the sector they taught in. Studies from within Tanzania (Davidson, 2007; Nyamubi, 2017) note that Tanzanian teachers not only teach large classes, they also perform many non-teaching activities, such as storekeeping and accounting. Non-teaching roles such as these Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) suggest, may result in a teacher's reduced sense of professionalism. Professionalism they argue, determines how teachers teach, how they grow as professionals and how they feel about changes introduced in the education system, thus facilitating researchers to obtain an overview of how teachers cope and respond to such changes. My study offers insight into the effect on teachers who undertake non-teaching roles and duties in schools. One finding is that such roles undermine their professionalism as teachers and has implications for motivation, commitment and retention in the teaching profession.

Research methodology

Research approach, research site and participants

To gain a deeper understanding of participants' feelings and experiences in relation to their professional lives, I undertook an interpretative standpoint, to capture the multiple realities of the participant teachers. Data from this study were drawn from participant teachers in four community secondary schools situated

in one of the regions in the Southern Highlands of the Tanzania mainland. Of the four schools, one was urban, one suburban and two were rural. Principals were interviewed because they were usually the one who allocated extra duties to their teachers. At least two teachers (one male, one female) participated in one-to-one interviews. The main selection criterion was that participant teachers had at least 10 years of teaching experience. This ensured that they could provide data in relation to personal experiences across the entire timespan relating to the Secondary Education Development Policy. In each school, there was also a focus group interview, comprised of two science and two humanities/social science teachers. All research ethical issues were adhered to (Loue, 2002; Yin, 2011). Before carrying out the interviews, teachers were given an introductory letter and information sheet which, among other things, indicated the duration of the interview and whether or not they were willing to participate in my study. Only teachers who agreed and signed the forms were interviewed. Depending on the participants' consents, the narrative account of self-reported data were either audio recorded or consisted of hand written notes (Davis, 2008; Yin, 2011).

Data analysis

Given that my study aimed at generating themes, categories and patterns from the participants' perspectives and understandings, an inductive analytical framework was useful (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I understood that in qualitative related studies there is no clear gap between data collection and analysis. In this regard, the initial analysis was carried out as I continued to interview my participants. However, after the practice of data collection was complete and tape recordings were transcribed, the interview transcripts were then coded in order to identify overarching themes. After this exercise, I established connections within and between numerous categories and subcategories. While categories which were related to each other were grouped together to form the themes, unrelated categories were kept aside for further analysis. Finally, the findings were discussed in relation to the literature and research questions, and the conclusion was drawn.

Research results

Participants expressed negative perspectives in relation to the impacts of multiple roles on the professionalism of teachers. The two themes below provide evidence about how teachers felt as a result of teaching and undertaking other non-professional roles.

Rewarding teaching quality

In Tanzania, teachers are promoted on the basis of teaching experience and their academic qualifications. The Education and Training Policy of 1995 stipulates that teachers should be considered by the government for promotion every three years. Teachers who upskill their qualifications are also required to be promoted based on the assumption that they have gained new knowledge and skills crucial for making a difference to student learning. Usually, teacher promotion in Tanzania is accompanied by salary advancement. The government also recognises in the Secondary Education Development Policy that teachers are most likely to become effective in undertaking their professional roles when they live within the school premises. In this regard, the government promised in the policy that it would build enough teacher houses in all newly built schools. Findings, however, revealed that there was a mismatch between what was stated in the policy documents and the actual implementation of priorities and strategies. In particular, teachers felt 'dejected' and 'unvalued' as a result of ineffective promotion and the lack of houses. Because of ineffective promotion, teachers' salaries remained unchanged. The lack of houses on school premises that the policy promised, meant that teachers were forced to rent houses far away from their school premises. Despite the government knowing that this is a problem, there has been little support for teachers in the form of house rent and transport allowances.

Teachers feel that their salaries do not meet the promises of the policy and there are chronic delays in promotion. Teachers were concerned that although they wished to spend extra time in helping their students, they did not do so, instead taking on supplementary work to boost their wages. One teacher from School X, for example, said that his delay in a salary increase related to promotion had resulted in him engaging in tuition and part-time teaching in other schools (IT/Experienced Teacher). Many teachers concentrated more on supplementing their wages than on the lesson preparation required for effective teaching.

Evidence also showed that teachers whose schools were situated along highways connecting with neighbouring countries became involved in money-making ventures such as the selling of onions, charcoal, smuggled diesel, barbecues and other food. Teachers from School Y made it clear that because of the poor strategy of the government in rewarding their teaching excellence, they sometimes did not turn up for their teaching work instead engaging in producing tomatoes and potatoes (FG/Kiswahili Teacher). Given this state of affairs, it was proving to be a hard task for heads of schools to effectively manage their teaching staff. The assumption in regard to these findings is that teachers were uncertain about their identities: were they teachers, agriculturists or owners of businesses? This situation, and their low wages, resulted in teachers feeling undervalued individually and as a profession.

Other multiple roles included teaching subjects they did not feel qualified to teach. It became apparent from the data that at the initial stage of policy implementation there was a critical shortage of teachers across all subjects. Given this situation, some teachers were forced by their heads of schools to teach subjects they never majored in at university or teacher colleges and which they were not interested. In the focus group interviews, one of the humanities teachers from School Z stated:

The Ministry of Education has posted me at the school to teach History which I majored in at college; but when I report to the school in order to start teaching, I am told that since I studied form six with a HKL combination (History, Kiswahili & English Language) that means I am also versed in English and Kiswahili, therefore, I am assigned to teach either of the subjects (FG/History Teacher).

One of the science teachers from School W also remarked, "I am a Mathematics teacher and when I came here there was no Physics teacher, therefore I was also assigned to teach physics" (FG/Mathematics Teacher). In spite of teaching these subjects, teachers asserted that they were not paid any incentives or extra reward in salary. This suggests that teachers did not feel recognised as a consequence of teaching these additional subjects. Overall, the interpretation of these results is that teachers who taught subjects they did not major in at teachers' college or universities felt less qualified to teach. These teachers reported that when students failed their national examinations, the society and parents in particular, pointed fingers at teachers being incompetent in teaching. Parents appeared to think that their children were taught by teachers who lacked expertise in the specific subjects. Such accusations disappointed teachers and discouraged them in teaching.

Supporting staff to assist teaching

Data from individual interviews and focus group interviews indicated that the newly-built schools opened without appointing key non-teaching personnel such as storekeeping and accountants. Some respondents suggested that since these schools did not have such staff, the tasks had to be undertaken by teachers whose primary role was to teach. Teachers complained that having to assume additional tasks apart from their actual professional responsibilities had a negative impact academically because it took time away from teaching preparation. They stressed that the lack of authentic lesson preparation might lead teachers to a loss of professional aptitude in influencing effective student learning. The heads of schools and teachers interviewed offered examples, which demonstrated how the multiplicity of tasks for a teacher in an accounting role, affects teaching and learning processes. One of the experienced teachers from School Y said:

A teacher who works as an accountant is required to prepare accounts ready for auditing and take cheques to and from the district headquarters. She was bothered that during this entire time the teacher would not be able to teach (IT/Experienced/Female Teacher).

Similar thoughts were revealed by the head of the same school (School Y), who stated:

The teacher/accountant is supposed to teach, but at the same time he or she is required to collect fees and other contributions from students (IT/School head).

To a certain extent, findings suggest that teacher/accountants felt confused about their roles: were they accountants or classroom teachers?

The teachers were concerned that accounting is also a profession, therefore, is it possible for a person who is not a professional accountant to make errors? In this regard, one of the teachers, who was a teacher/accountant in School W, voiced his concern that when this situation happened, the teacher/accountant might become completely upset trying to figure out what to do to compensate for possible losses (FG/Mathematics Teacher). These teachers became psychologically frustrated and thus unable to engage effectively in teaching. The heads of schools were afraid that since the teacher/accountants they nominated lacked professional knowledge of accounting, they did not properly handle the duties entailed. Therefore, the heads of schools were obliged to supervise accounting procedures so as to ensure accuracy. The head of School Z complained:

The head of school is looked upon as the school leader. However, for me, this role is extended to being involved in matters related to accountancy, store-keeping and others. Very often, you find that instead of the school accountant preparing the monthly or quarterly report, it is me who has to do that. Due to having so many responsibilities to attend to, very often, I find myself misplacing some reports and documents (IT).

It was also reported that some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Campaign for Female Education (CAMFeD) did not have their own employees, but they worked through attaching themselves with the local government authorities in order to use teachers in schools to perform their activities. Teachers who worked in this organisation were troubled that sometimes they were out of the school for the whole week working for CAMFeD thus leaving students with no one to teach them, and when they came back they were given other duties. To them, district education officials who gave these duties to them forgot that teachers were responsible for marking and returning assignments to students. . In brief, findings suggest that the lack of government commitment to employing supporting staff, including relief teachers for their teaching programmes, has the potential to put the professionalism of teachers at risk.

Discussion and conclusion

Teachers are expected to contribute to students' cognitive growth, the management process of classroom teaching and transforming school as a learning community. This suggests that teachers as professionals should be committed to their students, colleagues, the school and their own professional development. My study, however, revealed that the false promises in relation to school staffing, prompted teachers to perform multiple roles which detrimentally impacted on their sense of professionalism. The overall assumption is that how the Government value teaching as a profession, influences how teachers feel valued and how others such as students and communities view teaching as a profession. According to Bandura, these perspectives are important because they shape teachers' behaviour in several ways. In particular, these beliefs influence teachers to make choices about whether or not to participate in a certain activity (Bandura, 1995; Bruning, Schrow, & Norby, 2011). This means that teachers engage in activities in which they feel competent and confident and avoid those in which they do not. As is evident in the data, teachers felt incompetent (mastery experiences) to teach subjects which they did not specialise in pre-service teacher education – a situation which lowered their sense of efficacy. Efficacy beliefs influence one's own thought patterns and emotional reactions (Blackburn & Robinson, 2008). Teachers with a low level of self-efficacy may believe that tasks are harder than they really are, a

perspective that that exacerbates imposter syndrome such as fear and anxiety. Similarly, teachers' low perceived efficacy to teach the subjects beyond their specialisation prompted such teachers to view the teaching profession more difficult than they had thought before. Findings suggest that the social persuasion to teach was undermined as a result of parents viewing teachers in a negative way, notably when schools experienced poor academic performance. These negative perceptions could make teachers think of leaving the teaching profession (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Steca, 2003; Demirdag, 2015) as they are always motivated to remain in the profession if parents and the community at large respect them.

I argue that teachers' engagement in other activities alongside teaching, impacts on their mastery experiences. It is likely that school leavers who witnessed teachers performing extra duties such as businesses and agriculture in order to generate income would perceive that teaching is a poorly paid profession. This would discourage bright students to enter the teaching profession, making them choose other respected and better paid jobs. A qualitative study of Aitken (2008) found that some teachers demonstrated resentment and frustration because they were not acknowledged when undertaking multiple roles. Similarly, my findings show that teachers studied felt unrecognised and unrewarded (negative social persuasion) as a result of teaching alongside performing other duties. These roles were strange to teachers because, during their pre-service teacher education, these teachers were not oriented enough that upon arrival to their workplace, they would be assigned to perform such extra roles. Therefore, pre-service and in-service professional development would help these teachers feel adequately supported to perform these roles beyond their job descriptions (DeSantis, 2013; Kalsum, 2014). In particular, accounting and storekeeping could be taken into consideration as part of teacher preparation.

Some literature (Cicek, 2013; Nesari & Heidari, 2014) documents that lesson preparation is one of the fundamental aspects in the professionalism of all teachers because it provides a direction about what and how the behavioural changes and learning outcomes are expected to occur within students. Gülten (2013) who conducted a study of 150 second year English Language Teaching pre-service teachers found that lesson preparation facilitates teachers to feel capable of teaching. In this study, the lack of lesson preparation due to multiple duties resulted in teachers losing confidence in their teaching. Teachers felt their lesson preparation was impacted by multiple roles which essentially was a result of the inadequacy of the government's enactment plan to improve their wages, hire more key staff such as accountants and the provision of professional development for heads of school. My study potentially offers a caution to the Tanzanian Government in particular regarding the effect of increasing demands on teachers without proper recognition for the effects of extra workload in pay and conditions. In view of the fact that this article is based on the perspectives of teachers, future research is warranted to gain students' experiences about the extent to which teachers' multiple roles affected student learning.

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