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Drivers of Heads of Schools' Leadership Support for Teachers' Work Performance in Tanzanian Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The leadership support provided by Heads of Schools (HoS) influences teachers in secondary schools in Tanzania. Several drivers influence the leadership support in enhancing teachers' work performance (TWP) in Tanzanian secondary schools. Therefore, the paper intends to address the drivers that influence leadership support provided to teachers in secondary schools in Tanzania. Employing a qualitative exploratory design, the research conducted in-depth interviews with 76 participants (Heads of Schools and teachers) across the Iringa and Njombe regions. The study found that the influence of leadership support is divided into two distinct categories: external and internal drivers. External drivers include the pursuit of better student performance, strict directives from higher authorities (such as District Education Officers), the need to "market" or advertise the school (particularly in the private sector), and the attainment of institutional visions. Internal drivers comprise the personal fulfilment of responsibilities, the desire to retain the headship position, and the attainment of legacy status. It was further found that external drivers outweigh internal ones, suggesting that most HoS provide support based on external pressure or mandates rather than personal initiative. This threatens the sustainability of the provided support. The HoS need to develop internal motivation geared toward supporting teachers. This will end up contributing to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 4 (Quality Education).

Index Terms: Leadership support • teachers' work performance • Heads of schools • Secondary Schools

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Drivers of Heads of Schools' Leadership Support for Teachers' Work Performance in Tanzanian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The leadership support provided by Heads of Schools (HoS) influences teachers in secondary schools in Tanzania. Several drivers influence the leadership support in enhancing teachers' work performance (TWP) in Tanzanian secondary schools. Therefore, the paper intends to address the drivers that influence leadership support provided to teachers in secondary schools in Tanzania. Employing a qualitative exploratory design, the research conducted in-depth interviews with 76 participants (Heads of Schools and teachers) across the Iringa and Njombe regions. The study found that the influence of leadership support is divided into two distinct categories: external and internal drivers. External drivers include the pursuit of better student performance, strict directives from higher authorities (such as District Education Officers), the need to "market" or advertise the school (particularly in the private sector), and the attainment of institutional visions. Internal drivers comprise the personal fulfilment of responsibilities, the desire to retain the headship position, and the attainment of legacy status. It was further found that external drivers outweigh internal ones, suggesting that most HoS provide support based on external pressure or mandates rather than personal initiative. This threatens the sustainability of the provided support. The HoS need to develop internal motivation geared toward supporting teachers. This will end up contributing to achieving Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 4 (Quality Education).

Keywords: Leadership support, teachers' work performance, Heads of schools, Secondary Schools

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1 Introduction

In Tanzania, each secondary school is led by a headmaster or headmistress. The Head of School (HoS) is responsible for everything happening at a particular school. Despite the availability of heads of schools in secondary schools in Tanzania, there is no significant improvement in teachers' work. Most schools face the prevalence of minimal teacher work performance. (Nyamubi, 2017; Paschal & Tangi, 2022; Sauwa, 2022. Nyamubi (2017) argued that there were incidences of poor teachers' work performance which was indicated by presence of poor preparation of classroom instructions, lateness and absenteeism in spite of the availability of heads of schools in their working stations. The reports by the Teachers' Service Commission evidenced the existence of poor teachers' work performance in secondary schools, which led to the expulsion of teachers from their working stations (Paschal & Tangi, 2022; Chua & Mosha, 2015). Likewise, a report by the Teachers' Service Commission (2022) revealed that between 2021 and 2022, a total of 919 teachers were expelled from the teaching profession due to poor work performance in their workplaces (Sauwa, 2022; Massawe, 2014).

Teachers' work performance in secondary schools is crucial because the success or failure of students' learning largely depends on teachers' effectiveness. It is expected that when teachers adequately fulfil their professional responsibilities, including classroom teaching, preparation

of schemes of work, lesson plans and lesson notes, as well as maintaining students' discipline, students' academic achievement and overall school performance improve (Mwombeki, 2017; Mkumbo, 2012). Students' academic achievement and school performance are therefore commonly regarded as important indicators of teachers' work performance. However, reports from the Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (BEST) and the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE) between 2019 and 2024 indicate persistent low academic performance among secondary school students. Most students have continued to attain marginal passes (Division IV) or fail with Division Zero (URT, 2019–2024). The limited improvement in students' academic performance raises concerns about teachers' work performance and the extent to which heads of schools provide adequate support to enhance effective service delivery in secondary schools.

Studies which have been conducted have shown that heads of schools provide support to teachers due to various motives. For instance, a study by Glanz, Shulman and Sullivan (2007), as cited in Ampofo et al. (2019) in the USA, revealed that Heads of schools provided an instructional direction process focused on identifying pedagogical challenges encountered by teachers in their instructional delivery so as to provide them with needed skills. It was found that the reasons for HoS to provide support were to create an encouraging environment for teachers so that teachers as academics can be in a position to perform

their roles peacefully. In Indian context, Tyagi (2010) emphasized that leadership support provided by HoS created a platform for both teachers and HoS to use their collective expertise to identify gaps in teacher skills, knowledge and competencies in order to create an encouraging environment for teachers' professional responsibilities and accountability in teaching. The findings entailed that heads of schools performed roles in their schools to create an encouraging environment for teachers so as to provide them with an opportunity to perform their roles soundly. However, by comparing the findings from the USA context and the Indian context, one may notice that though the reasons for providing support to teachers were to create an encouraging environment, there was a contextual difference. Findings from the USA context revealed that the background was pedagogical challenges, while in the Indian context, the background was gaps in skills, knowledge and competence. This inconsistency needs to be addressed by conducting research in another context to explore the background of providing support to teachers in schools. The current study was conducted in Tanzania with a different background and context.

Additionally, study conducted by Mwesiga and Okendo, (2018) which sought to find out the understanding of head of schools on the aspects of their leadership as being an utmost factor to influence teachers' performance in teaching activities, revealed that all HoS who were interviewed, pointed out that they provide support to teachers due to the reason that they understand it is their responsibility to ensure teachers work accordingly and students perform well in schools. It is thought that awareness of HoS to understand their responsibilities as leaders of the school and knowing that they are accountable for any failure or success of the school drives them to provide support to teachers, so that teachers might work efficiently for the betterment of students and schools. Ampofo et al. (2019) conducted a study on the influence of heads of schools' direct supervision on teachers' work performance in public senior high schools, central region, Ghana. The study found that heads of schools carried out their administrative roles and supported teachers to carry out their teaching activities. These findings are in line with findings by Ngole and Mkulu (2021), who indicated that heads of schools had the responsibility of supporting teachers and assisting them to perform their duties effectively in schools.

Leadership support has been identified as a key factor in teachers' work performance in schools. Heads of schools play important roles in enhancing effective teachers' performance, which ultimately has an impact on students' academic performance in schools (Mwita, 2017; World Bank 2018).

However, the reviewed literature (Okoji, 2016; Nyamubi, 2017; Aunga and Masare, 2017) has indicated a debate on the significant role of heads of schools on teachers' work performance in schools. In other words, the minimal teachers' work performance in secondary schools in Tanzania raises questions pertaining to whether Leadership support is capable of contributing to the improvement of teachers' work performance in secondary schools. It is against this background that this study explored the drivers of heads of schools in supporting teachers and their contribution to teachers' work performance in secondary schools in Tanzania. The paper addresses the following research question: What drives HoS to provide support to teachers in secondary schools?

1.1 Theoretical perspective guiding the study

The study was guided by the administrative management theory. This is a classical management theory developed by Henry Fayol in the early 20th century (Kaul, 2020). The chief supporters of the administrative management theory are Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick. The theory is developed to make an organisation efficient and effective irrespective of the nature of the organisation. The theory focuses on what should

be the work of a chief executive. For this, Fayol propounded five basic elements of management: planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling (Mulengeki, 2014). Furthermore, Fayol provide points that define the principles of management, which serve as a main guide to the administrative operation of an organisation (Adam et al., 2018).

The theory assumes that organisational efficiency can be achieved through careful utilisation of management functions. It is assumed that when managers perform five essential functions, planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling, the organisational efficiency is enhanced. The theory further assumed that the 14 principles of management (division of work, authority, discipline, unity of command, unity of direction, subordination of individual interests to the general interest, remuneration, centralization, scalar chain, order, equity, stability of tenure of personal, initiative an esprit de corps) are very significant for any successful running up of any institution, and with these only a proper co-ordination among the work done can be expected (Kaul, 2020).

Fayol's administrative management theory is associated with significant strengths. Fayol's principles offer a structured approach to management that may help organisations establish clear guidelines and processes; this structured approach aid to provide effective management practices in the organisation. For instance, the principle of division of work promotes efficiency by assigning specific tasks to employees based on their skills, reducing redundancy and enhancing productivity (Robbins & Coulter, 2016). The administrative management theory focuses on improved efficiency. It includes a concern for efficiency in service delivery. The emphasis on efficiency and division of work remains relevant in a competitive business environment. By ensuring that the tasks are clearly defined and employees are specialised, the organisation may maximise productivity (Adam et al., 2018).

The principle of the unity of command and esprit de corps underscores the importance of unity and team spirit within an organisation. This principle creates a positive work environment that encourages collaboration and mutual support. It contributes to ensuring a systematic and smooth functioning of the organisation. (Robbins & Coulter, 2016). Despite its applicability, Fayol's administrative management theory fails to account for some points too. The theory focuses too much on the managerial aspect of the institution, and while doing that, it completely ignores the real-time problems that workers face. In such a sense, it can be said that it completely ignores the realistic problems that workers often face in co-operation (Kaul, 2020). Additionally, Fayol's administrative management theory relies only on its motivation assumption that each employee is an economic employee who is interested in maximising income. Such motivation assumption of the theory is improper because it has not taken into account non-economic factors (Adam et al., 2018).

The theory assumes that managers have the responsibility of organising, coordinating, directing, and guiding the efforts of employees in the organisation toward realization of employee and organisational performance. This study makes use of the theory to examine how heads of schools as administrators make use of the management functions to support teachers' work performance in schools. It is assumed that Fayol's functions of management increase efficiency and productivity, improve decision-making, improve employees' morale and enhance organisational performance. As the theory advocates for a formalised administrative structure, the delegation of power and division of labour. It is assumed from this theory that for efficient and improved work performance of teachers, heads of schools have to pay more attention to the division of work, clear definition of duties and responsibilities, and maintaining specialisation and coordination.

Based on this conceptualisation, Fayol's administrative management theory plays a similar role in education as transformational leadership theory, where the head of school is supposed to take every member of the staff as a separate and important identity having a valuable contribution to the vision accomplishment of the school (Norazin & Khalip 2016). The theory applies to the study since both heads of schools and teachers play a significant role in schools. The way the heads of schools manage and support teachers determines the performance of teachers in the execution of their responsibilities.

2 Materials and methods

This study was guided by a qualitative approach in which an exploratory design was employed to explore the drivers of heads of schools' leadership in supporting teachers' work in secondary schools. Creswell (2014) describes that the primary focus of the exploratory strategy is to explore a phenomenon but also wants to expand on the qualitative findings. In this study, the exploratory design was adopted with the purpose of exploring the drivers of HoS leadership in supporting teachers' work in secondary schools. The focal point of the study was in two regions: Iringa and Njombe. The regions were selected on the basis of students' academic performance at the ordinary level secondary school (NECTA results 2019-2021). The study population comprised public and private secondary school teachers and heads of schools, drawn from the two regions using stratified and purposive sampling. The study generated data from a sample of 76 participants from selected schools, where four districts from Iringa and Njombe were contacted.

An interview was chosen as the data collection method because it gives an in-depth understanding of the problem being studied. A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions was administered to obtain qualitative data from heads of the schools and teachers. The interview was used to capture detailed information about the personal views of teachers and heads of schools on what drives heads of schools to provide support to teachers' work in secondary schools. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, credibility, transferability, and conformability were used as criteria to assess trustworthiness. In this study, NVivo software was applied to analyse the data. The recorded interviews were transcribed into written form, and then codes were assigned to a section of transcribed data where expressions were taken. Expressions which occurred throughout the whole data set were taken to constitute major categories, which were later developed into themes.

3 Findings and discussion

3.1 Drivers that motivate heads of schools to provide leadership support to teachers

The findings from this study revealed that the drivers for heads of schools' leadership support are categorised into two categories, namely external and internal drivers. The external drivers are termed as drivers outside the heads of schools' control that drive the heads of schools to support teachers' work. The identified external factors that drive leadership support are students' better academic performance, directives from the higher authorities, the need to create a supportive environment for teachers, advertising the school, teachers' retention in school and attainment of institutional vision.

In terms of better students' academic performance, the findings of the study revealed that better students' academic performance drives heads of the schools to support teachers' work. For heads of schools, better students' academic performance enables the schools to be ranked

highly in the region or district. In view of this, the head of school 8, which is one of the high-performing schools, said:

“

My priority is the better academic performance of students in the school. I want my school to be among the schools which perform well academically in the region. I provide support to teachers to enhance their efforts and enable them to work hard so that we raise the school GPA (Interview, HoS8).

In support of what has been said by HoS in school 8, another head of school, 21, narrated that:

“

I provide support to teachers to enhance their efforts and enable them to work hard so that we can bring better academic results to our school. For us here in school, the better academic performance for our students is divisions one to three. We have eliminated divisions four and zero for our students (Interview, HoS 21).

The foregoing narrations presented in the voices obtained from heads of schools indicate that heads of schools focus on improving students' academic performance in their schools. This triggers them to provide support to teachers in order to ensure that their support yields better academic performance for students. Support is provided to teachers to encourage them to undertake their responsibilities diligently in order to bring better academic results for students. The motive of looking for better academic performance is observed in the heads of schools of both categories, high performing and low performing schools, public and private secondary schools in both regions, Iringa and Njombe. Likewise, Ampofo et al (2019) pointed that heads of schools provide support to teachers so as to enhance students' academic performance. Furthermore, Ngole and Mkulu (2021) documented that heads of schools performed their responsibilities of supporting teachers, aiming to ensure that teachers in the school perform their responsibilities efficiently to improve quality teaching and learning in the schools. Heads of schools played their roles, supervised curriculum, time table and monitored students' academic progress in order to improve the quality of teaching for teachers. Therefore, heads of schools are motivated externally to support teachers in secondary schools.

Moreover, the directives from authorities were mentioned to influence HoS support for teachers. For instance, the district education officers normally give directives to HoS related to students' academic performance in secondary schools. In one of the schools, the head emphasised that:

“

I support teachers in order to fulfil the directives from the top authorities, which demand that all heads of schools support teachers to enhance the work of teaching students in schools. Hence, I provide support to teachers to satisfy their orders. They have trusted me to be head of the school; I must work hard so that they may see my work (Interview, HoS3).

The teachers interviewed from visited schools explained that their heads of schools provide support to teachers due to the directives and pressure from higher authority. To emphasise this, one teacher said:

“

The head of school supports teachers due to the instructions and pressure they receive from higher authorities. Higher authorities want better performance from students and schools. It means the school must perform better; if it does not perform better, you are going to lose that position. Who would like to lose the title of headship? Under such circumstances, heads of schools are forced to support teachers to meet the instructions of the authorities (Interview with Teacher 2).

The findings in the foregoing narration reveal that heads of schools are driven to support teachers to adhere to directives from the authorities. The directives come from authorities such as directors, educational officers or districts/town councils. It was revealed that directives from authorities differ depending on the contexts or situations of the school, whether high-performing or low performing schools. HoS from Low achievers are directed to ensure that their schools perform better to meet the standard of performance, while high-performing schools adhere to directives to maintain the status of performance of their schools. It implies that heads of the schools provide support to teachers so that teachers teach to the best of their ability to ensure that the schools perform well, as it is expected or directed by the authorities. Similarly, Day and Sammons (2016) found and documented that school leaders have the key role to play in setting directions as directed from authority, supporting and enhancing teachers' motivation and commitment. Likewise, Lutego (2015) argued that principals executed their roles of supporting tutors in the institution in order to make sure that they accomplish their teaching activities and the institution performs well to meet the expectations of the ministry. Therefore, external forces are what motivate HoS to support teachers in different secondary schools in Tanzania.

Advertising the school was identified as one of the drivers that make HoS support teachers in secondary schools. The findings of the study revealed that heads of schools provide support to teachers in order to advertise the schools. It was found that the heads of schools provide support to teachers to make them work hard so as to produce good results in order to advertise their schools. The interviews conducted with heads of schools have revealed that there is a business-oriented drive among heads of schools. This was evidenced in interviews conducted with heads of schools and teachers. In view of this, the head of school 9 said:

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For me, school is a business like any other business. For the survival of the school, we need to have some students. We get students only if the school is doing well. In order to make sure that the school is doing well, we need teachers who are fully committed to their work of teaching, because without committed teachers with commitment, there will be no good school performance at all. So, I provide support to my teachers in order to make sure that they teach well and the school is doing well. As a result, we advertise the school and attract students who want to study in our school; hence, we market the school (Interview, HoS 9).

Similarly, interviews with teachers reinforced the view that what drives heads of school to support teachers in schools is to advertise the school and win the market. They support teachers to enable them to work, get good results and attract students to join their schools. Consider, for example, the explanation provided by teacher 2 from school 24:

“

Education is a service to people, but it is also a commodity. The first motive is to market the school through the good performance of students. Once HoS supports teachers, they become committed to their work of teaching students and students' performance becomes good. Once the students' performance is good, the school markets itself, and it gets many students (Interview, Teacher 2(S24H)).

The narration indicates that heads of schools in private schools are motivated by the drive of marketing their schools. The drive to market the schools is solely for private schools, it is rarely to find out the government schools is struggling to market school. It is the case, because, government schools have assurance of getting students without marketing. Private schools market the school with the intention of winning the market in order to attract more students to join the schools for its survival. For them, education is a business, and they need to advertise this business, the way of advertising or marketing it is through supporting teachers in order to yield good results for students, which attracts more students to join their schools or attracts parents to send their children to those schools. There is a common driver for HoSs in supporting teachers in schools, which is advertising their schools. In Pakistan, the school performance attracts parents to send their children to schools with the intention of acquiring good academic performance and determining quality education (Das, 2023; William & Ligembe, 2022). Likewise, Okoji (2016) documented that in Nigeria, the heads of schools provided effective leadership support to teachers in schools to enhance the academic performance of students and attract more students.

The findings also revealed that the internal drivers motivated HoS to support teachers in secondary schools. Such drivers include fulfilment of responsibilities, retaining the position of headship and attainment of legacy status. The fulfilment of responsibilities as an internal driver was reported by heads of schools and teachers during the interviews. In the schools visited, the heads of the schools reported that they provided support to teachers because they took it as their responsibility to support teachers. They are intrinsically motivated to support teachers because of the experience they have of their work and the value of the position of headship, which has been assigned to them. About this, one head of school 7 said:

“

According to the value of the position of headship which I have been assigned, it is my responsibility to support teachers in their work and encourage them to perform their duties in the school. The performance of teachers and the school usually reflects the head of school's support and execution of responsibilities. Teachers' failure is school failure, and this mirrors the failure of the head of the school too (Interview, HoS7).

The presented findings in the foregoing voice were also supported by the head of school 8 at school 8, who narrated that:

“

It is my responsibility to ensure that teachers work diligently. I am not doing my job just because of the directives from my bosses or just because I am looking for my daily bread or for better academic performance, but to me as head of school, I am supporting teachers because it is my responsibility to support them. It is my intrinsic desire to fulfil my responsibilities and

inspire teachers to fulfil their responsibilities too. If HoS does a job because of directives, daily bread or academic performance, he/she is a hypocrite (Interview HoS8).

The narrations indicate that heads of the school support teachers because it is one of their responsibilities as far as the headship of schools is concerned. They have a self-driving spirit, and they are self-motivated to fulfil their responsibilities. Their motive for supporting teachers is to enhance accountability in schools to fulfil the dreams of teaching students diligently. The findings by Mwesiga and Okendo (2018) indicated that heads of schools understood that supporting teachers was their core responsibility. It was the responsibility of the heads of schools to ensure that teachers were working accordingly and that students performed well. Providing support to teachers' teaching responsibilities became the main function for them. Heads of schools were effective in terms of supervising and guiding. Observing and evaluating teaching and learning processes. It was noted that the effective heads of schools were responsible and accountable.

Furthermore, retaining position was another internal driver, which was revealed in the schools visited, which was retaining the position of headship. The findings revealed that heads of school provide support to teachers because they want to retain their positions as heads of school. Headship of a school is an opportunity which needs to be maintained once one has been trusted by the authorities. One of the heads of schools gave the following narration:

"I have been allowed of headship of the school to lead my fellow teachers. I have been trusted by the higher authorities; I need to use this opportunity to show them that I know how to lead the school, otherwise I may lose my position (Interview, HoS7).

Moreover, the interviews with teachers revealed that heads of schools are driven by personal initiatives to maintain their position as heads of schools. They support teachers because they don't want to lose the position of headship of the school, which they are leading. For emphasis, one teacher said:

"No one would like to lose their position after being told that they are not fulfilling their duties properly and are not fit for the headship. As head of school, you have to support teachers and fulfil your headship roles. Our new head of school, like other heads of schools, wants to maintain his position of headship, which is why he is supporting us too (Interview, teacher S4).

Moreover, the findings of the study showed that heads of schools' personal drive are expected to retain the position of headship in the schools they have been assigned. For them, the means of retaining the position is by providing support to teachers in order to enhance the performance of the school they are leading; they anticipate that the students' and school performance determine their position of headship of the school. Once the performance is bad in their schools, there is a probability of losing the position of headship. Likewise, Okoji (2016) argue that the heads of schools have an important position, and by virtue of their positions, the roles to play in fostering effective teachers' performance in the schools. The findings of the present study are consistent with Mwesiga and Okendo (2018), who noted that at the level of school heads, school heads have an exclusive position which demands

effective performance of schools. To achieve the school performance, it is the responsibility of HoSs to make sure that teachers work hard and students perform well. It is through good school performance that HoSs can retain the position.

Furthermore, the findings of the study showed that heads of schools in secondary schools provide support to teachers because they want to retain teachers in their schools. This was revealed in the interviews conducted with both heads of schools and teachers. For instance, in the interview conducted with the head of school from School 5, it was found that support is provided to teachers to retain them. Concerning this, the head of school 5 emphasised that:

"A school organisation should support employees in order to retain them. Similarly, the school as an organisation should support teachers in order to make them feel part and parcel of the school and remain working here. So, I support teachers in terms of recognition and appreciation for their work to retain them and make them feel part of the school (Interview with HoS from school 5).

The quotation from the head of school highlights the importance of organisational support as a strategy for employee retention and commitment within the school context. The participants view the school not only as a place of work but also as an organisation that must actively care for and support teachers to maintain their loyalty and long-term commitment. This reflects the perceptions of the participant that when teachers receive adequate support from school leadership, they develop a sense of belonging, attachment and identification within the school community. Likewise, another head of school from School 7 said:

"My drive to support teachers in my school is to retain them here. I do offer various supports which are not offered in other schools, I intend to minimise the desire of my teachers to leave our school and find another place or school to work. A person likes to work in a place where she or he is comfortable. I do provide support to my teachers by giving them encouragement and guidance to ensure that they are comfortable remaining and working with us (Interview with HoS from school 7).

The foregoing narration by the head of the school indicates that teachers' support is closely connected to institutional stability and workforce retention. The participant recognises that teachers are more likely to remain in school where they feel valued, appreciated and included in the institutional environment. The findings of the current study are consistent with Nyamubi (2017), who noted that teachers' continuance performance in school is sustained when they perceive that they are supported. Teachers can stay in a school, work comfortably and perform well when they get full support from their leaders. Likewise, Okoji (2016) argued that heads of schools have an important role to play in fostering the maintenance of effective teachers' performance. Furthermore, the findings of the study are in line with what Mwita (2017) noted, that supportive leadership provided by HoSs to teachers in schools was the best way in promoting teachers feeling happy and excitement in the teaching career. Teachers felt comfortable staying and working in schools where HoSs provided care, work recognition and support.

By supporting teachers, the head of school aims to create supportive relationships, strengthen teachers' morale and reduce feelings of

dissatisfaction, which may lead teachers to leave the school. In addition, the head of school from School 26 added:

“

I support my teachers in terms of incentives, allowance and professional assistance because I want to retain them here in our school. We, as a private school we need to look for various means of supporting teachers to ensure that they remain with us and work in our school. So, I provide support because I want to make them settle here, work and bring good results to our school (Interview with HoS from school 26).

Likewise, interviews conducted with teachers revealed that heads of school's support teachers to retain them in the working stations to make the schools survive, since schools cannot have continuity without teachers, as it was narrated by teacher 1 from school 20:

“

The support I get in terms of allowance, appreciation, and counselling from the head of the school motivates me to work hard, commit myself to the work and the institution. It attracts me to remain here and provide my full service to the institution. It makes me ready to suffer for the institution, since I become part of the institution, I am ready to fight for its survival. It is through the institutional commitment of teachers that the school may survive (Interview with teacher 1 from school 20).

The explanation provided by the teacher from school 20 sheds light on the fact that teachers view support provided to them as both a motivational and retention mechanism. The participant experiences supportive leadership, and this leadership support he receives; it develops greater institutional commitment, job satisfaction and willingness to continue serving in the school. In this sense, the participant views teachers' support as an investment in maintaining a stable, motivated and committed teaching workforce, which ultimately contributes to improved school effectiveness and performance. However, contrary to the current study, the previous study of Moore (2012) in the USA found that working in unsupportive leadership made teachers dissatisfied with the job, leaving the profession. Implying that heads of schools were not providing support to teachers' work in the schools, a situation which resulted teachers to feel uncomfortable and left the career. Moreover, it was also found that harassment at the schools, especially by HoSs who applied a dictatorship style, made teachers not stay at the schools concerned, and others left the career. In terms of supporting teachers for retention of staff, one teacher said: As I become part of the institution, I am ready to fight for its survival because I receive support from the head of the school.

indicates an inclusiveness and emotional attachment to school. Likewise, Teacher 2 of School 20 narrated the following:

“

The heads of school's support teachers because they want to retain them for the survival of their schools. The survival of the schools depends on teachers' commitment to work, which in turn depends on support provided by heads of schools. So, our head of school makes an effort to retain us here at school by providing full support in terms of empowerment, recognition and resources; he makes us feel happy to remain and work in this school (Interview with teacher 2 from school 28).

The participant views given in the foregoing voice indicate that teachers are central resources in ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of the school. In this context, the head of school provides support not merely as an administrative responsibility but as a strategic effort to retain committed teachers whose contribution is essential for the functioning and sustainability of the school. Additionally, this quotation reflects the idea that teacher retention is necessary for institutional stability and survival. Therefore, the head of school intentionally provides full support as a means of maintaining a stable workforce and preserving the school's effectiveness.

The findings further revealed that the heads are to provide support to teachers to enable them to execute their duties in schools so as to achieve the institutional vision or goal. This was revealed in interviews conducted with both teachers and heads of school. For instance, the head of school 2 from school 2 said:

“

I support teachers because I want to ensure the execution of the vision and mission of the school. Understandably, educational stakeholders expect to see performance in its best in schools. However, there is no performance without the implementation of the vision and mission of the school concerned. So, I support teachers to ensure that we achieve the mission and vision of our school (Interview with HoS from school 2).

The narration of HoS from school 2 highlights the relationship between supportive school leadership and the achievement of the institutional mission. The participant perceives teachers' support as a strategic leadership responsibility aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of the school's vision and mission. These findings are in line with the findings of the study by Nyenyembe et al. (2016), which revealed that heads of schools communicated attractive visions of the schools to teachers, inspired and motivated them to execute their responsibilities in schools to achieve the institutional visions and aims of the school. Likewise, Ampofo et al. (2019) demonstrated that the motive for HoSs to provide support to teachers came from their own initiatives of understanding that it was their responsibility to ensure teachers perform well to reach the realisation of school visions and goals. In the same vein, Ngole and Mkulu (2021) indicated that HoSs had the responsibility of supporting teachers and assisting them to perform their duties effectively in schools to achieve the school vision. According to this context, the head of school recognises that the realisation of educational objectives depends largely on teachers since they are implementers of school policies, mission and academic programs in school; thus, supporting teachers becomes an essential mechanism for interpreting the school's vision and mission into practical outcomes. Likewise, the head of school from School 5 narrated that:

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I do stand on our school vision, finding educational excellence. To live in our school vision means the head of school and teachers must cooperate and work hard. If teachers don't teach and work hard, it is difficult to get educational excellence, as it is stated in our school vision or goal. Hence, I provide support to teachers to ensure that they are in a better position to teach the students well to reach the vision and goal of the school (Interview with HoS from school 5).

Findings from interviews with teachers reinforced the view that heads of schools provide support to teachers to enable them to accomplish

their duties in schools in order to achieve the institutional vision and goals. For instance, teacher 2 from school 7 supported this view by explaining that:

“*Each institution has its vision and goals, which are expected to be attained. Likewise, our school as an institution has its own vision and goals. The attainment of the school vision and goals will mostly depend on the collaboration of the head of school and teachers in the school. The head of school supports teachers to enable them to fulfil their duties of teaching students to achieve the school vision and goal* (Interview with teacher 2, from school S7)

The participant's narration highlights that school vision and mission are not symbolic statements, but operational frameworks that guide school activities and performance expectations. In this context, the participant understands that without teachers' active participation, commitment and collaboration with the head of schools, the intended vision and mission cannot be achieved. Therefore, the participant narrates that the head of this school views teachers' support as a means of strengthening teachers' capacity, morale and dedication towards fulfilling the institutional mission and vision. In addition, teacher 2 from school 4 narrated that:

“*The head of school supports teachers in order to attain both the national objectives and the school's vision in their schools. The national objectives are specified in the curriculum, and teachers are the implementers of the curriculum. Various Supports provided by heads of school to teachers enable teachers to implement the curriculum. Implementation of the curriculum enhances the attainment of the national objectives and the school's vision, too. We need such support; unfortunately, here, we don't get it as we expect* (Interview with teacher 1 from school 4).

It was found that heads of schools do provide support to teachers to enhance work performance, so as to affect the school's vision and reach the school's goals. In both categories of schools, public and private, heads of schools collaborate with teachers to make sure that the vision and goals of the school are reached. Furthermore, findings revealed that heads of schools are expected to provide support to teachers, the implementers of the curriculum, to achieve the national objectives of ensuring quality education is attainable, and the institutional goal is reached too; however, it was revealed that such expectations are not met in some low-performing schools, implying that the attainment of institutional vision is not attainable. Furthermore, Okoji (2016) argued that HoSs have important roles to play in fostering vision and objectives of the schools, among those roles include providing effective leadership support to teachers in schools to enhance better work performance among staff, to realise the school vision, goals and objectives.

4 Conclusion and recommendations

The study concludes that leadership support provided by Heads of Schools (HoS) in Tanzanian secondary schools is motivated by a combination of external and internal drivers. External drivers include the pursuit of better student academic performance, strict directives from higher authorities, the need to market schools for student recruitment, and the attainment of institutional visions. Conversely, internal drivers

involve the personal fulfilment of professional responsibilities, the desire to retain the headship position, and the pursuit of a legacy status. The reliance on external forces, such as the fear of losing one's position or pressure from district Education Officers, poses a risk to the sustainability of leadership support. While these external factors can lead to temporary improvements in performance, they may not foster a deeply rooted or long-term commitment to enhancing teachers' work performance.

Ultimately, to ensure the long-term effectiveness of school leadership, there is a pressing need for Heads of Schools to cultivate intrinsic motivation geared toward supporting their staff. Moving beyond a compliance-based approach toward a self-driven sense of responsibility is essential for improving teachers' work performance and, by extension, student academic outcomes. Strengthening these internal drivers will be vital for Tanzania to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on providing high-quality education through a more stable and supportive leadership framework. Based on the conclusions regarding the drivers of leadership support in Tanzanian secondary schools, the following recommendations are provided to enhance teachers' work performance and ensure the sustainability of school leadership. Shift from Extrinsic to Intrinsic Motivation.

Training and professional development programs should focus on helping school leaders internalise their responsibilities as a core professional value rather than a response to external mandates or the fear of losing their positions. Enhance Leadership Training Programs: Educational authorities should design leadership programs that move beyond administrative compliance. These programs should emphasise the value of leadership support as a primary function of the headship role. By fostering a self-driving spirit, HoS can transition from being "hypocritical" leaders who only follow directives to visionary leaders who support teachers out of a genuine desire to improve the quality of education. Align Leadership Support with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4): To achieve the Quality Education goal, leadership support must be consistent, not merely a temporary reaction to district directives or school ranking pressures. Authorities should re-evaluate how they monitor HoS performance, shifting the focus from purely academic results (GPAs and rankings) to the quality of support and professional environment provided to teachers. Promote a Supportive rather than Punitive Accountability Culture: High-level authorities, such as District Education Officers, should balance their "strict directives" with support for the HoS themselves. Reducing the reliance on the "fear of losing headship" as a motivator can help create a more stable and healthy school environment where leadership support is provided consistently rather than under duress.

DECLARATIONS

This study was approved by the Ruaha Catholic University Research Ethics Committee with approval number RUCU131 on April 23, 2025. The participants in the study granted permission to the researcher to conduct interviews verbally.

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