

Role of Head teachers in Implementing Multiple School Accountability in Managing Public Primary Schools in Handeni District, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The quality of school management to head teachers in public primary schools has become a central issue for the government of Tanzania. Head teachers are considered persons in authority who manage the public primary school and the pillars of educational management. Without effective roles of head teachers in implementing multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools, the provision of quality education and quality of education management cannot be realized in public primary schools in Tanzania. In this context, this paper explores the roles of head teachers in implementing multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools in Handeni district, Tanzania. The study employed a qualitative research approach with interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as the primary data collection method. Data needed for this case study design was collected from 42 participants and analyzed by using thematic analysis with the help of SPSS program version 25. Study findings indicate that head teachers implement multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools through planning, communicating, mobilizing, decision-making, and collaborating. Based on the findings, the study recommends that head teachers can more effectively cooperate with various education stakeholders in managing public schools and innovation practices to enhance the teamwork between schools and the community to strengthen school management partnerships.

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of public primary school management and the implementation of multiple school accountability in primary education have been emphasized in Tanzania. The implementation of multiple school accountability helps the head teachers in managing public primary schools in Tanzania to plan together and commit to equity and sustainability in school management with various educational stakeholders (Burns & Köster, 2016; URT, 2016). Researchers have pointed out that, multiple school accountability not only seeks to strengthen public management in managing public institutions but increasingly heads teachers' transparency, and responsibility in working closely with educational stakeholders and developing a school's capacity to enhance successful school development (Bae, 2018). Globally, various countries strengthening the implementation of multiple school accountability by head teachers to improve school management and qualified teachers as one of the approaches put forward to achieve target 4. c of the Education 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015; UNESCO, 2018)

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the education system for the implementation of multiple school accountability to create a holistic view of education quality and school management worldwide (UNESCO, 2018). For that reason, the government of Tanzania released Education Circular No.

3 of 2016 which recognizes the importance of implementation of multiple school accountability by the head teachers and the involvement of the different educational stakeholders in managing primary and secondary public schools (URT, 2014, 2016a). Based on that, this indicates that there is a need to investigate the roles of head teachers in implementing multiple school accountability in managing public primary.

An overview of the current situation on the implementation of multiple school accountability

Implementation of multiple school accountability has been acknowledged across the world and aims to increase legitimacy, transparency, trust, and participation from the local community in managing public schools and the process of teaching and learning feedback (Oostdam & Hooze, 2012). It is noted that multiple school accountability requires head teachers to work closely with different education stakeholders and educational supporters in their environment to establish a good relationship and obtain support in formulating school policies, communication, evaluation, strategies, and decision-making in managing schools (OECD, 2016). Implementation of multiple school accountability is inevitable because seeks to strengthen public management in running public institutions, is increasingly autonomous to school governing boards, increases schools' accountability for their decisions in school management, and community involvement in school management (Aithal & Suresh Kumar, 2017).

Various studies have discussed the issue of implementation of multiple school accountability by head teachers in public institutions. For example, the study by Bae (2018) in England and Wales observed that head teachers are crucial components in implementing multiple school accountability in managing schools and working closely with the educational stakeholders for general school management and administration including budgeting, planning, and decision-making. Furthermore, In Netherland, there is a strong positive movement toward the implementation of multiple school accountability in school management. All Dutch education governments require school management to engage education stakeholders in goal setting, strategy formulation, decision-making, and evaluation in the education system (OECD, 2020). A study conducted by Martinez (2017) found that multiple school accountability allows head teachers to work together with the community in planning, defining goals, decision-making, and communication for their education service delivery and school management. This situation implies that the head teachers are expected to show patterns of behaviors of participatory management in their headship position to facilitate multiple school accountability in managing public institutions. Therefore, the study is interested to know the implementation of multiple school accountability by head teachers' roles in managing public primary schools in Tanzania context.

Furthermore, some studies reported that in developing countries especially in Africa, the implementation of multiple school accountability in public institutions is ineffective, and lack of involvement of education stakeholders in public institution management (Mbiti, 2016). In Nigeria, a study conducted by Dauda, Sunday, and Benjamin (2023) found that education stakeholders in the school management system cannot be ignored by head teachers through employing multiple school accountability as undeniably they give significant importance to improving school accountability. Moreover, In Uganda, education stakeholders especially parents are involved in school management by the head teachers towards the realization of school achievements as a result of multiple school accountability (Higenyi, 2017).

In Tanzania, a study conducted by Komba (2017) indicates that there is a lack of clear multiple school accountability in education management, which is among the possible causes that contribute to challenges in school management by head teachers. This also was noted in a similar study conducted by Hillary, Ndibalema, George, Raymond, and Mislav (2010) in Tanzania, particularly in Tanga region found that there are great challenges in managing public primary schools to head teachers reflect on practices

and their experiences in implementing multiple school accountability. This implies that the head teachers cannot exist in a vacuum separated from involved education stakeholders in school management through the implementation of multiple school accountability. Research findings such as Kwendo and Areba (2022) show that the head teachers who implement multiple school accountability are the ones who always are positive toward improvement and success of school management. The rationale for the implementation of multiple school accountability in public institutions encourages the study to explore the roles of head teachers in implementing multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools in Handeni district-Tanzania.

Research objective

This paper was guided by the following objective to explore the roles of head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools in Handeni district.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of overlapping spheres of influence was helpful for this study because it emphasizes partnership and corroboration in school management. Schools do not exist nor function in a vacuum and various education stakeholders must come together as partners in the process of educating learners and managing schools (Epstein, 1981; Pansiri & Bulawa, 2013). Moreover, it gives head teachers a chance to use their roles in managing the school has overlapping shared goals and missions with education stakeholders to facilitate accountability and school management (Aithal & Kumar, 2019).

3. METHODS

Research Approach and Research Design

The study used a qualitative research approach embedded with the case study design as a methodological strategy underpinned by an interpretive paradigm to collect data. The qualitative approach is applied because it needs in-depth information about the roles of head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools in Handeni district, Tanzania. Furthermore, the case study allowed the researcher to investigate the issue based on the nature of the topic and objectives under study (Cohen et al., 2018)

Participants

Forty-two (42) participants were involved in this study. A convenience sampling technique from six primary schools was used to select 36 teachers who took part in this study (six teachers from each selected school). While purposive sampling technique was used to select six head teachers based on their experiences of managing the school for five to ten years from each selected school. The study chose all participants from six respected schools in Handeni District-Tanzania because Handeni is one among the districts facing a great challenge in the implementation of multiple school accountability to head teachers reflect on practices and their experiences in managing public primary schools (Komba, 2017).

Data Collection Techniques

This study employed interviews, and Focus Group Discussions to obtain data. The qualitative study uses multiple methods of data collection that are interactive (Creswell, 2019). Head teachers were interviewed individually to get detailed information about their roles in the implementation of multiple school accountability in managing the public primary school. On the other hand, Focus Group Discussions were conducted with teachers to share their own experiences about the roles of head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability because they work closely with head teachers in their daily activities at school.

Trustworthiness of Data

This study employed the trustworthiness of the study because it was dominated by qualitative data. In this regard, the sample size of the study was determined by the point of saturation in qualitative research to reduce bias and improve the trustworthiness of the data. To maintain credibility this study used multiple methods (interviews and Focus Group Discussions) to collect data and data sources to provide believable findings. Furthermore, the use of different locations during data collection in this study allows the transferability of the findings to provide contextual information. To maintain dependability this study included different participants (head teachers and teachers) from different public primary schools (selected schools). This helped in collecting various views about the role of head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools. Furthermore, confirmability was adhered to in this study by keeping all the important documents, information, and records during the whole time of the study and writing the report based on the information given by the participants. Finally, the researcher adhered to all the values that inform the work of research ethical procedures before, during, and after data collection including consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw from the study were highly observed and considered by the participants.

Data analysis procedure

The data from interviews and Focus Group Discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis as an appropriate procedure for qualitative study through five stages, namely; transcription, coding, categorization into themes, descriptions, and interpretation of the research questions with the help of SPSS version 25.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings about the roles of head teachers in implementing multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools revealed that head teachers get support from education stakeholders and involve teachers, parents as well as community in school management through employing various roles. Besides, head teachers and teachers through interviews and Focus Group Discussions main themes with sub-themes were identified by the responses of the study participants as fundamental roles of head teachers in managing schools that enhance the implementation of multiple school accountability.

Table 1. Main theme and sub-themes in the implementation of multiple school accountability

Main theme	Sub-themes
1. Roles of head teachers	i) Planning ii) Communicating iii) Mobilizing iv) Decision-making v) Collaborating

Source: Field data (2023)

Based on the findings of the current study, Table 1 shows the roles of head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools that facilitate cooperation and work together with various educational stakeholders.

Roles of head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability

Participants were asked about the roles of head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools in Handeni district-Tanzania. The question was: What are the roles of head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools in Handeni district? The findings show that the majority of participants agreed that head

teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability strengthen public management in running public institutions and involvement of different education stakeholders through the following roles:

Planning

The findings show that the majority of participants agree that planning in public primary schools was implemented by the head teacher through formulating objectives and setting goals with educational stakeholders, especially teachers, parents, and the community in managing public primary schools. Findings further revealed that participants viewed planning as an important role to be played by head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability and shape the direction of public primary schools, improve its overall school management and administration as well as ensure holistic participation in school management. The remarks made by one respondent support this:

In this school, I involve various education stakeholders in preparing the school's work plan and goals in various meetings helps to gather their constructive ideas towards positive outcomes in managing this school and strengthen multiple school accountability (Interview with the head teacher 8 from school H/ November, 2023).

Similarly, this was reiterated by one respondent who expressed that:

At the beginning of each academic year, the head teacher in this school holds various meetings with teachers, parents, and the community as a whole to set goals and objectives for school management and development (FGD with teachers from school F/ August, 2023).

Participants' narratives conflate that planning of the head teachers together with educational stakeholders develop a management framework for building a shared vision, objective, and goals and strengthening the partnership in school management through the implementation of multiple school accountability. The study of Ibrahim, Kyando, and Kiwonde (2023) in Tanzania also established that planning practices by head teachers in public schools enhance school management and performance. Planning is widely advocated as an effective managerial tool for enhancing performance in public schools through multiple school accountability. This implies that planning is an effective managerial tool for enhancing the inclusion and participation of all education stakeholders in the management of public institutions. Similarly, the study conducted in Spain by Del Carmen López-López, León Guerrero, and Moya (2021) affirmed that planning aimed at promoting participation in the public school and turning it into an inclusive space for education stakeholders engagement in school management. This indicates that planning provides a useful opportunity for head teachers for school management by creating inclusive environments to engage education stakeholders through multiple school accountability.

Mobilizing

The results revealed that head teachers mobilized and involved parents and the community in fundraising at school to help with other management costs of the school and improve education infrastructure as well as address shared challenges. The findings show that resources mobilized and improvement of school infrastructures by head teachers help in ensuring transparency and accountability through involving teachers, parents, and the community in school management. Subscribing to this line of thinking, one of the participants said:

As head teacher, I involve teachers, parents, and the community to understand the school capitation funds allocated by the government and fundraising as a way of implementing multiple school accountability. (Interview with the head teacher 2 from school B/ August, 2023)

Moreover, the findings show that head teachers have shown successful mobilization in community engagement in the plan and implementation of school projects especially the construction projects of classrooms and toilets in Handeni district particularly in schools A, C, D, and H. The following statements were made by the study participants through their experiences:

The head teachers involve the teachers, parents, and the community in resource mobilizing for the plan and implementation of school projects together (FGD with teachers from school G/ November, 2023).

Another participant in his remarks also echoes the same sentiments:

Mobilization made by the head teacher helped to foster multiple school accountability with the surrounding community in managing this public primary school and school project development (FGD with Teachers from school H/ October, 2023).

The texts above give evidence of the participants' view that mobilizing made by head teachers helped in school management and development that facilitates the implementation of multiple school accountability. This implies that the head teacher as a leader makes efforts to encourage active participation and involvement of education stakeholders to foster collaboration and a sense of shared responsibility in managing public primary schools. This finding is also in tandem with Ginsburg, Klauss, Nankhuni, Nyirongo, and Sullivan (2014) in Malawi found that head teachers' mobilization in participatory school management creates active involvement of the teachers, parents, and community is widely recognized as a significant factor in the success of the school improvement project and management. This mobilization has led to the attainment of various school accountability measures and has fostered a positive collaborative environment between head teachers, teachers, parents, and the community through multiple school accountability. This was also noted by the study of Njunwa (2010) revealed that mobilizing falls under the role and responsibility of head teachers in managing the school and involves the local community aiming to promote participatory management within the public school management. This means that teachers, parents, and the community should work together as partners and enhance a strong bond of teamwork for success through head teachers mobilizing in managing public primary schools.

Communicating

The findings of the current study revealed that the majority of head teachers in public primary schools regularly communicate with educational stakeholders to share important and relevant information about school management and pupils' academic issues through staff meetings, parent-teacher meetings, newsletters, and mobile devices. Communication applied by head teachers increases public awareness, and ensures clarity, transparency, and collaboration in school management. One of the participants commented that:

Various communications foster positive relations with the teachers, parents, and communities in managing this public school. Communicating has become an important way to communicate with education stakeholders about school management and administration (Interview with the head teacher 5 from school E/ October, 2023).

Furthermore, the findings show that communication from head teachers helped to keep education stakeholders especially teachers, parents, and pupils informed, updated, and open an environment of transparency, trust, and accountability in school management. One of the participants said:

Parents and teachers receive updated information on their children's academic progress and management of the school through communication (FGD with teachers from school H/ November, 2023).

Based on the above comments, the use of communication by head teachers keeps all education stakeholders informed and updated about school management and administration. This implies that

communicating in public school management helps to bridge gaps between teachers, parents, and the community and makes school operations more streamlined and effective school management. This aligns with the previous studies, For example, the study by Merryness and Rupia (2022) conducted in Tanzania revealed that communication head teachers in public schools had strong relationships with teachers, parents, and the community in facilitating effective school management and multiple school accountability. The findings further concur with the study of Leopold and Felix (2022) found that the success of any public institution is dependent on the mutual relationship. This indicates that head teachers should actively involve teachers and parents in public school management through mutual communication in daily school management this creates a better environment for the implementation of multiple school accountability in achieving quality public primary management.

Decision-making

The findings of this study exposed that, head teachers involved various education stakeholders in school management especially teachers, parents, and the community in decision-making to discuss academic improvement as well as pupils' welfare and discipline. The findings of the current study show that decision-making has significant benefits in managing public primary schools for open forums where head teachers, teachers, parents, and the community come together to discuss issues, share ideas, and make decisions collaboratively about school management. One of the head teachers was quoted saying:

Collaborative decision-making facilitates multiple school accountability that binds the head teacher, teachers, and parents working together in various initiatives aimed at improving quality school management (Interview with the head teacher 3 from school C/ August, 2023).

Furthermore, the findings discovered that decision-making creates satisfaction for head teachers, teachers, and parents in school management related to their feedback. One teacher said that:

Decision-making has great satisfaction and promotes good governance that values the opinions and ideas of teachers, parents, and the community in school management (FGD with teachers from school A/ November, 2023).

It is clear from the above narratives that the participants' view of decision-making encourages shared responsibility, fosters transparency, and aims to create collaboration in school management and reinforce the implementation of multiple school accountability. The current study is aligned with the study conducted by Mbele (2021) who found that multiple school accountability facilitates decision-making that empowers head teachers, teachers, and parents to share ideas and opinions to improve school management and administration. The findings further concur with the study of Musengamana, Shaoan, Namanyane, and Mcnamara (2024) disclosed that implementation of multiple school accountability creates room for decision-making to education stakeholders as a potential for improvements and fosters a more collaborative and inclusive participatory in educational management. This means that decision-making creates effective participation in school management effective and cordial relationships with all education stakeholders through the implementation of multiple school accountability. This is also annotated by the study of Memedi and Ameti (2024) found that decision-making strengthens the implementation of multiple school accountability that helps education stakeholders jointly share their views, goals, and opinions in school management.

Collaborating

The results revealed that community partnership and teamwork in school management are triggered by the collaborative approach employed by head teachers in the implementation of multiple school accountability. The current study findings show that collaboration in school management with various

education stakeholders creates multiple channels for open communication between the school and the community to discuss issues about school development. Head teachers collaborating with teachers, parents, and the community creates mutually beneficial relationships and offers access to information between the school and all education stakeholders in strengthening multiple school accountability. One head teacher quoted that:

Collaboration in school management strengthens the relationship between this school and the community surrounding this school and fosters positive community involvement in school management (Interview with the head teacher 4 from school D/ October, 2023).

Similarly, subscribing to this line of thoughtful, one of the participants said:

The community has good relations with the head teacher in collaborating on school management issues. Collaborating is one of the key pillars in strengthening good relations in managing public schools (FGD with teachers from school G/ November, 2023).

The above statement indicates that collaborating in school management with the community is important because a school is established in a community that expects to benefit from the school. This indicates that head teachers' role and responsibility lie in fostering positive collaboration between the school and the local community by employing multiple school accountability. These findings support the Tanzania Education Policy (ETP) indicating that it is now a widespread consensus in Tanzania that collaborating in public primary school management is crucially important and should involve all education stakeholders (URT, 2014). Moreover, these findings support the findings by Liu (2021) who emphasized that collaboration in school management has become a popular approach for education development and improvement in global education reform. Head teachers' collaboration with education stakeholders created success in improving education quality and the stakeholders' interactions in education management globally. Furthermore, a study conducted by Georgia and Irene (2018) linked with the current study observed that collaborating through multiple school accountability set the foundation for a more democratic approach in school management aims to the redistribution of authorities which are institutionally connected to the head teachers to a more collaborative structure on the school's function. This also has been noted by the study of Schlebusch (2020) exposed that collaborative leadership involves participatory actions that are focused on school improvement and shared goals with education stakeholders. This implies that head teachers must collaborate with education stakeholders in the management of the school and educating learners aims to make schools more effective institutions of learning and well-organized management.

5. CONCLUSION

The findings from the current study have indicated that the majority of head teachers involve parents in decision-making about food availability in public primary schools to improve nutrition for pupils. Conversely, it seemed that nutrition programs are much more concerned with only head teachers while access to food at public school is one of the nation's strategies in Tanzania to ensure all pupils receive lunch. This means that head teachers and parents are responsible for making sure that access and availability of food at public primary schools are among the roles in managing schools.

The results show that planning for school financial management is well managed by head teachers with the cooperation of teachers, school committees, and parents in forecasting income and expenses, allocating resources appropriately, and ensuring that school funds are used properly. However, parents face challenges related to school financial management in public primary schools especially the "Facility

Financial Accounting and Reporting System (FFARS)" which was introduced by the government of Tanzania through the Ministry of Finance. The parents are often not well prepared for the financial management skills and knowledge. They must undertake sufficient training to perform accountant duties and tasks to ensure efficient management of school funds in managing public primary schools.

The findings show that, in some localities, the collaboration of head teachers with communities especially a few parents was reluctant to physically participate in parent-teacher meetings to share views and opinions on the management of public primary schools. This creates challenges in the implementation of multiple school accountability to head teachers in managing public primary schools. This results in a lack of opinions and suggestions from parents on joint discussions about the school's progress and management. Some parents were not sufficiently engaged in parent-teacher meetings at public primary schools to provide their input regarding school operations was lacking.

Due to the importance of multiple school accountability in managing public schools, in this sense, the findings of this study will increase the body of knowledge regarding the role of head teachers in managing public primary schools. Therefore, this paper recommends that head teachers can more effectively cooperate with various education stakeholders in managing public primary schools and innovation practices to enhance the teamwork through implementation of multiple school accountability. Furthermore, the scope of this study is limited to 6 public primary schools, 6 head teachers, and 36 teachers on their experience with the role of head teachers in implementing multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools. Further study could be conducted in public secondary schools or involve a larger sample size and other education stakeholders such as parents, education officers, and curriculum developers on how they could predict the role of head teachers in implementing multiple school accountability in managing public primary schools.

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