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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of Administrative Overlapping Responsibilities on Promoting the Effectiveness of Heads of Schools in Kyerwa Public Secondary Schools in Kagera Region in Tanzania

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All authors contributed equally to this research.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of administrative overlapping responsibilities on the effectiveness of heads of schools in Kyerwa public secondary schools, using the Complementary Model of Political-Administrative Relations as a guiding framework. Employing a mixed-methods approach under an explanatory sequential design, the study involved 127 participants, 115 teachers, 5 heads of schools, 5 Ward Education Officers (WEOs), 1 District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO), and 1 District Quality Assurance Officer (DQAO), drawn from a target population of 505 individuals. Data collection methods included questionnaires for teachers and interviews for heads of schools, WEOs, the DSEO, and the DQAO, with SPSS Version 21 used for analyzing quantitative data and thematic analysis applied to qualitative data. The findings revealed that overlapping administrative responsibilities hinder the efficiency of school heads, resulting in unclear accountability, difficulties in accessing vital information, inefficiencies in school management, and delays in completing school activities. To address these challenges, the study recommends that education authorities and stakeholders clearly define the division of labor among decision-makers and policymakers, ensuring that roles and responsibilities are well-structured and effectively communicated. Additionally, adequate information should be provided on role demarcation, and collaborative partnerships between school heads and teachers should be strengthened to enhance operational efficiency. By implementing these measures, schools can significantly improve leadership effectiveness and overall institutional performance.

Keywords: Overlapping; responsibilities; heads of schools; effectiveness; promotion

INTRODUCTION

Schools are intricate organizations that require effective leadership to achieve their goals and fulfill their mandates (Manafa, 2020). As the chief administrators and instructional leaders, school heads play a crucial role in ensuring the quality of education and fostering the development of both students and teachers (Farah, 2022). However, the diverse responsibilities entrusted to school heads often result in administrative overlap. Administrative overlap in education refers to situations

where multiple administrative roles intersect within educational institutions (Manafa, 2020). This topic highlights an important aspect of school leadership that is often overlooked. Administrative overlap can create confusion, inefficiencies, and may potentially hinder school heads' ability to focus on their core responsibilities, such as instructional leadership and student development.

The history of overlapping administrative responsibilities is complex and varies globally. In the

United States, secondary schools mirror the broader evolution of the American education system, marked by increasing complexity and the interaction between local, state, and federal levels (Roumell et al., 2020). In the early 19th century, U.S. high schools were few and served a small segment of the population. As secondary education expanded, roles became more defined, but overlapping responsibilities emerged between local and state authorities. Education was largely managed by local school boards and superintendents, with minimal state or federal oversight (Bush, 2020). As school principals and district administrators began assuming more specialized roles, areas such as curriculum development and student services saw overlaps. Within schools, principals, assistant principals, and department heads also developed overlapping responsibilities, particularly in curriculum implementation, student discipline, and staff management (Rosenbloom et al., 2022).

In Europe, countries have focused on developing policies aimed at ensuring quality leadership for quality education (Supovitz, 2014). In England and Scotland, educational leaders and administrators' skills and abilities are certified, licensed, and credited (Asuga et al., 2015). However, between the 1960s and 1980s, many countries centralized their education systems around national accountability. Central governments were responsible for curriculum development, policymaking, training, financing, resource management, program execution, and overall educational management (Kuluchumila, 2014). This centralization often conflicted with the execution capabilities of local authorities, leading to overlapping responsibilities. During this period, the government dominated areas such as planning, budgeting, policy development, education reforms, and decision-making through a top-down management approach.

In Tanzania, overlapping administrative responsibilities in the secondary education system can be traced back to the colonial era, through post-independence reforms, and into ongoing efforts to improve educational access, quality, and governance (Bourguignon & Wangwe, 2023). For example, during the German East Africa period (1880s-1919), education was primarily managed by Christian missionaries, who established schools with a focus on religious instruction and basic literacy. Under the British Mandate (1919-1961), overlapping responsibilities arose between the colonial government and missionary organizations, each managing different aspects of education.

Following independence, and during the era of the Arusha Declaration, Tanzania pioneered the Education for Self-Reliance (1967-1980s) initiative, as noted by Majani (2023). This was followed by the establishment of regional education offices to support the Ministry of Education, which led to overlapping roles between regional and local education authorities and teachers. Tanzanian education reforms from the 1980s to the 2000s, which focused on decentralization to improve efficiency, often resulted in overlapping responsibilities between central, regional, and district authorities (Manea & Naso, 2021). Additionally, the rise of public-private partnerships in education provision created imbalances and contradictory management issues. Originally, education in Tanzania was primarily managed by Christian missionaries, establishing a foundation where education focused on religious instruction and basic literacy. This early foundation, which lacked a centralized educational policy, has had lingering effects on the administrative structure today. Moreover, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) has always maintained its position as the ultimate supervisory and advisory body for decisions related to education at the local government levels (URT, 2015). MoEST is responsible for creating policies, curricula, planning, supervising, and monitoring educational programs, while ensuring the implementation of high-quality education. Locally, school administrators bear the primary responsibility for ensuring the effective execution of curricula and school programs.

School administrators, particularly headteachers, oversee daily teaching and learning activities, inspire teachers, and ensure their dedication and academic achievement, among other duties. Strong leadership is therefore essential in areas such as authority, autonomy, training, incentives, and government support. To address these challenges, the government established the Agency for Development of Education Management (ADEM) to equip school administrators with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective school management (Chalisey, 2023).

Additionally, Mkumbo (2012) found that teachers' commitment to the profession is often poor, with doubts regarding the effectiveness of school heads in fostering this commitment, despite the considerable power entrusted to them. This issue is exacerbated by strict directives from higher authorities, primarily related to administrative duties. Consequently, the overlapping responsibilities of school heads, such as in curriculum

implementation, student discipline, and staff management, have raised questions about the efficacy of school leaders.

Although the educational administrative framework clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of school heads to ensure effective management and focus on educational leadership (Chalisey, 2023), the reality often presents a situation of administrative overlap. This overlap can lead to confusion, duplicated efforts, and inefficiencies in school management practices. Administrative overlap, therefore, poses a significant challenge to the effectiveness of school heads in promoting quality education and achieving the desired educational outcomes, ultimately hindering the progress and development of schools in Tanzania. This study aims to investigate the impact of administrative overlapping responsibilities on the effectiveness of school heads in Kyerwa public secondary schools, Kagera, Tanzania.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Administrative responsibilities issues have been examined differently around the globe. Education administrators, heads of schools and teachers assume interlocking activities which are fragmented and complex. A study conducted in Lebanon on ethics and conflicts in rural communities, highlighted that overlapping responsibilities become intertwined in the absence of clear communication and defined duties (Pomerantz, 2022).

The overlapping responsibilities might lead to production inefficiencies, time losses, and difficulties in accessing information and resources. However, the influence of administrative overlap on the effectiveness of heads of schools is still not well examined. Meanwhile, studies provide that administrative overlapping responsibilities play a significant role in promoting the effectiveness of heads of schools. Therefore, it is important to address these issues promptly to prevent negative consequences (Pomerantz, 2022).

McMillan and Hwang (2015) provide inputs on measures of perceived interactivity, emphasizing the concept of overlap in the context of the educational World Wide Web. While overlap has been conceptually discussed as a process, function, and perception, this study focused on operationalizing the perception-based approach to overlap. The study explored three overlapping constructs central to interactivity namely: direction of communication, user control, and time

(McMillan & Hwang, 2015). However, the study did not examine the influence of administrative overlapping responsibilities on the effectiveness of heads of schools or principals leaving a knowledge gap to be considered by this study.

Experience from Somali, as raised by Farah (2022) on how ownership, leadership, and management functioned together at Somali universities after the Civil War. Farah examined universities showing rare exceptions, nominally organized boards with clearly defined roles, yet very few of them had well-organized boards. The investigation brought to light role confusion and overlap at the Somali National University, which had an effect on the calibre of instruction and employability of graduates. These findings raised the demand for external quality control systems for universities and the implementation of a corporate governance framework cascading down to lower management and educational levels as ways to overcoming the problem. This would in turn provide insights into the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of interventions in schools, public secondary schools being among the concern.

Similarly, Manafa (2020) investigated how administrative elements affected the effectiveness of teachers in public secondary schools in Nigeria's Anambra State. Using a descriptive survey approach, the study found that insufficient motivational elements and instructional supervision as two significant factors for increased power overlapping. The research recommended collaboratively teacher involvement in textbook selection, competency specification for subjects, and government support for textbook writing to diminish overlapping and conflict of interests. Moreover, the study identified that congested classrooms, limited staff development programs, and poor motivational strategies for teachers to accelerate responsibilities overlaps. Again, power overlaps impact policy implementation hence failing to achieve practical solutions aimed at clarifying reporting lines, improving coordination between different administrative bodies, and enhancing support structures for heads of schools. In Tanzania and Geita district in particular, heads of schools are multitasked in the sense that, they sometimes receive contradicting policy directives which influence negatively their administrative roles. Ng'walabu (2017) evaluated the effect of school culture and administration on teachers' morale in Geita. The study revealed that poor administration processes and lack of conducive school culture contributed to low

teachers' morale. The low morale was said to have been influenced by low salary, untimely payment of claims, and disappointing working environments, with inadequate professional development opportunities, and seminars for school administrators and heads of schools. Such shortcomings were said to increase unclear job descriptions who is to do what, hence interference among working forces, heads of schools and teachers in question. Such accumulation of contradictory studies from global, regional and local level assures that, there is limited research on the impact of administrative overlapping responsibilities on promoting the effectiveness of heads of schools in public secondary schools, as a gap that this study wishes to fill.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study focused on the description of data or information being gathered by a researcher, through mixed approach. The study gained a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon by combining qualitative and quantitative data. This study used an explanatory sequential design, by collecting and analysing quantitative data first, followed by collecting and analysing qualitative data to explain or elaborate on the quantitative findings. Through stratified, simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques a sample size of 127 was used which included: 115 teachers, 5 heads of schools, 5 WEOs, 1 DSEO and 1 DQAO. The study used interviews to collect data from heads of schools, WEOs, DSEO and DQAO, and questionnaires administered to teachers in data collection. Qualitative data was analysed thematically, while quantitative data was analysed through descriptive analysis, correlation analysis and chi-square test with the help of SPSS version 21. The researcher adhered to different ethical issues including obtaining permissions from the required authorities, confidentiality, and informed consent, anonymity, acknowledging all the used sources and proper application of American Psychological Association (APA) style 7th edition was highly observed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study explored the impact of administrative overlapping responsibilities on promoting the effectiveness of heads of schools in Kyerwa public secondary schools. Data was collected from questionnaire and interview guide. In the questionnaire, participants were required to indicate the level of

agreement with the statement provided concerning the impact of administrative overlapping responsibilities on promoting the effectiveness of heads of school. The findings on the impact of administrative overlapping responsibilities on promoting the effectiveness of heads of schools and are presented in Figure 1. The findings are then discussed under five themes namely: uncountable performance among heads of schools, difficulties in accessing information, inefficiency among heads of schools, delayed accomplishment of the school activities, and disturbance the communication channels. The summary of findings is presented in Figure 1 below.

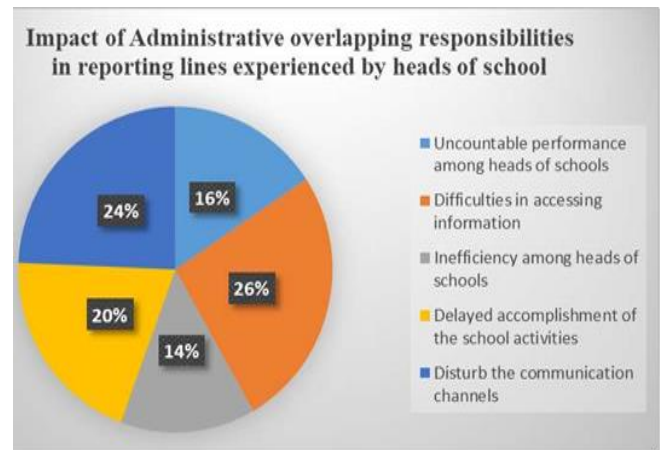


Figure 1. Teachers' Responses on the Impact of Administrative Overlapping Responsibilities in Public Secondary Schools.

Source: Field Data, (2024)

Findings in Figure 1 above shows that 30(26%) participants exposed difficulties in accessing information as among heads of schools as an impact of responsibilities overlapping. The disturbed communication channels among heads of schools is another impact of the administrative overlapping was verified by 28(24%) participants. Also, 23(20%) participants pointed out that delayed accomplishment of the school activities as an impact of the administrative overlapping. Moreover, 19(16%) of the participants exposed that uncomfortable performance to be an impact of the administrative overlapping. Furthermore, 17(14%) participants exposed that inefficiency among heads of schools impact the administrative responsibilities overlapping.

Difficulties in Accessing Information

Information is a necessary component of doing things at the right time and purpose. However, the study

findings exposed that 30(26%) respondents perceived difficulties in accessing information. This weakness leads to overlaps in different administrative areas in the education sector. Therefore, based on the overlap in the communication area, heads of the schools experienced difficulties in accessing information because, hence they failed to understand to whom they were going to get the correct and useful information. The questionnaire quantitative data presented related to the qualitative information taped during the interview with different educational administrators. When one head of school was asked about the impact of administrative overlapping responsibilities in reporting lines, he was quoted saying:

The head of school supervises their schools based on different directives and information provided by the educational administrator. The presence of an overlap in the area of communication hinders effective communication between heads of schools and educational administrators. The challenge observed as it appears different information is provided by different administrators, and the head of the school is confused about what information to consider and utilize for the effective running of the education sector. Thus, the presence of an overlap in communication interferes with the access to information as the head of school fails to recognize which person is right to provide certain information (Interview W1, July 2024).

The quoted information means that the presence of an overlap in the area of information supply hinders the effective accessibility of the information among respective educational leaders. These findings concur with those of Pomerantz (2022) who conducted a study on ethics conflicts in rural communities, focusing on overlapping roles in Lebanon. Such previous findings agree that administrative overlapping led to difficulties in accessing the right information and resources. In turn, this leads to difficulty in getting clear information from the respective administrator, responding accordingly and failing to timely meet the target objectives.

Disturbing the Communication Channels

Effective communication is dependent on the right channels. Once the communication channels are disturbed, 28(24%) respondents pointed out administrative responsibilities are likely to collide and accelerate conflicts. The findings appeal that an overlap

existing between the education administrators interferes with the communication channels once the information come from different sources. The same notion was raised during sessions as one WEO narrated that:

Heads of schools depend on the presence of effective communication for them to ensure effective school supervision. The presence of an overlap in the area of communication hinders effective school supervision with the head of the school. The presence of different communication channels interferes with the user of the information on which information to use for effective school operation. The communication channel is disrupted due to the presence of different administrators who provide information to the heads of schools as they overlap themselves in the area of communication (Interview W2, July 2024).

The quoted information means that the presence of an overlap in the area of communication interferes with the communication channels as the head of the school fails to receive the right information to the right person at the right time. These findings tally with the complementary model of political administrative interactions created by Gulick and Urwick in 1937. The model propounds that complementary political-administrative relations emphasizes the need for collaboration and cooperation between political and administrative actors. By recognizing their distinct roles and functions, co-workers promote a balanced approach of win-win situation where both sides contribute to the decision-making and implementation processes. On the contrary, this shows that the existence of an overlap in the education sector impacts the effectiveness of heads of schools in their responsibilities.

Delayed Accomplishment of the School Activities

Another impact identified is the delay in the accomplishment of the school activities. 23(20%) respondents verified this. The respondents were in a position that the overlap existing among the education administrators interferes with the subordinates' accomplishment of different activities allocated in the school. This is because, when administrators overlap their responsibilities there should be unclear and contradicting directives from subordinates, hence failure is evidenced in poor school management and inefficiency in teaching and learning processes. Similarly, the DSEO raised this concern during interview:

The effective performance of the head of the school depends on the presence of different educational administrators who supervise the head of the school. I witnessed in my ward different heads of school are performing poorly in their school due to the lack of effective supervision. The delay of accomplishment of activities results from the aspect that heads of schools lack an administrator who could be responsible in monitoring and supervising their activities. Thus, the delayed accomplishment of the activities in schools□ results from the overlap of different administrators in guiding heads of schools to accomplish their activities (Interview W4, July 2024).

The quotation above implicates that, severally heads of schools perform poorly because they have multiple directives to them and to teachers responsible to them. Such heads of schools do not supervise the accomplishment of activities as there in accordance, as if there is no one is responsible in making follow up for their activities. The findings correspond with Pomerantz (2022) who focused on determining sources and impacts of ethical conflicts in rural communities and overlapping roles of educational administrators in Lebanon. The findings revealed impacts caused by overlapping responsibilities to be loss of time and underperformance due to prolonged conflict which the school administrators fail to overcome by being part of them.

Uncountable Performance Among Heads of Schools

For effective performance to occur heads of schools need to be accountable enough. However, in contrast the overlapping of administrative responsibilities among heads of schools has resulted in unaccountable performance among heads of schools. This was pointed out by 19(16%) of respondents in this study. It was observed that, due to an overlap of responsibilities experience among heads of schools, their administrative performance tends to become low as they lack a clear consensus to whom they are going to be accountable. The quantitative findings correspond with the qualitative findings obtained during the interview, as it was quoted from the DQAO that:

The existence of overlap among the educational administrator's responsibilities makes the uncountable performance among the heads of schools. The uncountable performance happens as the head of the school

will be unaware of whom they are going to be accountable. Thus, it will make the head of the school perform their responsibilities without knowing to whom they are going to be responsible for the tasks they perform. The activity performance of the head of school might be guided by the administrator who is responsible for that activity, if the administrator overlaps each other might be difficult for these heads of school to be accountable for their performance (Interview W5, July 2024).

The quotation implies that, if there is no clear identification of the person who the head of school is responsible, it will make these heads of schools unaccountable. This is because they will perform their activities with less care, confidence and commitment as they know no one is responsible for them. These findings agree with the findings of Chalisey (2023) who examined the separation and overlapping of governance and management in Nepali Lucerne, Switzerland. Chalisey realized that the separation of governance and management contributes to less accountability among administrators. The study further exposed that overlapping leads to unaccountable performance, something which is a dangerous sign with poor management reactions when it comes to head of schools. Unaccountability distracts the routine running of schools and affects the sustainability and efficiency of schools.

Ineffective Curriculum Supervising and Implementation

The presence of different overlapping areas in the education administrator results in ineffective curriculum supervision and implementation. Through quantitative findings it was found that 17(14%) respondents stated that inefficiency among heads of schools is an impact of administrative overlapping and is mostly caused by their inefficiency in curriculum supervision and implementation. It was further exposed that the existence of an overlap leads to the failure of different heads of school to perform their duties effectively especially in supervising and implementing the curriculum. Such inefficiency is reflected in the students□ general academic performance. The findings corresponded with the findings provided by the interviewee, for example one WEO was quoted verifying that:

Curriculum refers to the set of documents that guide the whole process of teaching and learning. The effective implementation of the

curriculum depends on the presence of well-specified documents that guide the whole process of curriculum implementation. The document which guides the implementation of the curriculum is provided by the education administrator. The presence of an overlap among the administrative responsibilities leads to the availability of documents which differ from one document to another. Thus, impacts effective curriculum implementation and supervision (Interview H4, July 2024).

The quotation implicates that the presence of different instructions that guide the curriculum implementation resulted from the presence of overlap among the educational administrators. Heads of schools supervise and implement differently the curriculum issues because they also receive different directives from the top officials and organs. The educational administrators at national, regional and district levels raise confusion and managerial distractions based on the overlap of their responsibilities from one another. Due to such confusions, heads of schools find themselves undecided with problematic decisions. The findings agree with the findings provided by Pomerantz (2022) who exposed that the existence of many channels of information supply led to contradicting processes of dealing with administrative and managerial issues in local contexts, schools and heads of schools being the case. Overlapped management and administration lead to inefficiencies among the educational administrators and their subordinates at schools such as heads of schools. Moreover, the school heads also deliver the same contradicting administrative measures and directives in different activities including curriculum supervision activities.

Generally, the findings show that, the existence of overlapping administrative responsibilities in public secondary schools has the following impact: uncountable performance among heads of schools, difficulties in accessing information, inefficiency among heads of schools, delayed accomplishment of the school activities, and disturbing the communication channels. The findings correspond with the complementary model of political-administrative interactions created by Gulick and Urwick in 1937. The model, propositions stress that isolating administrators from elected officials will lead to sub-performance because administrators can have a significant impact on policy making. Although the model stress much on political administrators its application and relevance in

the education sector is vital. This is because even the elected political officials can have a significant impact on administration through politics of education. Therefore, it is very important to consider that there is an open and significant correlation and impact on education management and administration influenced by the policymakers and the administrators. The finding implies that Kyerwa district is not an isolated island, therefore, it receives the same administrative overlap of management responsibilities in its public secondary schools as evidenced by the study findings. Therefore, whenever the identified area of overlapping among the administrative responsibilities is not well observed and rectified it would lead to more managerial and administrative harm and ineffectiveness among heads of schools in executing their daily administrative and management routines.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that administrative overlap significantly impedes the effectiveness of school heads in public secondary schools. This overlap creates a state of confusion and inefficiency, as school heads struggle with unclear accountability and conflicting responsibilities. In schools where such overlapping roles persist, decision-making becomes hindered, leading to indecisive planning and poor implementation of both school and national educational plans. Furthermore, communication channels are often distorted, causing prolonged conflicts within the school community. Consequently, the overall management of the school suffers, resulting in a decline in performance across various school activities.

The study underscores the need for clear directives and information from educational decision-makers to eliminate administrative confusion. School heads and education administrators must be provided with well-defined roles and responsibilities, ensuring effective collaboration and partnership in school management. In addition, the study highlights the importance of continuous training and professional development for school leaders to enhance their management skills, particularly in navigating administrative overlaps. By equipping school heads with the necessary tools and up-to-date knowledge, schools will be better positioned to overcome administrative challenges, fostering an environment that supports both academic excellence and effective school management.

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