Teaching Professionalism in an Accountability Age in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

In recent years teaching profession faces public scrutiny. Multiple groups and different people in the society react differently from what is taking place in schools. Sometimes head teachers are demoted because of poor performance of pupils in national examinations. School committee members are also encouraged to foster teacher accountability for pupils' learning. In this paper, I argue that although teachers need to work more harder and to be more creative in fulfilling their obligations and ensuring pupils learning, there is a need for an alternative way of assessing teachers' performance. Pupils are of different abilities and teaching is only part of the learning process. A teacher cannot predict how human mind works and be exactly sure how many pupils will pass the exam. The data for this paper were collected between 2011 to 2013 through questionnaires, focus group discussion, interviews and documentary analysis. The sample of the participants was 108, where 90 were primary school classroom teachers, 10 head teachers, 6 were the school committee members and 2 educational officials. The findings here are part of PhD dissertation on "Decentralisation in Tanzanian Education and Teacher Accountability: The Case of Primary School Management under School Committees in Kinondoni Municipality and Mbeya City".

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching as other professions requires specific knowledge and skills that are acquired after a certain training period. According to Sockett (1985: 3): "A profession is said to be an occupation with a crucial social function, requiring a high degree of skill and drawing on a systematic body of knowledge". A professional performs according to the required rules and regulations and fulfills obligations as an employee (Sockett, 1976: 35). Hargreaves (2006: 673) further states: "To be professional has to do with how teachers feel they are seen through other people's eyes—in terms of their status, standing, regard and levels of professional reward". To Hargreaves, an attempt to improve the status and standing of the teaching profession is what is termed as professionalization. In recent years, however, multiple groups of people have been putting more pressure on what happens in education. Communities have been demanding a greater say in how their schools are running and how teachers are performing to an extent that the local/ward council members can air out their dissatisfaction with the District Education Officer (DEO), and about head teachers/teachers they would not like to be in their schools or districts. The Human Rights Report of 2010 indicates that in 2009 in Bukoba in Tanzania, 19 primary school teachers were caned by the police officers in front of their pupils because of the poor performance of the pupils in the national examination. The order to cane teachers came from the district commissioner (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 2010: 5; Media report, 2009: 1). Teachers' union, human rights groups, and the vast majority of Tanzanians including teachers themselves strongly condemned the incident (BBC News, 13 February 2009).

In 2005 four headteachers in Morogoro were demoted by the regional commissioner (RC) because of the poor performance of their pupils in the national examination and no pupils were selected for secondary education from those schools (Habari Tanzania, 7 September 2006). In 2013 parents at Saranga primary school in Dar es Salaam, demanded a removal of the head teacher because of poor performance of pupils in national examination. In Taveta Kenya, a headteacher committed suicide after being dismissed and hissed at by parents because of the poor examination results of the pupils (Mwananchi, 8 May 2012). These incidences and others are signs that indicate how the delivery of education is faced with public scrutiny with many challenges and what the societies expect from the teachers. One of the key questions is how teachers can best be managed to provide quality[1] education in their communities (Gaynor, 1998: 1; Naidoo and Kong, 2003: 27). As Hargreaves points out, the teaching profession is currently at a crossroads, with the increased involvement of multiple clienteles that press for accountability of teachers with regard to pupil achievement. Observing these changes in the public interests in education, Hargreaves (2006: 684) states:

> Teacher professionalism and professional development may be entering, or perhaps may even

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[1] According to Vedder (1994: 6), the quality of education is "the extent to which, and the manner in which, aims and functions of education are achieved or realised. Aims are the anticipated effects of learning and functions refer to what schools are expected to accomplish apart from learning". Tjeldvoll (2009: 8) states that "Quality is something relative and based on the individual's subjective perception of standards". The notion of quality is, therefore, relative. It depends on who defines it and what kinds of standards one has in mind through which to measure quality.

already be embedded in, a new era—the era of postmodernity. The fate of teacher professionalism in this era is by no means fixed, but is being and will be argued about, struggled over and pulled in different directions in different places at different times. One possible outcome of these processes is a new, postmodern professionalism that is broader, more flexible and more democratically inclusive of groups outside teaching and their concerns than its predecessors.

1.1. The meaning of accountability

Accountability is a fashionable terminology that has been in use in different governance systems of the world. In its literal meaning, accountability denotes that an individual gives an account of what has been done and achieved to the authority above him/her. Wilcox (2000: 16) states: "[…] at its most fundamental, accountability is the obligation of one party to explain or justify its actions to others". To Neave (1987: 70), accountability is "a process which involves the duty both of individuals and the organisation of which they are part to render periodically accounts for tasks performed, to a body having both the power and authority to modify that performance subsequently, perhaps by use of sanction or reward". Ranson (2003: 199) states that: "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". Accountability is defined in a narrow sense when the focus is on the external monitoring of pupil performance (Neave, 1987: 71).

According to Ranson (2003: 199): "Any request 'to account' for performance is likely to lead to the giving of an account, that is, to offer a story that interprets and explains what has happened and why it has taken place". The major purpose of accountability is to ensure that the educational quality and its provision is maintained and improved with the purpose of providing information to the key stakeholders that the work has been done (Sockett, 1976: 35). Accountability, as observed by Lessinger (1971b) cited by Neave (1987: 71), uses forms of 'public auditing', where the school is answerable to the public, or in this case, the school committee, as has been the case for the board of directors or the public sector industry/company that has been held answerable to its key shareholders. Neave (1987: 77), in discussing participation theory that calls teachers to account, states:

> …….. though teaching is the task of professional educators, the body that calls teachers to account should draw widely from the community they serve. The argument for greater parental participation than is customary follows many lines of reasoning and justification: fiscal responsibility (i.e., parents as local taxpayers), [and] open government in the schools (the right of citizens to be informed about what is being administered in their name).

1.2. Dimensions of accountability

As indicated by Muriisa (2008: 88), there are generally two types of accountability: *political accountability,* in which the elected representatives give account to their electorate, and *administrative accountability*. To Muriisa, the latter concerns the extent to which the managing group and administrative leaders meet the targets that have been set to achieve the organisational goals and other aspects of administrative tasks. Muriisa's categorisation seems to be more political in orientation.

In the education management field, Anderson (2005: 1) gives three dimensions of accountability: i) Compliance with regulations, such as that of the British Office of Standards in Education Department (OFSTED). This, to Anderson, involves compliance to rules and to the bureaucracy; ii) Adherence to professional norms, which implies adherence to the professional code of conduct and accountability to peers; iii) Results-driven accountability, which demonstrates that educators, and in this case teachers, are accountable for pupil learning, which may be interpreted as being accountable to the general public (Anderson, 2005: 2).

Glassman and Sullivan (2006: 4) also note three dimensions of accountability. First, teachers are accountable to the authority above them in the educational hierarchy. According to Glassman and Sullivan, headteachers must demonstrate to the DEOs that they are performing and fulfilling their obligations. The same applies to the classroom teachers, who need to perform and demonstrate their responsibility to their superiors or headteachers as their immediate supervisors, which, as Anderson (2005: 1) puts forward, can be regarded as bureaucratic accountability. Second, teachers and education managers are held accountable for the learning outcomes of pupils whose main purpose for coming to the institution or school is to learn. There must be an assurance among the local board, or in this case, the school committees on behalf of parents, that the required standards are being met by the schools. In this case, it is the responsibility and obligation of teachers to ensure that pupils receive programmes of studies that meet their learning needs. This is in accordance with the third dimension proposed by Anderson. Third, the education system as a whole is accountable to parents and the community at large, as they pay for the education of their children, either through taxes to the government or, if fees are charged directly to the school. This group of key educational stakeholders has the right to access and receive meaningful information with evidence that learning has occurred in a school setting based on accountability management.

Sockett (1976: 34–35) outlines two models of accountability. First, the utilitarian model, which focuses on achievement based on accountability for specified results and second, accountability based on adherence to the principles that govern practice. According to Sockett, the utilitarian model based on the achievement of specified results has many deficiencies. He therefore proposes an alternative type of accountability that stresses a professional model of teacher accountability based on adherence to the principles prescribed

in a professional code of practice. Further, Bovens (2010: 948; 2007: 106–7) writes that an accountability mechanism in its *narrow sense* stresses that the actor should be held accountable to the agent (a person who has power over her/him), while accountability based on *virtues* is broadly related to responsibility.

Thus, forms of accountability, as Neave (1987: 71) states, are found in all education systems. Some are in the form of contracts, and entail direct enforcement based on national decrees and ordinances, or they are regulated by the constitution of a particular country. Others are indirect, passed or even regulated by people who are in charge of making decisions concerning educational issues. One example of direct accountability, as given by Neave, relates to what happened in England and Wales in the 1870s when the teacher's salary was paid on the basis of the improved performance of pupils in reading, writing and arithmetic when measured against the established national standards, a system known as 'payments by results'. Ranson (2003: 199) provides an example of direct accountability by referring to an annual appraisal or departmental review, such as parents' meetings, where data on the performance by the department is presented for evaluation by the stakeholders. To Ranson, however, this is a very formal type of teacher accountability, which teachers have opposed in many public institutions on the grounds that it is very complex and punitive in nature.

Neave (1987: 71) indicates that, in the past, teacher accountability involved making the teachers answerable to the parents who paid the owners of the school for the education of their children. According to Neave, the idea was strongly practiced in countries where the church was once the most influential provider and stakeholder in education. Neave further states that teacher accountability to the state administrators or to the regional/local level authorities took place after the introduction of public or state education systems when regional or national inspectors were put in place to assess the performance of individual teachers.

These types or dimensions of accountability are, however, complementary and cannot be easily distinguished from one another. While accountability may involve many aspects, including resource utilisation and political accountability, the focus in this paper is on the extent to which school committees in a decentralised plan of primary school management can make teachers accountable to parents for their teaching. The aim is to examine how teachers fulfil their responsibility as regards their key function of teaching, demonstrating their obligation to the parents and the community that they serve. Accountability in this sense "is seen as a *virtue*, as a positive feature of organisations or officials […] used to positively qualify a state of affairs or the performance of an actor. It comes close to 'responsiveness' and 'a sense of responsibility', a willingness to act in a transparent, fair, and equitable way" (Bovens, 2010: 949). As stated by Lauglo (1995: 9), "education is deliberate activities designed to bring about learning". To what extent are teachers committed to this end in Tanzania?

2. TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY IN TANZANIA

For improving accountability, school committees are to follow-up on pupil attendance and to monitor the daily school operations. The Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) policy states: "The government will empower School Committees by providing them with financial and human resources for better management and development of the schools" (URT, 2006a: 31). The responsibilities of the school committees, as outlined in the PEDP policy, are:

- Sensitising and involving all pupils, parents, teachers, the community and community based organisations in the development of the school;
- Overseeing the day-to-day affairs of the school;
- Approving the whole school development plans and budgets and submitting them to the relevant authorities for scrutiny, consolidation and further approval;
- Controlling the bank account operations by effectively and efficiently managing funds received for implementation and maximising accountability and transparency;
- Ensuring safe custody of the properties acquired using PEDP funds;
- Preparation and submission of accurate and timely physical and financial progress reports to Local Government Authorities (LGAs) through village/mtaa[2] authorities and Ward[3] Development Committees (WDCs);
- Making sure that there is systematic information to the community by publishing the deliberations/decisions/school budget on public bill-boards;
- Ensuring that there is compulsory enrolment and attendance of all school-age children in the village/mtaa.

The URT (2001: 58) further indicates how teachers and schools are to be held accountable:

> School inspection will serve as an instrument for rendering accountability. It is clear that the school is accountable to its pupils/students. Students are the clients of the school and as such it is essential that they benefit from the education the school provides. The school is accountable to the parents of the pupils/students. In this respect the parents must be assured that the schools are doing a good job. The school is accountable to its school committee/board,

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[2] Mtaa in Kiswahili means a street or a part of the city or town that indicates the location of the administrative place.

[3] A ward is a division of a city or town or any other area for administrative purposes, usually having elected political representatives (Ambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary). In Tanzania, an educational ward comprises two to four schools and is under the leadership of the Ward Education Coordinator (WEC).

which has invested time and resources. It needs to be assured that quality education is being provided. In broad terms, the schools are accountable to the community at large. The country needs to be assured that the overall investment in education is worthwhile, that children are being well educated and that the government and owners/managers of schools are getting value for money which they have invested in schools.

It is hoped in Tanzania that the new arrangement would enhance parental involvement in the management of education by empowering the communities and making teachers more accountable in the process of education (URT, 1995: 28). The government states further in the ETP (URT, 1995: 28): "It is necessary to rectify this system by strengthening institutional Boards/Committees so that institutional heads become directly answerable to their Boards/Committees". This could be interpreted that the headteachers and teachers are to be answerable to the school committee for what they do in school, including their teaching. As for the school committee/board's supervision of the schools' functions, the URT (2011b: 89) states:

> Schools work better when the community and parents are fully involved in its functioning. School Committee/Board on behalf of the community works together with the Head of the School and other teachers to prepare a Whole School Development Plan (WSDP) and oversee the day-to-day affairs of the school. The School Committee/Board has a supervisory role in ensuring that the school implements all agreed activities of the school.

3. WHY ADVOCATING ACCOUNTABILITY OF TEACHERS?

The reasons for advocating accountability in education include the need for competitive knowledge for economic development and efforts to ensure quality education for all. As noted by Brown and Lauder (2006: 317), social cohesion and justice including competitive economy are grounded on what is taking place in education system. Some scholars argue that investing in human capital is more important than investing in other kinds of capital, as all capital operations require knowledgeable and skilled human beings. According to Becker (2006: 292): "While all forms of capital are important, including machinery, factories, and financial capital, human capital is the most significant".

3.1. Competitive ideas and economic growth

In the past, nations used to fight for land and material wealth, the struggle has now shifted to "knowledge wars" (Brown and Lauder, 2006: 318). According to Brown and Lauder, nations compete with ideas, skills and knowledge that contribute to intellectual capital as a potential asset for economic development. This knowledge revolution changes the nature of work, with more of a focus on occupations that require higher level skills that can be achieved through tertiary education, but it also requires basic education for all children (Grubb and Lazerson, 2006: 295). According to Grubb and Lazerson, the belief vested towards formal schooling has

influenced many educational policies in different countries. Many countries are campaigning for improving educational standards. Some countries come up with different strategies to ensure that children learn. The UK for example, has introduced educational reforms such as *Skills for All in Schooling*. In other countries such as Germany and Spain the emphasis has been on introduction of new forms of learning to provide higher levels of knowledge and skills.

3.2. Assessment of pupils' academic performance

Governments in different countries strive to ensure quality education for their citizens and to mobilise resources for the education sector. To focus more on results-based performance indicators, there has been a shift towards mechanisms that will hold teachers more accountable for their pupils' performance (Ballard and Bates, 2008: 560). In this accountability era, "The curriculum would no longer be the 'secret garden' of an autonomous professional community detached from public scrutiny" (Ranson 2003: 198). Governments in some countries have reacted to the seemingly low achievement of pupils, as it has been shown in the US report on *A Nation at Risk*, which pinpoints a declining trend in the quality of the American educational system (Gardner *et al.*, 1983).

Moreover, to ensure that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Every Child Matters (ECM) policies are properly implemented in the USA and UK, respectively, schools and teachers are to be evaluated based on pupil performance on state-mandated tests that are provided each year (Ballard and Bates, 2008: 560; Taysum, 2010: 29). Therefore, as argued, among others, in the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR), there is a need to develop the capacity for measuring, monitoring and assessing education quality, including its financing (UNESCO, 2009b: 7). The GMR report further states:

> An effective learning environment relies on basic information, professional leadership, motivated teachers, sufficient time and resources, the use of performance-enhancing monitoring and evaluation and adequate funding (UNESCO, 2009b: 22).

Other international agencies have the same line of thinking. For example, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) emphasises the need for improved competence. The OECD has established various measures to assess pupils' academic performance under the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which evaluates school pupils of 15 years of age with regard to their proficiency in reading, science and mathematics in OECD member countries (Dohn, 2007: 1; Gorard, 2004: 26). A similar programme is the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS), developed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) to compare pupils' educational achievement and proficiency across participating member countries (Gonzales, Guzman and Jocelyn, 2004; Gonzales, Williams, Jocelyn, Roey, Kastberg, Brenwald and Westat, 2009). As noted by Brown and Lauder (2006), the question here not only relates to the assessment of individual pupils, but also to the quality

of national education and training systems in general. All these educational reforms aim at ensuring that education meets the requirements of the market-driven world economy. As stated further by Brown and Lauder (2006: 318), "These new rules of wealth creation rest on 'out-smarting' economic rivals. Schools, colleges, universities, think tanks, design centres, and research laboratories are now in the front line in the search for competitive advantage".

While these are plans or proposals for education in the economically developed world, in developing countries, efforts are also underway to ensure that children learn better. Tanzania, like many other developing countries, is committed to the vision of a well-educated society by producing the skills needed for rapid social and economic development in the 21st century (URT, 1999: 3). Given the poor economy of the country and the size of the school population, this remains a huge challenge in Tanzanian context.

3.3. Achieving international goals and targets in education

Governments in various countries have been committed to the achievement of the EFA goals that were agreed on at the world conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, followed by the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, and to the millennium development goals (MDGs), which include, among others, the achievement of universal primary education (UPE). For governments to achieve these goals, good governance in education has been viewed as crucial for ensuring more flexibility and accountability based on a participatory kind of management system (UNESCO, 2009a: 1; 2009b: 25). To achieve all these goals teacher accountability for pupils learning is viewed to be a way forward.

4. OPPOSING ARGUMENTS ON TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY

While there is a great demands from the communities and parents on the teacher accountability for students' learning, however, some observers view accountability as a controversial issue and it has been heatedly debated by many scholars (see for example, Sockett, 1976; Blair, 2000; Leithwood, 2002; Ranson, 2003; Normore, 2004; Burch, 2006; Gershberg, Meade & Anderson, 2009; Ballard & Bates, 2008). Some questions are raised regarding teachers' accountability for pupils' achievements, while in practice the teacher's role is to teach and she/he cannot force the pupil to learn and pass the examinations. Some would ask why a teacher should be made accountable for what is out of his control. Of equal importance, there is also a query of why a teacher should be accountable for the fulfilment of the curriculum standards, test regimes and examinations that are centrally set? Some have even argued that accountability on the part of the teacher based on a professional code of practice is worth doing rather than accountability demands that are pressed on pupils' achievements (see for example, Sockett, 1976:35; Hargreaves, 2006:673). Ranson (2003:199) has even stated "the regimes of regulation designed to enhance public accountability paradoxically strengthen corporate power at the expense of the public sphere".

As noted further by Normore, (2004:60), the need for accountability has been widely accepted but, what it means and how it ought to function in practice is not well known. Indicating the interdependence of various practitioners in accountability setting and how it may be contradicted in reality, Normore (2004:58) observes:

> No employee of a school system is wholly accountable for students' performance. A teacher depends on administrators at the school and at the district levels to create conditions that facilitate learning; the principal depends on administrative superiors to provide resources and to enact instructionally sound policies. If the school district has determined what students are expected to learn and provided the resources that teachers need to teach, and if the principal has maintained conditions in the school that are conducive to learning, then the teacher and the school administrator can reasonably be held accountable for exercising good judgment in the selection and presentation of instructional materials, management of student behaviour, and allocation of time and resources.

5. SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUPERVISION OF TEACHERS' WORK PERFORMANCE

The PEDP policy articulates the responsibility of the school committees, which includes overseeing the day-to-day affairs of the school (URT, 2006a: 31). The URT (2011a: 89) states that the school committee/board has been vested with a supervisory role in order to ensure that the school implements all activities as required. The term 'oversee' is defined in the Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary as "to watch or organise a job or an activity to make certain that it is being done correctly". To 'supervise' is "to watch a person or activity to make certain that everything is done correctly, safely". The directive for school committee formation indicates further that the school committee is responsible for monitoring teaching in the classrooms.

During the fieldwork in both Dar es Salaam and Mbeya in Tanzania, the findings indicated a mixed picture. Teachers in the visited schools seemed not to be aware of what really the school committee is supposed to do in making teachers accountable for their teaching. There are teachers who thought that involving the school committee in school and teacher supervision improves their work performance. To these teachers, the school committee members are owners of the schools and, therefore, are supposed to know the work of the teacher. They thought it is good if the school committee members know how a teacher is performing, and they would like to know what the school committee thinks about teacher's work performance. Some teachers noted that the school committee act as a link between teachers and parents. School committee members as representatives of parents can identify problems that face teachers and pupils in school and participate in solving them. Such activities involve the construction of classrooms and school toilets/latrines for creating a conducive environment for learning. When parents

cooperate with teachers in solving such problems, it simplifies the work of the teacher, which can help in improving academic performance of the pupils. Teachers thought it is also a responsibility of the school committee members to educate their fellow parents about the importance of helping their children at home.

However, more than one third of teachers in the visited schools disagreed that the school committee members should supervise their work as supervision fits within the tasks of educational professionals better. They argued that the school committee members do not have enough education and are not teachers by profession. School committees comprised of people from other occupations than teaching and therefore could not monitor and identify the weaknesses of the teachers. The main view of this group is that the school committees exceed their limit of authority when interfere classroom teaching. According to these teachers, the school committee should sensitise their fellow parents on matters of school-development plans outside the classroom and should leave the teacher free to perform without interference, partly because it is considered to be degrading for the teacher and harmful to her/his professional career. Teachers considered the involvement of school committee members in monitoring their work as a degrading practice. To them, it could create unnecessary hostility between teachers and parents. Teachers commented further that involving the school committee in the supervision of teachers' work indicates a lack of trust in the teachers. They recommended that the supervision of teacher performance be left to the school inspectorate, head teachers and the WECs as they belong to the teaching profession. It does not mean, however, that school committee members have no education, but they have other professions and so they cannot understand the work of the teacher in detail.

School committee members also have different views concerning the supervision of teachers' work performance. Some thought that they needed to check pupils' work in the classrooms to ensure that the pupils are being taught the different subjects and that they are receiving proper attention from the teachers. They also commented further that 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, Mathematics, English and Kiswahili. The school committee members further commented that teachers do their work responsibly; it is only that they are discouraged by negative responses from the community to contribute towards school-development plans. Further comments from the school committee members indicated that in case of any dubious behaviour of a teacher, it could be absence from work or a teacher who does not do the job properly, usually this is reported by her/his fellow teachers. School committee members tell the headteacher to give a verbal warning twice. If that is unsuccessful, the headteacher has to write a warning letter to her/him twice. If it does not work, the headteacher should let the school committee discuss the case before informing the employer. According to the school committee members, however, such a problem has not taken place in their own schools as teachers do their work properly. School committee members make arrangements

with teachers to have remedial classes for the pupils with low capabilities in the classrooms from standards I–VII as some do not even know how to write their names. To school committee members that is an extra time for teachers and they need to be paid.

There were some school committee members, however, who thought that they were not supposed to interfere in the work of the teachers in the classrooms, as they were themselves not teachers by profession. According to this group of school committee members, what is important for the school committee is to ensure that teachers have a better teaching and learning environment by dealing with problems that affect teacher' efficiency in the process of educating the pupils.

6. SCHOOL COMMITTEE FOLLOW-UPS ON PUPIL ATTENDANCE AND PERFORMANCE

The findings from teachers in almost all of the visited schools indicated that the school committee make follow-ups on pupil attendance and performance. Findings from the educational officials indicated that the school committee helps in planning development activities of the school especially academic issues, discipline and the budget of the school funds. Some teachers stated that the school committee works well in their schools because it has helped to improve pupil attendance rates. The general impression from teachers is that the school committee has helped in controlling truancy among the pupils and it has also helped in maintaining school discipline and ethics which are very important aspects in the whole process of teaching and learning. In this study only a small number of teachers indicated that the school committees were responsible for planning school-development activities. This could be one of the school committee's priority as it has been stated in the URT (2011b: 89):

> The School Committee/Board on behalf of the community works together with the Head of School and other teachers to prepare a Whole School Development Plan (WSDP) and oversee the day-to-day affairs of the school.

The school committee members in their side thought it was important for the school committee to deal with school-development plans. A school committee is to mobilise and conscientise the people in the community to contribute for the school-development plans, to encourage teachers to put more efforts on academic matters, because the school committee is the main actor for monitoring the schools. They look after school buildings and other problems that tend to happen for both teachers and pupils. School committee members also communicate with the government when there is a problem. Comments from the educational officials indicated that the school committees had improved pupil attendance rates as it has been a link between parents and school leadership and it has helped in maintaining pupil attendance and the school discipline.

It appears, however, that the majority of the teachers think that the school committees have not been doing their intended job of checking pupil progress from classes I–VII, but rather have just concentrated on class-VII leaving-examination results. Teachers indicated that school committees concentrated on results in the final examinations (e.g. class VII), but do not ensure that teaching is taking place or express views on its quality. The latter type of involvement, however, would be too intrusive to the work of the teachers. There were teachers who did not see any benefit in school committees because they did not seem to know their responsibilities. Teachers thought the school committee is supposed to keep an eye on academic and subject matters at school and contribute to the core function of the school, which would involve checking how well teachers are fulfilling their main duty of teaching the pupils. One of the teachers commented during the focus group discussion in Dar es Salaam:

> 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 home.

Another teacher said:

> 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.

Teachers commented that the school committee members needed training so that they can understand their vested responsibilities and they should not concentrate exclusively on school financial matters, but need to ensure that the teaching and learning environment is improved. Some teachers complained that the school committee performance in their schools was not good as there were so many pupils who sit on the floor due to shortages of desks and classrooms, which contributed to pupils' failure in the examination. A teacher cannot go through the classroom to check how pupils are doing the given assignments, and check pupils' handwriting in such poor teaching and learning environment. Teachers had the view that the school committee should not be there to endorse the subsidy from the government. But, it should find alternative ways that can help in academic improvement in schools including looking for donors who can help in solving school problems that hinder effective performance.

The findings from the school committee members also indicate that they concentrate on ensuring that classes having examinations, such as classes IV and VII, have some remedial programmes. From the school committee members' point of view, school committee members have been ensuring that pupils have access to remedial programmes to improve their performance in national examinations. They also ensure that there are tests offered across schools to create competition among pupils for them to do better in their Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Some school committee members commented that teachers sometimes are lazier in the classroom than when teaching tuition classes. Since, when pupils pass the examinations, it is a credit to both teachers and the school itself, parents are requested to contribute, but those with such a feeling, that they should contribute some money for the extra time for their children so that they improve in their academic performance. Teachers are also asked to give extra teaching every Saturday and so each parent is asked to pay some amount of money that can be used for test preparation, duplication of test papers, marking of the test scripts. To school committee members this is extra time from normal duties of the teachers and so they have to be paid for that, though according to the school committee members there seems to be some parents who do not understand the necessity of doing so.

School committee members also indicated that they make sure that every weekend, there are tests and exercises that are given to the classes that have examinations, like that of class IV and class VII. Pupils do the tests with other schools so that they can compare themselves with other schools within the ward. However, according to the school committee members, money are needed for typing and printing including duplicating the papers. There seems also to be many orphaned children who are unable to pay for it. At the same time, some of the parents do not see any reason to pay the contributions. Although according to school committee members, orphaned children are not segregated as they cannot afford to pay, they let them do the tests. The school committee arranges for teachers and parents meetings, where parents receive a report on pupils' academic development from teachers. They share their views on what could be the techniques that can facilitate school academic improvement.

The findings also indicated that the school committee practice included the control of pupil truancy. According to one of the educational officials, however, controlling truancy has been the most difficult task of the committees. As stated in the Basic Education Statistic in Tanzania (BEST), truancy has been the main cause for dropout in primary schools (URT, 2010: 23). Therefore, it has been important for the school committee to control the truancy as one of it functions.

The minutes of the school committee meetings showed that in all of the ten visited schools, both in Kinondoni Dar es Salaam and Mbeya City, school committees had been active and meeting regularly. The issues most commonly discussed were:
- Standard-I pupil enrolment;
- School funds (Capitation Grants);
- Parents' contributions to a school fence for security;
- Classroom construction;
- School boundaries;
- Academic matters, such as the preparation of examinations for standards IV and VII pupils.

7. HEADTEACHER DEMOTION AND DISMISSAL BECAUSE OF POOR PERFORMANCE IN EXAMINATIONS

Most teachers in the visited schools both in Kinondoni Dar es Salaam and Mbeya City did not know of any such cases. Few teachers who indicated that headteachers had been demoted and sometimes dismissed from schools due to poor performance or for other reasons, such as drunkenness or irresponsibility or carelessness in their job performance and examination cheating. Teachers indicated that demoting a headteacher was unfair, as it was the teachers' responsibility to teach and the pupils' responsibility to pass the examinations. The assistant headteacher at school 'I', commented:

> To demote the headteacher because of poor performance of pupils is not correct and not good as the examination results of the pupils, whether good or bad, depend on different factors such as truancy, many pupils having no parents due to HIV/AIDS, lack of teaching and learning materials, and the number of teachers in the school.

The headteacher from school 'J' said:

> It is unfair for the headteachers to be demoted because of poor performance of the pupils in examinations. This is because the headteacher does not receive any allowance in her/his pay so as to acknowledge her/his contributions for supervising educational delivery in school. The government has not played its role and at the same time wants good examination results. Is that right?

Teachers thought that the academic performance of the pupils was not the exclusive responsibility of teachers. There should be some arrangements to improve the conditions under which education is provided. The assistant headteacher at school 'D' said: "There should be alternatives to achieve academic improvement. Demoting the headteacher is not the solution to the problem". The headteacher from school 'E' commented:

> It is alright only if they look at the results, they consider whether the headteacher has been provided with enough teachers or not, and they should make sure that all basic facilities are in place like books, desks and enough classrooms. If all such things are in place, and the pupils still fail, then it is right for the headteacher to be demoted.

A teacher from school 'F' indicated that the headteacher's demotion was due to the poor performance of the pupils in the examination, but this problem was caused by a shortage of teachers, as they were only five teachers in the whole school responsible for teaching about ten subjects from standards I–VII. No headteachers or teachers had heard of headteachers or teachers being dismissed. Demotions were done by educational officials and not by the school committee, since teacher dismissal is part of the accountability to higher levels within the education service. In dismissal cases, the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), now known as the Teachers' Service Department (TSD), must be involved, as dismissing a teacher is regulated under the country law on employment terms. The URT (1995: 31) stipulates: "The Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) shall be responsible for maintaining and controlling the Unified Service of all teachers to which they shall belong".

8. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings indicate a great controversy and it has not been clear what really the school committees are supposed to do in making teachers accountable within the decentralised school management system. While some of the teachers would view that the school committee members need to inspect and know what the teachers are doing in educating the pupils, there are those who say that their work in the classroom should not be touched. Gaynor (1998:30) has the view that pedagogical supervision is not appropriate to be devolved to the local community although, in Nigeria, the local government education authority, use the locally recruited supervisors who are funded by the state. However, these supervisors, according to Gaynor, are the retired teachers who live within the community. Yet, to Gaynor, teachers had the view that the retired teachers have the old view of what constitutes teaching and are unable to help them cope with changes. Pedagogical professionalism as form of decentralisation given by Lauglo (1995:16) implies that teachers' supervision should be left in the hands of people with the same profession. The professional control over teachers is the most likely form of School Based Management (SBM) that may increase the teachers' sense of accountability to parents and the community at large (Leithwood and Menzies, 1998:341). This line of thinking concur with Kogan (1978) cited in Ranson (2003:203) who states that "only the trained eye could judge the quality of teaching and the pupil progress". Chapman *et al.* (2002:182) have the opinion that for teacher assessment in a decentralised plan to have a meaningful impact on improved instructional quality in schools, effective instructional practice and school management processes have to be known by the community members. Yet, according to Ranson (2003:203), the opponents of professionalism argue that, the quality of public services is not a private matter for the specialists alone detached from public scrutiny. Thus, as findings of this study indicate, there is a necessity for the school committee members as parents representatives to monitor the school development activities including making sure that pupils receive quality education.

The problem of poor performance of pupils in PSLE is attributed by many factors. As stated earlier, the findings indicated that it has been due to shortage of teachers and the poor teaching and learning environment such as congested classrooms and lack of desks. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2001: 2), low learning achievement is due to a combination of interrelated factors. Pupils cannot learn well if they are in overcrowded classrooms and learning is unlikely to take place if pupils are passive recipients of what is taught by the teacher and if that

knowledge cannot be applied at home. Lack of motivation and a poor teaching and learning environment have been frequently mentioned by Tanzanian stakeholders as the major factors behind the massive failure of standard-VII pupils in their final examination results (The Guardian, 13 December 2009). Thus, demoting the headteacher because of poor performance of the pupils may be unfair. According to Gaynor (1998: 21), however, there are circumstances when disciplinary actions and the dismissal of teachers can be warranted, for example, if there is a violation of standards that govern the professional code of conduct. Gaynor gives the example of Nicaragua, where authority has been given to the municipal of education councils to hire and fire the teachers. This has to be within a legal framework to protect teachers' rights. In Nepal, the Ministry of Education threatened the withdrawal of school grants from schools with poor performance for more than three years. As the teachers did not want to lose their jobs, they had to work harder to improve performance (Gaynor, 1998: 62). Thus, while it is important to ensure that teachers' rights are protected, disciplinary actions as part of the accountability system should be taken against teachers who misbehave and who do not fulfil their duties.

9. CONCLUSION

There seems to be considerable confusion regarding teacher accountability and what the school committee members are supposed to do in making teachers accountable in Tanzanian context. The teacher is to be held accountable both to the bureaucracy, in terms of adherence to rules and regulations, and to the community through the 'oversight' by local school committees. Most governments in the world in this postmodern era are highly concerned about the education of their citizens. This seems to be reinforced under the New Public Management (NPM) regime, where performance-based outcomes are key, partly due to increased pressure and attention from many different groups in society. Community members and parents are currently aware of their rights and have higher expectations of schools in terms of helping their children succeed in their future lives. This implies that more pressures and demands from communities and parents for teacher accountability may intensify to ensure that children acquire competitive knowledge and skills. Thus, teaching pupils with higher order thinking and problem-solving skills will remain a huge challenge for teachers and the education system as a whole. Under the NPM type of accountability, teachers need to focus on attainable objectives. Their professional practice, as Hargreaves points out, is likely to improve the quality and standing of teaching professionalism. Teachers need to be more flexible and dynamic with a demonstrated sense of responsibility and obligation in order for pupils to have the knowledge and skills that are needed in the 21st century. They need to use their discretional judgment to fulfill their responsibility of instilling social values and customs that are desired by their societies. This will ideally, as Neave states, justify their sense of responsibility and commitment to the society they serve and the pupils they teach in keeping with the populist localism idea where teachers are seen as servants of the society where they live and serve.

While it is important for the teachers to be evaluated, however, there is a need for an alternative way of assessing teacher performance because of the nature of the field. Since it is not easy to predict the way the human mind works, it is unlikely that teachers will know with confidence how many pupils will pass the exam. Thus, reflection on the local conditions in which teachers work, is important for them to be effectively evaluated. Although teachers have to fulfil their obligations and have to be accountable for teaching their pupils, their rights also have to be protected as their teaching and the school in which they work will not be the only input that matters for learning. Pupils have different abilities and their learning is partly shaped by conditions in the world outside the teacher's control. Teachers are the ones responsible for the creation of human capital. By subjecting them to the hands of local politicians, representatives of parents or other members of the community, they might be frustrated and demoralised. If so, pupils may suffer the consequences in their learning as the impacts may not be vividly observed and take longer to be discerned.

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