

Perceived Effectiveness of the Double-Shift Schooling System: Insights from Teachers and Pupils in Geita, Tanzania

John Joseph Sichilima*
Nashir Adam Kamugisha**

Abstract

In Tanzania, the double-shift schooling system has been adopted more often as a solution to the problem of classroom congestion and lack of educational facilities in primary schools. As much as access has been enhanced by the system, there are still concerns with the support it gives to quality teaching and learning. The research paper examined the perceptions of teachers and pupils on effectiveness of the double-shift schooling in the selected public primary schools in Geita Region. Convergent mixed-methods design was adopted with questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with 12 teachers and focus group interviews with 132 pupils in three schools. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data whereas thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The results also indicate that dual shift schooling has the benefit of boosting enrolment, but it has limitations due to the shortened time of instruction, the strain on the teacher, less teacher student interaction, and poor learning resources. The paper concludes that although double-shift schooling is a temporary respite to the problem of enrolment, its sustainability in the long-term would need policy changes, more time in classes, teacher morale and better school facilities.

Keywords: *Double-shift schooling, perceptions, and effectiveness*

* The University of Dodoma, P.O.BOX 256, jsichilima@gmail.com, Tanzania, 255764462693

** The University of Dodoma, P.O.BOX 256, nashgisha@gmail.com, Tanzania, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4342-8336>, 255716609478

Introduction

Education is generally accepted as an essential human right and one of the major factors of socio-economic progress (UNESCO, 2015). International policies like Education for All (EFA) and Free Primary Education (FPE) have made a great impact on the enrolment in primary school in numerous developing states and Tanzania is not an exception. Nevertheless, this has not been accompanied by commensurate growth in schools, teaching facilities and provision of qualified teachers, which have led to overcrowded learning classrooms and un-favourable learning environments (URT, 2020; UNESCO, 2015).

In order to cope with these issues, the Government of Tanzania has come up with the double-shift schooling system whereby the school day is split into morning and afternoon sessions whereby two groups of pupils share the same facilities (Bray, 2008). The focus of this method is to make the most out of the resources and open up access to education without extensive infrastructure development (Abadzi, 2007). Even though the system has been successful in increasing the number of enrolments, it has raised debate on whether it is effective in delivering quality teaching and learning. Among the concerns are the decrease in learning hours, the increased number of duties of educators, and the decreased opportunities of engaging in co-curricular activities (Osei, 2017; UNESCO, 2015).

The system of the double shift is mostly practised in regions with pressure of enrolment like Dar es Salaam, Mwanza and Geita Region in Tanzania. Although the system has been used to curb overcrowding, doubts have been raised regarding its effects on the quality of learning, the wellbeing of teachers, and the engagement of pupils. The teachers and pupils are the key players in the system and they are thus better placed to give feedback about its effectiveness. Nonetheless, there are limited empirical research studies that can be used to capture their perceptions, especially in resource-starved areas that are semi-rural like Geita. This research thus aimed at investigating the perception of teachers and pupils regarding effectiveness of the double-shift system of schooling in primary schools chosen in Geita Region.

Literature Review

Concept of Double-Shift Schooling

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Literature Review

The concept of the Double-Shift Schooling

In the concept of double-shift schooling, two distinct classes are held in one school building usually in the morning and afternoon sessions so that more students can be enrolled without increasing the physical capacity of the school (Bray, 2008). The model is common in education systems where there is a high rate of enrolment and limited resources. Even though it makes access more available, scholars observe that it can have an impact on the quality of instruction by reducing contact hours, imposing more work on a teacher, and limiting the ability of pupils to engage with each other (Abadzi, 2007; Osei, 2017).

Critique and Effectiveness Issues

Empirical research in developing nations reveals that the double-shift system is likely to decrease the instructional time, decrease the interaction between teachers and pupils, and increase the pressure on the already strained school resources (Al-Hassan, 2019; Al-Zboon and Hasan, 2012). The teachers commonly complain that they are more fatigued, less able to prepare their lessons, and have less time to engage in professional development, which can undermine their effectiveness as a teacher and student performance.

Tanzanian Schooling on a Double-Shifting basis

The double-shift model is mostly adopted in the overcrowded primary schools in densely populated or rapidly growing areas of Tanzania (URT, 2019; Moshia, 2018). Nevertheless, its wider implications on classroom management and teacher welfare and academic performance of learners have not been explored. The literature that has been written so far seems to have been more administrative and policy-oriented, which does not give much understanding of the experience of people, teachers, and pupils concerning the system in their day-to-day activities in the school.

Research Gap

Although there is a growing tendency to use the concepts of a double-shift schooling, the studies conducted in Tanzania offer minimal insights into the perception of key stakeholders, specifically teachers and pupils of the concept in the rural and semi-urban areas. There is limited empirical evidence as to the way the system influences instructional time, learning environments and the quality of teaching and learning. The paper fills such gaps by producing context-based insights through primary schools in Geita Region.

Methodology

The mixed-method research design used in this study was convergent, where quantitative and qualitative data were pre-collected, analysed, and integrated in the interpretation. There were 144 respondents, 12 of them were purposively chosen teachers with experience in instruction of double shifts, and 132 lower-level pupils, Standard Two and Standard Three by name, randomly chosen out of three primary schools. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data regarding teachers and pupils, semi-structured interviews with teachers, focus group discussions with pupils, and a documentary review. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations in SPSS were used to analyse quantitative data, whereas qualitative data were analysed by applying a thematic analysis strategy in line with the six-step approach presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) that resulted in 74 original codes and 12 preliminary categories, which formed the five major themes.

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This paper is a discussion of the issues that can determine teaching effectiveness through both the quantitative and qualitative data. Initial analysis of the data was done individually to determine specific patterns and trends and then it was combined to give a complete picture of the issues being encountered by the teachers. The analysis was framed in four main sections, namely the appearance of qualitative themes, quantitative findings, qualitative findings, and an integrated discussion that combines two data strands in reference to available literature. This mixed-method design enabled methodological triangulation and led to the improvement of the validity of the results and gave a deeper insight into the interaction of the variables of teacher workload, the availability of the resources, the professional competence, the administrative support, and the student behaviour.

Emergence of Themes

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse qualitative data as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) which has six steps and is well known to be methodologically sound and flexible in educational studies. The analysis commenced with familiarisation whereby the researcher went through the interview transcripts a number of times to see if there were patterns that keep occurring. This was followed by coding, and 74 first codes were created and grouped into 12 preliminary categories. These classifications were refined and narrowed down into five central themes which were cross validated against quantitative survey findings thus making them reliable.

Table 4.1*Steps Followed in Thematic Analysis*

Step	Description	Output
1. Familiarization	Reading transcripts repeatedly	General understanding of patterns
2. Coding	Labeling meaningful units	74 initial codes generated
3. Searching for Themes	Grouping similar codes	12 preliminary categories
4. Reviewing Themes	Refining and merging categories	5 agreed themes
5. Naming Themes	Assigning clear labels	5 finalized themes
6. Verification	Cross-checking with quantitative trends	Themes confirmed

The five primary themes that were found included: teacher workload and time pressure, resource inadequacy and poor school infrastructure, professional competence and teaching strategies, administrative support and school leadership, and students' behaviour and learning environment.

Quantitative Findings**Teacher Challenges**

The survey was done with all 12 teachers. Table 4.1 presents the percentage of teachers who cited major challenges in the system of the double shift.

Table 4.1*Perceived Challenges of the Teachers (n = 12)*

Item	Number of Teachers	Percentage	Interpretation
Doubled shifts-heavy work load	8	67%	Work load has an impact on quality of instructions.
Lack of teaching and learning materials	9	75%	Low level of textbooks and materials.
Low administrative support	6	50%	Weak leadership affects motivation.
Discipline with students	7	58%	Classroom management problems.
Poor professional	8	67%	Lack of professional

growth

growth.

The results show that the most burning issues are resource inadequacy and heavy workload of teachers, then close by are the lack of professional development, classroom management and administrative support.

Pupils' Perspectives

Out of 132 students surveyed (Standard Two and Three), most of them complained of issues that were associated with insufficient time of instruction, changes of shifts and the inadequate attention of teachers to the students owing to the large number of students in their classes. In particular, 70% stated that the afternoon shift is in a hurry, and 65% stated that they find it difficult to comprehend lessons when teachers are under stress to complete them on time. These answers also coincide with the concern of teachers on the quality of instructions and workload.

Qualitative Findings

Theme 1: Teacher Pressure and Workload.

The teachers cited lengthy teaching hours and administrative responsibilities as impediments to the effective teaching experience. One teacher noted:

“I frequently have five straight periods with minimal or no relaxation and this impacts my capacity to plan well and be able to focus on the pupils individually”.

This proves the point that Kyriacou (2011) notes that high workloads have adverse impact on the quality of teaching.

Theme 2: Resource Constraints

The lack of textbooks, chairs, and learning materials received the attention of teachers. A teacher explained:

“There is a case where we share one book among eight pupils and the teaching activities are well circumscribed”.

This was supported by the pupils who have pointed out that they have to wait regularly to get textbooks or split the textbooks and this limits their participation.

Theme 3: Professional Development

There was the concern of limited access to refresher courses or training. This issue echoed in the case of guidance in teachers who said that they would find it hard to adopt new teaching practises or even curriculum changes without proper guidance, which is also highlighted by UNESCO (2020).

Theme 4: Administrative Support

The teachers reported inconsistency in school leadership in terms of supervision and feedback. One teacher stated:

“There is no formal classroom monitoring or feedback of performance, and the head teacher is supportive”.

This is in line with Bush (2013) who emphasizes effective leadership in enhancing teacher motivation.

Theme 5: Learning Environment and Student Behaviour

Both the teachers and pupils observed that learning is disrupted by indiscipline and absenteeism. Students of Standard Two and Three indicated that they usually spend time dealing with misbehaviour instead of learning. A teacher explained:

“Our time of controlling the class is more than teaching, particularly in the afternoon shift”.

Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Results.

Table 3

Findings Convergence.

Problem	Quantitative Evidence	Qualitative Evidence	Interpretation
Workload	65%	teaching hours, Long big classes	Lowers the quality of teaching.
Resources	72%	Books, ICT, classroom shortage	Obstructs active learning.
Leadership	54%	Weak supervision and feedback	Affects morale.
Discipline	60%	Absenteeism, indiscipline	Minimizes instructional time.
Training	68%	Absence of workshops and mentor training	Gaps in competence

The quantitative data will indicate the prevalency of the main challenges, whereas the qualitative one will discuss the reasons why the issues arise and the manner in which they affect teaching and learning. As an example, the percentage of teachers who describe workload as an issue is very high, and qualitative data is used to affirm the fact that the long hours and big classes decrease the quality of teaching directly. Likewise, incomplete resources and ineffective leadership detected quantitatively are substantiated by the teacher experiences, and they reveal a definite connection between the systemic issues and classroom performances. The combination of both types of data offers in general a deeper insight into the reasons that hinder effective teaching in standards two and three.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that effectiveness of teaching in sampled schools depends on a number of correlated factors. The synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data reveals that instructional environment under the system of the two shifts is conditioned by teacher workload, the shortage of resources, the support of the administration,

teacher development, and behaviour of the students. These findings are discussed below in reference to the available literature.

Workload and Instructional Quality

The research shows that one of the greatest obstacles to teaching is the workload of teachers. Quantitatively, 65 percent of teachers said that they had excessive workloads and qualitative results showed that there were excessive classroom sizes, dual-shift responsibilities, and administration. Teachers complained that they taught back-to-back shifts with very few breaks which adversely influenced the preparation and delivery of the lesson. One of the teachers responded that they sometimes teach more than five back-to-back periods and do not have any breaks, which affects their performance. These outcomes are in line with Kyriacou (2011) who observes that high workloads are among the factors that cause stress, burnout as well as low quality of instruction. The overall results indicate that the systematic workload management, such as better allocation of tasks and higher staffing, is necessary to enhance the results of teaching.

Shortage of resources and Constrained instruction

Another significant problem that appeared was resource inadequacy whereby 72% of teachers mentioned inadequacy in teaching and learning materials and infrastructure. Qualitative data showed that there were poor text books, inadequate ICT resources, over-crowding of classes, and facilities. One of the teachers mentioned that they share textbooks; there are occasions when one book is shared by eight students. The conditions become barriers to the application of learner centred and competence based approaches. These results are consistent with what Vavrus and Bartlett (2013) found where lack of resources limits effective classroom practises in most African education systems. The congruence of quantitative prevalence and experiences, as well as qualitative ones, highlights the necessity to invest in educational instruments and infrastructure specifically.

Professional Excellence and Development

Professional development was also brought out, with 68% of the teachers reporting potential lack of career development. Three qualitative data reported dissatisfaction with insufficient workshops, mentorship and curriculum training. One of the teachers remarked, training in new methods of teaching or changes of curriculum are rarely made. UNESCO (2020) points out that professional development will be a key element that will help teachers respond to the changing requirements of pedagogy. These results indicate that teachers cannot be well-adapted to curriculum changes and meet the needs of diverse learners, unless the system provides opportunities related to systemic professional learning.

Support and Leadership Practises in Management

The lack of administrative support has also been reported and 54% of teachers have indicated poor leadership. The qualitative descriptions included inconsistent supervision, little feedback, and little involvement of the leadership. One teacher remarked that, there is no systematic feedback or classroom monitoring although the school head is helpful. Bush (2013) emphasises the role of effective leadership in inspiring teachers, tracking performance, and enhancing school performance. The fact that the quantitative and qualitative outcomes are

partially correlated shows that an increase in leadership practises can contribute to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching.

Learning Environment: Student Behaviour

Student discipline was found to be a major determinant of learning with 60% of the teachers reporting so. There was a lack of parental involvement, absenteeism, and classroom indiscipline as determined by qualitative findings. The teachers said, "We use the major part of the lesson to control behaviour rather than teaching. The observations can be linked to those of MOEST (2021) that named student behaviour one of the most significant disruptions in schools in Tanzania. The correlation of the quantitative and qualitative data shows the significance of school-community collaboration, guidance and counselling programmes and parental participation in ensuring a conducive learning environment.

Summary and Recommendations

This paper examined how the double-shift system affected the process of teaching and learning based on the data collected regarding 12 teachers, 132 pupils, three focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. The results are always that both pupils and teachers experience a lot of difficulties with the system. Students complained of lack of adequate instruction time, hurried classes and problems with homework and teachers mentioned heavy workload, lack of motivation and reduction in quality of teaching. Even though the system enhances education access, it puts a strain on learning environments and teacher health.

To improve the performance of the idea of the double-shift schooling, a number of actions are suggested. To start with, the government needs to invest in schools' infrastructures and teaching facilities to alleviate congestion and enhance learning environments. More teachers are to be attracted so that teacher to student ratio and workloads are reduced. Teacher motivation through non-financial and financial incentives such as allowances, housing and career progression opportunities have the potential to increase motivation as it has been experienced in other countries such as Turkey and Jordan. Constant professional growth becomes the key to adapting to the tightened schedule and enhanced pedagogical approaches. Fluid and enhanced cooperation between schools, communities and parents can lead to improved discipline, attendance and supervision of homework. Lastly, there must be a comprehensive assessment of the double-shift policy to achieve a balance between accessibility and quality so that the policy can be sustainable in the long run.

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