Teaching profession and educational accountability in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Teaching profession has recently been scrutinised by different groups of people and sometimes, head teachers have been demoted because of poor academic performance of pupils in the National Examinations. In a decentralised framework through the Primary School Development Programme (PEDP), the school committees have to oversee the functions of the schools to ensure that teachers are accountable for the pupils' learning. This study investigated how teachers as professionals are accountable for pupils' learning and achievement in the National Examinations in Tanzania. This was a qualitative study that was conducted in Dar es Salaam and Mbeya Regions. The study involved 90 classroom teachers, 10 head teachers, 6 school committee members and 2 district educational officers, making a total of 108 participants. Data was collected through open-ended questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion and documentary analysis. Results from both Dar es Salaam and Mbeya indicated that demoting teachers because of poor performance in the National Examinations is unfair and it undermines the teachers' professional credibility and status although demotion can be warranted to irresponsible and those who do not adhere to the professional standards. Teachers also opposed to be supervised by the school committee as its members do not belong to the teaching profession. Teachers thought school committee members need to deal with all activities that facilitate teaching and learning environment outside the classroom. Some teachers, however, thought that involving the school committee is important because it consists of people who represent the parents who need to know the value for money invested in the education of their children. The argument in this paper is that while teachers' accountability for pupils' learning is important, however, teachers' evaluation of their work performance needs to base on their fulfilment of the ascribed professional code of conduct. Pupils' academic performance is a combination of many factors and it cannot be determined by teaching alone.

1. Introduction

Teaching field as other professions all over the world has a set of bestowed specific knowledge and skills that are usually acquired through training for a particular period of time. A profession by its nature is an occupation as it has a crucial social function that requires an individual to possess a high degree of skills that are drawn from a systematic body of knowledge. A professional teacher is required to perform according to rules and regulations and fulfill the obligations vested to the teaching field as part of accountability to the society (Sockett, 1976; Neave, 1987). A teacher as a professional has to be respected in terms of professional status and standing of the profession (Hargreaves, 2006). All over the world, teaching profession has been regarded as a sacred and distinctive field involving people who are really committed and who sacrifice themselves for other people's life as it has been the case for medicine and nursing fields. Teachers as professionals are regarded as potential segment group in the society and they are recommended to sanctify themselves and be committed to do what is right and need to be honorable because, they are the ones responsible for guiding and preparing the young generation towards future life (Mondal and Roy, 2013). All people in the society being it political leaders, administrators and all other experts have passed through the teachers' hands and care. If one wants to destroy the nation, can just start destroying the teacher as her/his impact is invisible and it is the teacher who knows what to do in the classroom. Indeed, those who are involved in teachers' management system have to be careful on what they do when dealing with the teacher.
So, what is a profession? Next section devotes some spaces to provide the definition of what a profession is.

1.1. Definition of a profession

Different people have different standing point when it comes to the definition of what is a profession as a term. Some scholars define a profession based on period of time for training and some define it according to the obligation involved in the field. Other people also have defined it by paying their attention to the type of knowledge and skills that one needs to have to be regarded as a professional within the field, while others focus on the ascribed body of ethics or code of conduct that govern the field. Some authors, however, combine all the aspects in their definitions. Kwashabawa and Ishaq (2018, p. 6), for example, defines a profession as “any type of work that requires long-term and extensive period of training and study that make its practitioners acquire and master specialised knowledge and skills”. A clear definition of a profession although it is from an old work is given by Palmer (1953, p. 139), who defines a profession as “an occupation involving relatively long and specialised preparation on the level of [...] education and governed by a special code of ethics”. As it can be seen from these definitions, four important things are to be involved for someone to be regarded as a professional; one, it is training, second, for a specific period of time, third, involving specialised knowledge and skills and fourth, it should be governed by special code of ethics. In this paper, however, teaching profession is conceived as a field of work that needs relatively a long time of the specialised training governed by special knowledge and skills ascribed within special code of conduct. A professional teacher has to perform in accordance to the given professional code of ethics. After defining what a profession is, it is also important to define the term accountability as it can be seen in the next sub-section.

1.2. The meaning of accountability

The term accountability as it has been the case for the profession is dubious and it has also been conceived differently by different individuals and organisations. Kristiansen et al. (2018, p. 1), view accountability as “the information employees deem reasonable to share and document about their work practices, progress, and outcomes”. According to UNESCO (2017, p. 1), accountability is “a process, aimed at helping actors meet responsibilities and [...] goals”. To Ranson (2003, p. 199): “To be accountable, conventionally, is to be ‘held to account’, defining a relationship of formal control between parties, one of whom is mandatorily held to account to the other for the exercise of roles and stewardship of public resources”. Ranson, has the view that any request for someone to give an account for performance has the notion that one has to offer a story and explain what has happened and why it has taken place with what effects. Accountability, in this paper is regarded as the process where an individual gives an account on what has been performed with what achievement to the authority or the employers/stakeholders with the intentions of improving performance in the future.

Literature related to teacher accountability and professionalism is mostly old. For example, Sackett (1976) and Neave (1987) talk about educational and teachers’ professional accountability during the 1970s and 1980s respectively, while Ranson (2003) concentrated on public accountability and Hargreaves (2006) focussed on how to improve the teaching profession. Some more studies that are related to educational accountability have been carried out in the United States of America (USA) (see for example, Chavez, 2013; Wills and Sandholtz, 2009; Ingersoll and Collins, 2017). UNESCO (2017) and Demas and Arcia (2015) have extensively discussed about what is known as political accountability at global level. Almost all of these works have been carried out within the Western countries that have quite different context, culture and styles when it comes to accountability for the teachers which may differ from Tanzanian context. Komba’s (2017) study in Tanzania dealt with the educational accountability and its relationship with students’ learning outcomes and it was a literature based research. While teachers' accountability for pupils' learning is important, in Tanzania it has not been clear how these accountability undertakings operate in the school management system within this decentralised framework where teachers are to be accountable to the school committees for the pupils' performance. Indeed, the rationales as to why teachers need to be accountable for their teaching and for pupils' learning have not been well documented. This study investigated on teaching profession and educational accountability in Tanzania. The key research question was: How teachers as professionals can be accountable for pupils’ learning in Tanzania? The study did not focus on financial accountability or leadership accountability although these are important aspects if the schools have to be efficient and effective in their day-to-day performance.

2. Teachers’ professionalism

Elsewhere in the world, the code of teaching professional ethics requires teachers to be accountable to: the pupil they teach, the school where they work, the community and the teaching profession (Neave, 1987). Professionalism of teachers also requires two important aspects: one, is mastering the content (knowledge base of the teacher on the subject matter) and second, pedagogical knowledge (knowledge on how to teach the content to the pupils). Reimers (2003), views the professionalism of teachers as a lifelong process that starts during the initial preparation at colleges or in on-the-job training, and that continues until the retirement time. Mondal and Roy (2013), suggest that it is important that when a person joins the teaching profession should be trained on the code of ethics and accountability as ascribed in the field. According to Hargreaves (2006), any kind of an attempt to improve the teaching profession and its status and standing, is what is usually known as the professionalisation process. Thus, becoming an excellent teacher, according to Reimers (2003), relies on an enduring process, with guidance and supervision by experts in the teaching field. McGinn and Welsh (1999), also state that education as an activity has to be left within the hands of professionals (persons with special training, skills and knowledge) and those who are not experts may be consulted with the aim of legitimating a continuity of the governance system by professionals.

Governments of the world are advised to place the teacher at the centre if at all they are to create and improve their human capital (Kraft et al., 2018). While a teacher is accorded this respect of being potential person to groom the new generation, however, it has been very unfortunate that teaching profession has been receiving low status and placed at lower ranks of the employment cadres in at least all countries of the world. Teaching profession has not been taken seriously, everyone can just pretend to be a teacher and sometimes take actions against teachers that de-professionalize and degrade the teaching field and some teachers have had even thought that their profession has not received due respect as it deserves (Namamba and Rao, 2017; Kafyulilo, 2014; Mgaiba, 2018). Teaching profession also has received a low status and a last resort as it deserves (Namamba and Rao, 2017; Kafyulilo, 2014; Mgaiba, 2018). Teaching profession also has received a low status and a last resort after an individual has missed other professions would mostly tend to opt for teaching (Namamba and Rao, 2017). Again, candidates with poor quality and those who have received low scores in their Form Four or Six in the National Examinations in Tanzania have been the ones who have been selected to join teacher education and become teachers (Namamba and Rao, 2017; Mgaiba, 2018). Some findings from Tanzania have further reported on teachers’ attrition and turnover due to poor working conditions and lack of professional growth among teachers (Namamba and Rao, 2017; Kafyulilo, 2014). Some people have even argued that if teaching profession is to receive its status, then it requires arrangements that will raise its status and standing (Hargreaves, 2006; Maphosa et al., 2015).
and they would be happy if they quit from their schools or districts. Teachers and district counselors that do not perform as per requirements threatens the future life of children. Really, as observed by Hargreaves (1995), the case, because people are now aware of what education can do for them. Feedbacks on how their schools are performing is necessary. The performance of the District Educational Of- ficial council members and local people within the surrounding com- munity seem to pressurise teachers to be more professional and be accountable for what they do. In Tanzania for example, the pressurise teachers to be more professional and be accountable for what they do with regard to pupils’ performance. In Tanzania for example, the pressurise teachers to be more professional and be accountable for what they do with regard to pupils’ performance. In Tanzania for example, the pressurise teachers to be more professional and be accountable for what they do with regard to pupils’ performance. In Tanzania for example, the pressurise teachers to be more professional and be accountable for what they do with regard to pupils’ performance. In Tanzania for example, the pressurise teachers to be more professional and be accountable for what they do with regard to pupils’ performance.

3. Why professional accountability for teaching?

3.1. Preparation of the future generation

It is an agreeable truth that a teacher plays a critical role towards shaping the future of all societies around the world (Maphosa et al., 2012). Education has been believed to play a crucial role towards development of the nation and its citizens. As observed by Brown and Lauder (2006), education plays a central role not only for a competitive economy but also for social cohesion and justice. All societies in the world system depend on the teachers to prepare their human capital (Maphosa et al., 2012). Some scholars have even argued that investing in human capital is more important than investing in other kinds of capital, as all capital operations require knowledgeable and skilled human be-ings. Becker (2006, p. 292) for example states: “While all forms of capital are important, including machinery, factories, and financial capital, human capital is the most significant”. According to Brown and Lauder (2006), in the past nations were fighting for material wealth and land-ownerships, the struggle has now shifted and nations are advised to put down their nuclear weapons and compete with ideas, skills and knowledge that contribute to intellectual capital as a potential asset for eco-nomic development.

3.2. Assessment of education system

Teachers’ assessment is increasingly becoming one of the educational agenda. Various countries in the world for example, particularly the member of the Organisation for Economic and Cooperation Development (OECD) use Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) to check if their pupils can compete in terms of Reading, Science and Mathematics (Olsen and Nilsen, 2017). The implied meaning here, though not specific is that not only it relates to the assessment of individual pupils but also to the quality of national education and training systems of the countries including teachers’ work performance (Brown and Lauder, 2006). As people are now aware of what takes place in schools and that they would like to see that their children take advantage in the global market economy place, they would definitely like to see that the teacher produces individual who can compete in the labour market economy, ‘the audit society’, the very term given by Power (2000) as cited by Smith and Benavot (2019).

3.3. Making teachers accountable for pupils’ learning

Recently, there are multiple groups of people who tend to be more interested on what takes place in education system by demanding for the feedbacks on how their schools are performing. This has been necessarily the case, because people are now aware of what education can do for their children’s future life. Really, as observed by Hargreaves (1995), teaching profession is at a crossroad as there has been an increased de-mand for the involvement of multiple groups and stakeholders that pressure teachers to be more professional and be accountable for what they do with regard to pupils’ performance. In Tanzania for example, the ward council members and local people within the surrounding com-munity tend to air out their dissatisfaction and concerns regarding the performance of the District Educational Officers (DEO), head teachers/teachers and district counselors that do not perform as per requirements and they would be happy if they quit from their schools or districts (Mwananchi, 20 April 2019). Sometimes, teachers are de-motivated to what happens to them and they see that teaching profession has had interference and that it seems to be a field for everyone. The Human Rights Report of 2010 reported a horrible incident that happened in Bukoba in Tanzania in 2009, where the police officers caned the teachers in front of their pupils because of the pupils’ poor performance in the National Examinations. The order to cane teachers came from the district commissioner (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 2010; Media report, 2009). It was highly debated in the world news where Human Rights groups, Teachers’ Union, teachers themselves and the vast majority of Tanzanian citizens strongly stood against it (BBC News, 13 February 2009).

Other examples, include what happened in Morogoro Region in Tanzania, where four head teachers were demoted by the regional commissioner (RC) because of poor performance of pupils in the National Examination (Habari Tanzania, 7 September 2006). In 2013 the media reported on another incident where parents of the pupils at Saranga primary school in Dar es Salaam, voiced out demanding a removal of the head teacher because the pupils performed poorly in the National Ex-aminations. It was also reported in the media in Tanzania that a head teacher in Taveta Kenya committed suicide after being hissed by parents because of the poor performance of pupils’ examination results (Mwananchi, 8 May 2012). These happenings and other incidents of that na-ture signify how education profession is facing public scrutiny and many challenges that threaten the survival of the teaching profession suggest-ing that teachers and those who are involved in the profession have to learn on new ways of doing things and re-think about the teaching pro-fession itself. Next section gives some discussions on teacher’s perform-ance as related to accountability mechanisms.

4. The relationship between teachers’ performance and accountability

As indicated earlier and from those given examples, teachers are seemingly facing many challenges that change the ways of their thinking and that they need to act as professionals because of what the societies expect from them and the belief on what education can do for children’s life. Teachers’ survival will depend on the extent of being committed towards meeting accountability demands by fulfilling their professional obligation. If the teacher does not fulfil the obligations vested to her/him then, it may be difficult to achieve the required quality2 and standards that are demanded by the society.

The question may be on how teachers can best be managed so that they can provide desired quality education that can fulfill the societal needs as perceived by the education stakeholders (Gaynor, 1998; Naidoo and Kong, 2003). While the teacher is always at the centre of criticisms, however, educational achievement of the pupils is not from the teachers’ work alone and accountability is a very controversial matter and it has been heavily debated (see for example, Sackett, 1976; Blair, 2000; Leithwood, 2002; Hanson, 2003; Normore, 2004; Burch, 2006; Gerl-berg et al., 2009; Ballard and Bates, 2008; UNESCO, 2017; Demas and Arcia, 2015). Some writers ask the questions why a teacher should be accountable for pupils’ learning and achievements, while the teacher’s role in practice is to teach and not to force pupils to pass the examina-tions. Others have asked why the teacher has to give an account for something that cannot be controlled.

There is also a question on why a teacher needs to be accountable to fulfill the curriculum standards and examinations that come from the Ministry of Education? Some of the scholars argue that a teacher needs to be accountable based on a professional code of conduct than that of being held accountable for pupils’ learning achievements (see for example,
teachers' evaluation committees, selection of books and the better pupils' learning outcomes. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] (2017) has observed various challenges that teachers face in the classroom including: dealing with pupils with learning difficulties or brilliant ones, pupils' attendance, lack of teaching and learning materials to make pupils learn and they deal with truant children. For teachers to be accountable for pupil's achievement, apart from having a clear policy on reasonable level of inputs (well selected and trained teachers), the Government has to ensure the availability of learning materials, suitable school environment, availability of libraries, clear and defined curriculum, trained school managers and an effective supervision programme to ensure that the education system is running well, and assessed fairly and effectively. Thus, many factors are required to interplay to bring about high state achievement of the pupils in schools.

As stated by UNESCO (2017), accountability is a shared responsibility between the government, private sector, parents, schools, teachers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and students. To Komba (2017), educational accountability requires a reciprocal relationship between the higher and lower level of educational officials. For example, the ministry is responsible for education and educational officials at the regional, district, and ward levels and that it expects teachers to work well and effectively in their schools. A school's staff members depend on financial, technical, and logistical support from ward, district, regional, and ministerial officials. Demas and Arcia (2015) give accountability framework that indicates long routes and short routes each one having a role to play. The process involves the government in terms of politicians and policy makers after receiving voices from the customers or the citizens who are regarded as the poor and/or rich people who are to be given power to question the service providers or the institutions/organisations so that they provide the services as required as what has been happening in Tanzania. As observed by Komba (2017) in the long route of accountability, community members are expected to influence policy makers by demanding the government to improve the overall of quality provision of educational facilities in schools that in turn may result into better pupils' learning outcomes. Again, as observed by UNESCO (2017), school management committee and teachers' evaluation committees, selection of books and the pedagogical and content competence play a significant role towards pupils' learning. In the private education context for the Tanzania for example, the concept of accountability can mean that the consumers or buyers of education who are more likely to question and demand for a high-quality education and sanction by sending their children to other schools if buyers are unsatisfied with the service provided (Komba, 2017).

5. Accountability of teachers in Tanzania

To improve accountability among teachers in Tanzania, the school committees make follow-ups on pupils' attendance and monitor the school operations in daily basis. The Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) policy stipulates that school committees are empowered to ensure that they manage both financial and human resources for the school development plans (URT, 2001, 2006). Key responsibilities of the school committees among others include: Sensitisation and involvement of pupils, parents, teachers, and the community in the school development plans; overseeing and supervising the day-to-day functions of the schools; endorsing the budgets for the whole school development plans; maximizing accountability and transparency within the school by controlling the school bank account operations and communicating to the community members about the school functions and making sure that there is a compulsory enrolment and attendance for all school-age children. This arrangement plan is hoped to enhance parental involvement in school management process whereby the communities are empowered to make teachers more accountable for their teaching (URT, 1995) and that institutional Boards/Committees have to be strengthened so that institutional heads become directly answerable to their Boards/Committees. This implies that head teachers and teachers have to give an account and be answerable to the school committee for what they do with what effects including the teaching itself. It was the intention of this study to investigate to what extent school committee members in the name of the community and parents make teachers accountable for teaching.

6. Conceptual framework for teacher's professional accountability

Teacher professional accountability as seen above requires concerted efforts between all parties involved in the education of the children (Figure 1). These include: pupils' desire to learn and commitments;
Governmental financial support and incentives; the Ministry of Education, policies, rules and regulations; community members, parents, private sector (NGOs) support to schools; Training programmes and supervision for teachers and availability of teachers’ professional board. A double directional arrow indicates a relationship of teacher professional accountability for pupils’ learning and other factors that contribute towards pupils’ improved academic performance and achievement.

6.1. Pupils’ desire to learn and commitment

For pupils to improve their learning outcome and performance, they need to be committed and work hard by being attentive to the teacher and do all tests and assignments given to them including attending all the classes. They need as well to respect their teachers and using time effectively and efficiently for learning purposes.

6.2. Governmental financial support and incentives

If accountability framework of teachers on pupils’ achievement has to work, then the Government has a role to play to ensure that teachers work effectively by providing or setting a relative enough budget to the schools for effective teaching, i.e. there should be availability of teaching and learning facilities such as libraries, laboratories, laboratory apparatus and chemicals, books and other supplementary teaching and learning materials to strengthen learning of the pupils. Teachers who make the school and pupils perform well have to be provided with some incentives such as promotions and certificates as recognition for what they do.

6.3. Ministry of education, policies, rules and regulations

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has to give policies on a desired and quality curriculum that has to be monitored by school inspectors or Quality Assurance Officers (QAOs). The Regional Educational Officers (REOs), DEOs, Ward Educational Officers (WEOs) and all of people who are involved in the examination system setting have to work together and be committed to their fulfilment of their professional key responsibilities and obligations. Other important things including controlling ghost teachers and those who receive salaries without work, embezzlement, illegal fees that parents are charged without any agreement, controlling diversion of utilisation of funds, and ensuring that schools receive funds timely for their effective operations including the teaching itself (UNESCO, 2017). If these players are not working together, it is hard to hold someone or a teacher accountable and rules and regulations have to be institutionalised for those who violate professional standards.

6.4. Community members, parents, private sector (NGOs) support to schools

For pupils to do well in schools, the community members, parents, private sectors in the name of educational stakeholders have to work together with the schools. They need to provide assistance when it is needed such as supporting the schools with school development plans, construction of more classrooms in case of congestions, making sure that the school has enough desks, social services such as electricity, water, printing and photo copier machines and other related social services. Community members, in the name of the school committees need to check all the activities that facilitate the teaching and learning environment to be conducive enough if teachers are to be held accountable for pupils’ learning and the parents have to help their children learning at home.

6.5. Training programmes and supervision for teachers

Training programmes for teachers in pedagogies and content are important if teachers are to be accountable for pupils’ learning. They need in-service training and seminars on how to teach difficult topics in a specific subject. Teachers have to be updated in the curriculum changes and new methods of teaching that facilitate clear understanding and learning of the pupils. They also need supervision by the school inspectors (quality control) of what is taught in the classroom setting so that to discern the areas of weaknesses for improvement purpose.

6.6. Teachers’ professional board

If teachers are to be accountable for their profession and for pupils’ learning, they need a professional board that will be responsible for regulating teacher professional accountability to their professional standards as ascribed in the professional code of conduct. This important organ needs to be responsible for rewards for teachers who maintain professional status and standing and punishment for those who misbehave, unlike the current situation where anyone can just punish the teacher.

7. Methodological issues

7.1. Research approach, design and area of the study

This study was mainly carried out qualitatively. Qualitative data are based on phenomenological thinking that people’s experience is very important if one wants to understand the phenomena or problems. Qualitative data gave the opportunity to understand how teachers viewed the practice of head teachers being demoted because of the poor performance of pupils in the National Examinations. Qualitative approach was more revealing and more convincing for more explanations from the participants and it gave a chance for probing more questions to head teachers, teachers and school committee members regarding the issues in question and particularly, on how do teachers feel to be supervised by the school committee members and how the school committee members make sure that teachers are accountable for pupils’ learning under the decentralised framework as given by the Government guidelines. Qualitative approach, however, does not allow generalisation of the research findings and thus the results in this study can be generalised within the visited schools and research areas. It employed the case study design where few schools were involved in the study. Dar es Salaam was selected due the belief that it forms the economic base of the country. Dar es Salaam was selected due the belief that it forms the economic base of the country. Dar es Salaam was selected because it ranked the second from Mtwara (Masasi) to Dodoma Capital City in 2016. The Tanzanian Government officially announced to have been transferred to Dodoma region in October 12th, 2019. Many policy documents that stipulate the implementation of the PEDP were obtained from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEC) which has currently changed the name to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). Mbeya was involved in this study because it ranked the second from Mtwara (Masasi) district to be successful in implementing the PEDP programme. Mbeya region also was selected as it was raking in the higher positions in the National Examinations. It was a hope that the school committees could have contributed to the success.
7.2. Sampling techniques

The data were collected from 10 schools whereby Dar es Salaam had 5 schools, among these 2 schools were located in an urban area and 3 schools from a peri-urban setting. Five schools were purposefully selected from Mbeya, where 3 schools were from urban area and 2 schools from peri-urban areas. The study involved 90 classroom teachers, 10 head teachers, 6 school committee members and 2 district educational officers with a total number of 108 of participants. This was done purposefully to check how school committee in rural and peri-urban setting differs in terms of their involvement in the school development plans. It was earlier planned to sample randomly 10 teachers from each school but only the few teachers were found in the day of the visit and thus all teachers available without classroom session were involved in the study.

The study involved 28 males and 80 females. Among these, classroom teachers were 16 males and 74 females. The study also involved 5 males and 5 female head teachers. School committee members were 6 and all of them were males. One (1) DEO was a male and 1 was a female. The number of female participants exceeds the males because in Tanzanian cities, in most cases female teachers follow their spouses who work in different sectors in cities unlike male teachers who are usually found in a rural setting. Head teachers were involved in both interviews and questionnaires, while classroom teachers were involved in both questionnaires and focus group discussion. School committee members and educational officers were involved in the interviews. Again, it was thought that school committee members could be available for the interview. Unfortunately, only school committee chairperson could be easily accessed and in some schools they were not readily available. The study did not involve the ward educational officers and the school inspectors although during data collection teachers thought that they are the very ones to supervise their work.

7.3. Data collection methods and procedures

Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) and documentary review. Questionnaires were given to the classroom teachers (those teachers who did not have a class during the visit), and interviews involved the school committee members who mostly depend on their availability and head teachers who were selected purposefully as these were the ones that the media reported about their dismissal or even being demoted. Teachers for the FGD were those who were previously given the questionnaires so as to cross-check their responses. The purpose was to triangulate the data from different individuals for more informed findings and conclusions. One focus group discussion was carried out in Dar es Salaam at school ‘H’ and one in Mbeya at school ‘E’. FGD involved 7 teachers for each FGD for both regions.

Some of the questions for the FGD were: According to the scheme for decentralised management of primary education, the teachers and the school should be answerable (accountable) to the school committee on how they carry out their work and for what they achieve. How do you feel and view that the school committees supervising your work performance through the overseeing of the school functions as stipulated in the PEDP guidelines? What is your opinion of this practice? What are your views regarding head teacher demotion because of the poor performance of pupils in the National Examinations? Is it carried out in practice? Is this needed? Does it work well? Are there any problems with it? Focus group discussion was more revealing and one question triggered the other one. Documentary review was used to collect the data from the policies guidelines, books, and news papers, reports from both international and local sources. Some information was obtained through secondary source especially when the original document was unaccessible. Data were recorded through the use of camera, and field work notes for future reference purposes.

7.4. Data analysis and ethical issues

Data were coded first according to the themes. Where possible, bar graphs were used for presentation and analysis of the results and were supported by recorded and transcribed voices. All the necessary procedures in research were adhered to, including the research permission and quest for consent for participants to be involved in the study.

8. Results from the study

8.1. Demotion and dismissal of head teachers because of poor performance of pupils

The study intended to investigate about teachers' views on whether it is appropriate to demote or dismiss teachers because of poor performance of the pupils as part of educational accountability (Figure 2). Most teachers in the visited schools from both Dar es Salaam and Mbeya commented that demotion or dismissal of the head teachers based on the pupils' performance is inappropriate, unfair and it undermines the teachers' credibility. Teachers argued that it is a teacher's responsibility to teach the pupils while learning and passing the examinations is the pupils' responsibility and it is difficult for the teacher to figure out about how many pupils will pass the examination. Very few teachers thought it...
is ok to demote the head teacher especially when they are drunkards or irresponsible and careless on issues related to National Examination cheating.

One of the teachers from school ‘I’ stated:

I do not agree with this idea of demoting the head teacher because of pupils' poor performance. Examination performance of pupils in the National Examination, being it good or bad depends on various factors including truancy and ability of parents to support their children on school requirements. There are also many orphaned pupils because of a killer disease Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), shortage/lack of school facilities, and the inadequate number of teachers in our school.

Another head teacher from school ‘J’ also commented:

I see it to be unfair to demote the head teachers because of pupils' poor performance in the National Examinations. There are no allowances for the head teacher as acknowledgement for the work performance and his/her contributions for the supervision of teaching and learning. If the Government does not play its role there are no ways we can get good examination results.

Some teachers thought that pupils' academic achievement should not exclusively be a responsibility of teachers. For pupils to pass the examinations, the government and parents need to cooperate in improving the conditions and the teaching and learning environment. The head teacher at school ‘D’ stated:

We need alternative ways if we want to achieve high academic achievement of pupils in primary schools. In my view the demotion of teachers because of poor performance of pupils in the National Examinations does not help as it works at the detriment of teachers.

One of the classroom teachers at school ‘H’ commented during the focus group discussion:

I wonder why school committee members focus on class-VII results, but they do not focus on how well the teacher is doing the work and in what kind of environment. When pupils fail, we are nagged throughout our way back home.

Another classroom teacher said during the focus group discussion:

The school committee members just wait for class VII to finish their studies. It also depends on different years, sometimes many pupils are good and so they pass the examination. If pupils fail, that is a big problem. This year we did not do well. When you pass by, the school committee member would ask where are you going now, it is still early and you took with you a handbag? At the same time she/he does not know what my problems are. I can say that the school committee should not be concerned with pupils alone; it should consider the teacher as well.

The head teacher at school ‘E’ said:

It is ok to demote the head teacher based on poor performance, after seeing that the schools have been provided enough teachers, and they have ensured that all basic facilities and the teaching and learning environment supports learning, such as the availability of books, desks and those pupils are comfortable in the classrooms. If they do that and yet pupils continue to fail, I support that it is their right to demote the head teacher.

Generally, teachers opposed the views on being held accountable for pupils’ achievement and as a mechanism towards controlling their work. To them it undermines the teaching profession as there is no a single factor that can determine good performance of pupils in the National Examinations.

8.2. School committee supervision of teachers’ work performance

Another aim of this study was to explore the teachers' views on how they feel to be supervised their work performance by the school committee members. Most teachers rejected the view with an argument that school committee members are not teachers by profession to have the right to supervise them (Figure 3). They argued that the school committee members did not have enough education and were not teachers by profession. They also stated that the school committees are comprised of people from other occupations than teaching and therefore could not monitor and identify the weaknesses of the teachers in the classroom.

Only few teachers thought that it could be good if the school committee take charge in monitoring schools to improve the teaching and learning environment. Some teachers, however, commented that the school committee act as a link between parents and teachers. Thus, their supervision of the teaching and learning environment may help to improve the pupils' academic performance. Teachers commented further that if parents work together and cooperate with teachers and be able to identify the problems faced by pupils, it is possible to improve the
performance of their children. During the focus group discussion at school ‘E’, one of the classroom teachers said: “It is important that the school committee being involved in the work of teachers' supervision as they are responsible for the identification of the problems that schools face. The cooperation with teachers will help in solving the identified problems”. Another classroom teacher said:

It is the right of the school committee to make a follow-up on school and pupils’ development as they are the representatives of parents. School committee members simplify the work of the teachers as they participate in identifying problems in the schools and how to solve them. For example, they can be involved in activities such as classroom construction or school toilets/latrines. These activities could otherwise shorten the time for teaching.

Some classroom teachers commented that the school committee members focused their attention on standard VI leavers and that were not they are responsible for the identifi-

The school committee does not undertake follow-ups on academic issues. I do not see any advantage of involving the school committee in school management as it does not carry out follow-ups on subject matters. Yet, pupils are congested in the classrooms as we do not have sufficient buildings to accommodate them. This could be one of the responsibilities of the school committee.

Another classroom teacher from school ‘D’ (Q 86) indicated:

The school committee members do not undertake any follow-ups on how pupils learn. They only look and concentrate on class-VII examination results and not from class one so that they could improve pupils’ academic performance.

School committee members also seemed to have different view point with regard to the supervision of teachers’ work performance. Some thought that they were required to check the pupils’ work in the classrooms for them to understand that pupils have been taught as per timetable. One of the school committee members at school ‘I’ responded when asked during the interview about what the school committee do to ensure that pupils as key customers of the school received quality education and making sure that teachers do their job responsibly, he stated:

At any time, the school committee member at his/her own time can go through classes asking pupils to see if they have been properly taught and checking pupils’ exercise books of three daily taught subjects which are Mathematics, English and Kiswahili. Even today, I went through a few classes and have come to understand that teachers do their work as I found many pupils who wrote in their exercise books what they have been taught.

However, some school committee members thought that they did not need to interfere the work of the teachers in the classrooms as a school committee member is not a teacher by profession. This group viewed that what was important for them was to ensure that teachers have a better environment that facilitates teaching and learning. One of the school committee chairpersons at school ‘C’ commented:

Teaching is a profession and I am not a teacher by profession. Yes, our responsibilities as school committee members might be to make follow-up on what teachers are doing especially in the classroom, but since I am not in this profession, I might be wrong to make follow-up on teachers’ work performance. We, as parents, would like to know what the problems are facing the pupils as identified by the teachers and parents. We discuss in our parental meetings on how to solve them.

Another school committee chairperson from school ‘E’ indicated:

We do not interfere with the teachers to tell them to do this or that. Teachers might be committed, but parents may not make follow-up on their children’s education. Following up on teachers, I think, is outside the school committee’s power. But, I as a chairperson may secretly discuss with the head teacher if there is a problem with any teacher. If I make follow-up on a teacher’s performance while she/he is a professional and I am not the employer, the teacher might not feel free to perform her/his teaching activities.

These results portray a mixed standing point. While there were teachers who thought that school committee may improve their work performance because they are the owners of the schools and that they have to know what is delivered in the classroom, however, there were majority of teachers who stood against the idea of being supervised by the school committee. To this group, supervision of teachers fits better within the people who belong to the teaching profession. Teachers viewed that the school committee needs to mobilise and sensitise the parents and community members on matters related to the school-development plans outside the classroom and give freedom to the teacher to perform the teaching duties without being interfered as if that so, teachers feel to be interfered as it degrades and tend to be harmful to their teaching profession.

9. Discussion of the results

Results indicated that teachers were unhappy for the demotion of the head teachers because of the pupils’ poor performance and achievement in the National Examinations. This confirms what have been frequently reported in the media regarding demotion of head teachers in some places where teachers themselves, the Human Rights groups and the Teachers’ Union in Tanzania have been standing against it. According to Ranson (2005), if this is not carefully carried out, it can work at the detriment of teachers’ rights. Gaynor (1998), gives a warning that teachers’ punishment should be done within a legal framework to protect the teachers’ rights and to retain them within the teaching profession. The results also confirm to what Namamba and Rao (2017), Kafyulilo (2014) and Mgaiwa (2018) found in Tanzania that teaching profession did not receive its due respect as it has been the case to other professions. A phenomenological study by Chavez’s (2013) in Texas in the USA on teacher accountability and cultural competence also found that teacher accountability for pupils’ achievement resulted into great stress and anxiety among public school teachers. Another qualitative study by Wills and Sandholtz (2009) in California in the USA found that test-based accountability affected teachers as they did not teach in ways they would think could best serve the pupils’ needs and interests. In addition, Ingersoll and Collins (2017) did a qualitative study in the USA and they found that teacher accountability perspective overlooked some of the most important forms of organisational accountability and control on teachers’ management that contribute towards teacher’s quality, such as the way they feel to be part of the school.

Moreover, these results are in line with Sockett (1976), Ranson (2003) and Hargreaves (2006) disagreement with an externally imposed teachers’ accountability based on centrally set curriculum standards, as to them, it works at the detriment of the teachers’ rights. To these scholars, teachers need to act as professionals and do the right as ascribed in their code of professional ethics. This, however, does not mean that disciplin ary actions against those who misbehave and destroy the professional standing should not be undertaken as it was reported in this study where drunkard head teachers and those who did not fulfill their responsibilities were demoted by higher authority, although demoting a teacher because of poor performance in National Examinations is unfair as many factors are involved when it comes to pupils’ achievement. These results about demotion and dismissal of teachers who tend to diminish teaching profession status support what Gaynor (1998) found in Nigeria that in some circumstances the dismissal and disciplinary actions were warranted, especially when the teacher violated the professional standards that govern the practice. Gaynor found again in Nicaragua that the municipal of education council was given the authority to hire and sometimes fire
the teachers especially when there were misconducts. But, it was supposed to be carried out in accordance to a legal framework that guides the teachers’ rights. As reported by Gaynor in Nepal, the Ministry of Education threatened the schools not to receive the school grants if pupils performed poorly for more than three years consecutively. As teachers did not want to lose their employment positions, they had to devote themselves and work harder to improve their work performance. However, it is important to note that dismissal or demotion incidents may affect teachers’ morale towards their work performance.

In this study, teachers complained upon the school committee members’ concentration on the National Examinations without improving the environment in which teaching and learning take place and the teacher who is the main implementer of the curriculum. These results are in line with Kraft et al. (2018) who suggest that if governments have to create competent human capital, the teacher has to be placed at the centre, i.e. being cared and well supported for him/her to perform. When a teacher feels secured and respected may be committed towards vested responsibilities and adhere to the professional norms and code of conduct unlike thinking of quitting the profession as Namamba and Rao (2017) and Kafyulilo (2014) found in their qualitative studies in Tanzania that there were a high attrition and turnover cases for teachers because of unfavourable working condition. However, Hollowaya and Brass (2017), in their comparative study in the USA found that accountability mechanisms were important modes that helped teachers to know themselves about their quality in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.

The results further seem to bring about great confusion among both teachers and the school committee members when it comes to teachers’ supervision. Yet, it appears that the role of the school committee is undefined and unclear as regard to what the school committee needs to do when overseeing the functions of the schools. While there were teachers who thought that the school committee members were required to know what takes place in the classroom to press teacher accountability, the majority of teachers tended to disagree their work to involve people when overseeing the functions of the schools. While there were teachers who thought that the school committee members were required to know themselves about their quality in terms of their strengths and weaknesses.

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As it has been argued by Demas and Arcia (2015) and UNESCO (2017), teacher accountability is a concerted effort between the teachers and the management. The government needs to fulfill its responsibility of ensuring that teaching and learning environment is conducive enough to permit learning to take place which in turn may influence the teachers to perform their duties by abiding to the professional code of conduct. This includes the payment of reasonable level of salary and promotion on time. As argued by Chapman et al. (2002), if decentralised assessment of teachers through the school committees has to have meaningful impact on pupils and for improved school instructional quality, community members have to understand what constitutes effective teaching, which according to Gaynor (1998), however, has been unfortunately missing among local people. Yet, according to Ranson (2003), the opponents still see the necessity of professionals including teachers to receive public scrutiny as the provision of the quality public services is not in the private domain for the specialists to be detached from.

All in all, however, as argued by Maphosa et al. (2012) a teacher plays a crucial role in shaping the future citizens and thus their good examples may be emulated by their pupils as they are the ones who need to take up the responsibilities in the future. Thus, it is important that a teacher works in accordance to the professional norms and ethics to protect the image of teachers and the profession. While pupils’ learning and achievement remain important, however, those who engage with teachers’ management have to protect the teachers’ rights as pupils’ achievement is a result of many factors and teaching is only part of the factors. A teacher is unlikely to exactly know how many pupils will pass the given examination as it is difficult and not easy to calculate how human mind works. Creation of human capital of any nation in the world takes longer and it relies on teachers’ devotion and commitment to their profession practice. This profession group needs encouragement instead of being demoralised or get frustrated which have a negative consequence upon the profession itself and it works at the detriment of pupils’ learning as its effects take longer to be discerned. Thus, it is important for those who deal with teachers’ management to make reflection on local conditions under which teachers work and perform if they are to be effectively evaluated and being accountable for pupils’ achievement.

If well managed, however, accountability as a leadership trait is likely to yield multiple benefits and forge a trust, collegiality and credibility of the school managers to improve the relationships between the teachers and their leaders and, it is likely to give better support for teaching career sustainability and growth. Nevertheless, counter-balancing of the accountability needs to take a reciprocal relationship so that teachers feel that they can be accountable for the pupils’ learning, including uplifting teachers’ status, by giving them promotion and other fringe benefits when they deserve including recognition of what they do.

10. Conclusion and implications

This study investigated how teachers as professionals can be accountable for pupils’ learning and achievement in the National Examinations. Results from both Dar es Salaam and Mbeya indicated that
demotion of teachers because of poor performance in the National Ex-
aminations is inappropriate, unfair and it degrades the teachers' profes-
sional credibility and the teaching status and standing, although
demotion can be warranted to irresponsible and those teachers who do
not adhere to professional standards. The results also indicated that
accountability for teaching of pupils under school committee members as
representatives of parents and community members was a controversial
matter and it was unclear for both teachers and school committee
members in both Dar es Salaam and Mbeya regions in Tanzania. The role
of the school committee in ensuring that teachers are accountable for
pupils' learning appeared to be also undefined. For school committees to
understand their roles and being effective when it comes to the
improvement of academic performance and the general learning of the
pupils, it implies that they will need training. Teachers also opposed their
work to be supervised by people from outside the teaching profession.
Teachers thought that the school committee members have to deal with
tasks that facilitate the teaching and learning environment and their
work in the classroom should not be touched as school committee members
do not belong to the teaching profession. Although the results
from this study indicated small percentage of teachers who responded to
be appropriate for teachers to be demoted due to poor performance, it
remain important that for teachers to survive in this accountability era
where many parents know their rights on what education should be and
what a teacher has to do, they need to be more reflective, flexible and
dynamic to meet educational accountability demands and fulfill the
teaching obligations as vested to the field and comply to an auditing so-
ciety (Power, 2000 as cited by Smith and Benavot (2019) that tend to
scrutinize their work performance. Teachers as professionals also have
to understand that they need to be accountable to the bureaucracy, meaning
adherence to both the government rules and regulations, and to the
community or parents for the pupils' learning as they are the essence for
the creation of competent human capital (Mondal and Roy, 2013), a
segment that is needed than ever before all over the world. This also
implies that teachers are to be committed towards their professional
obligations by working hard and fulfilling their key responsibility of
educating the pupils, who are the future citizens who deserve to receive
quality education and reach their full potential (Castells, 1996; Garrison,
2007).

There is also a need of a strong partnership between the bureaucratic
and community or the customer evaluation where there should be open
reports on what the schools are doing so that the key stakeholders can
discuss and support the school development plans. Schools should be
regarded as a place for learning of the pupils and not using false ranking
based on divisions 1, 2... etc as an indication for quality of education
provided. This is so because passing the examination depends on many
factors and teaching is only one of the factors such as poorly set or
memorisation kind of examinations. The Government needs to ensure that
resources are in place to facilitate the work of the teacher and not rely on
the teacher alone when it comes to pupils' achievement. This means that
every part has to play its role of fulfilling their key responsibility of
educating the pupils, who are the future citizens who deserve to receive
quality education and reach their full potential (Castells, 1996; Garrison,
2007).

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Rose Ephraim Matete: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

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