

## POLICY BRIEF:

## SCHOOL MANAGEMENT



## Understanding the quality of school management in Tanzania

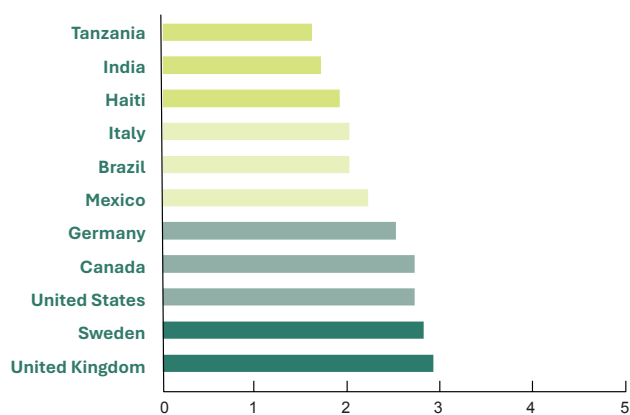
Evidence shows that interventions targeting school management in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have the potential to improve student learning. Such interventions are also highly cost-effective because a skilled and knowledgeable school manager benefits the whole school. However, in a World Management Survey (WMS)<sup>1</sup> assessment of school management practices in 11 countries with diverse income levels, Tanzania rated lowest (see Figure 1) with around 95% of schools in the country indicating very poor management practices: practically no monitoring, very weak targets and extremely weak incentives. This highlights the significant potential to improve school management practices throughout the country.

This Policy Brief is part of a series that aims at improving understanding of school management practices and potential interventions to improve student learning in Tanzania. It presents key results from a novel study of school management practices reported by teachers across a nationally representative sample of primary schools in Tanzania. The study assesses practices performed by the head teacher and other staff supporting school management activities, collectively referred to as ‘school managers’. It provides a unique opportunity to assess the application of management

practices and shed light on what interventions could be targeted to improve student learning.

This Policy Brief is based on the Technical Note [‘What Do We Know about the Quality of School Management in Tanzania?’](#)<sup>2</sup> and contributes to two key Shule Bora programme outcomes: “Quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning improved” and “Enhanced evidence-based planning and management in basic education sector”.

**Figure 1.** Average Education Management Score from the WMS by Country (out of 5)



Source: World Development Report 2018 (own calculations).

### Summary of findings

- School management practices are not implemented systematically.**
- Schools lack systems to assess student learning.**
- School managers have limited resources to incentivize and motivate teachers.**
- Student learning is currently not related to management practices in Tanzania, potentially due to low quality of those practices.**

## What is School Management?

School management practices encompass a broad range of actions that make effective use of resources to produce high-quality schooling. The focus here is on practices proven to support student learning. There is significant evidence that quality teaching is the most important factor affecting learning at school, thus school management practices should support teachers' professional development through interventions focused on instructional guidance, use of student assessment data and motivation. Most of these practices are part of the Head Teacher School Leadership and Management Manual for Tanzania, updated recently by the Agency for the Development of Educational Management (ADEM), in charge of improving education management in the country.

## Findings from a school management practices survey

### 1. Systematic implementation is required

In most schools surveyed, a wide range of school management practices are performed. However, these practices are not done systematically and often lack complementary practices necessary to achieve their intended goals. For example, 85% of school managers conducted classroom observations for at least one teacher in the past year, but only 4% observed all teachers. Meanwhile 95% spoke to at least one teacher about lesson plans, but less than a third spoke to all their teachers. Such observations require follow-up actions to be effective, but only 2% followed up classroom observations to all teachers and only 3% followed up on lesson plan discussions. Most of these practices were performed by the head teacher or the academic teacher, and patterns are consistent across other instructional guidance practices. These results suggest that special emphasis must be placed on helping school managers scale up teacher classroom observation, provide formal feedback to teachers and provide follow up to assess progress – and do so systematically.

#### *Example of a successful intervention:*

In Brazil, classroom observations of secondary school teachers were followed by with feedback on best practice and supporting materials on pedagogical tools. The schools' pedagogical coordinators also received coaching to better support their teachers. Students showed improvements in maths and language on a national test compared to those in schools that did not receive the intervention (Bruns, Costa and Cunha, 2018).

### 2. Schools need a system to assess and track student learning

Global evidence suggests the use of student assessment data (including national and formative assessments) can help improve learning outcomes by identifying and targeting difficult areas of the curriculum and struggling students. However, only 5% of schools in the survey provided all their teachers with information on students' performance in writing at the start of the year. The 2023 Cambridge Education Monitoring Survey conducted in nine regions in Tanzania also shows that formative assessments happen frequently but not systematically in primary schools: 59% of head teachers stated that all teachers in their school conduct formative assessment.

It is crucial that supporting school managers ensure that:

- (i) formative assessments are conducted by all teachers and for all children in each school.
- (ii) national examinations and formative assessments are used to monitor learner progress systematically, including timely analysis of, and access by, critical stakeholders.
- (iii) actions to improve learning are identified based on the assessment and progress of the students in each school and grade level.

#### *Example of a successful intervention:*

In Argentina, standardised tests were administered at the end of each academic year and results were made available to schools at the beginning of the next year. The results were communicated in a report that included an overview of the school's performance in each grade and subject and compared it to other schools in the area. Within two years, schools performed 0.33 standard deviations (SDs) better in maths and 0.22 SDs better in reading compared to schools that did not have access to student achievement data (De Hoyos, 2021).



### 3. School management has limited ability to motivate teachers

In Tanzania, like in many LMICs, school managers' ability to reward or penalise teachers for their performance is limited. For instance, hiring and firing teachers is not within the purview of the school and schools have limited resources to provide incentives. This is challenging in a country where substantial amounts of learning time are lost due to unmotivated teachers being absent from the classroom: according to the 2014 World Bank's Service Delivery Indicators, 47% of teachers were not in the classroom teaching during unannounced visits.

Despite their limited resources in this area, some school managers try to incentivize teachers: in 38% of schools surveyed at least half the teachers indicated that good performance is recognised. However, financial incentives are rare and used in only 6% of schools. In terms of penalties for poor performance, school managers are largely limited to issuing warnings (96% of schools), while transfers or dismissals occur in 1% of schools. Similarly, the 2023 Cambridge Education Monitoring Survey shows that head teachers report using low-stakes measures that are likely to be ineffective and do not apply them systematically: even though 99% of head teachers collect teacher attendance data daily, only 23% of them acted on attendance issues in the past year with only 3% sanctioning teachers.

School managers can motivate teachers by supporting them in other ways, such as providing better instructional guidance. Innovations that can increase the time spent in the classroom can be highly cost-effective by increasing the time teachers spend teaching and by amplifying the effects of other school management interventions aimed at improving teacher-student interactions.

#### *Example of a successful intervention:*

Head teachers, select teachers and community members in the Gambia received comprehensive training in school leadership and management, community participation, curriculum management, teacher professional development, teaching and learning resources, and the school environment. During the training, participants drafted a school management plan, and received a grant from the Ministry of Education to help implement the goals related to teaching and learning. Four years into the programme, the intervention led to a reduction in student absenteeism and a reduction in teacher absenteeism (Blimpo, Evans and Lahire, 2005).

### 4. Student learning is currently not related to management practices in Tanzania, potentially due to low quality of those practices

There is an internationally well-documented positive relationship between school management practices and student learning; however, the Tanzania study finds no association between being in a top- or low-performing school and school management practices in primary schools. This could be due to: (i) the quality of management practices being currently too low to impact student achievement; (ii) student learning depending highly on other factors outside of the control of school management (e.g., pupil-teacher ratio, teacher competencies and teacher absenteeism); and/or (iii) other unobservable characteristics – in general, this correlational analysis does not allow us to pinpoint causal links, and there could be various factors confounding these results, for example, targeted resource allocation to poorly performing schools. In addition, and consistent with the broader literature on predicting effective educators and managers, the study finds that no available observable characteristics of schools or head teachers are predictive of good school management practices.



**23%**

**of headteachers acted on attendance issues in the last year with only 3% sanctioning teachers**



## Conclusion

There is considerable room for improvement in the intensity and systematic approach of school management practices in primary schools in Tanzania. This presents an opportunity for highly cost-effective improvements since a single head teacher, or the school management team, can influence many teachers and students.

This Policy Brief and the accompanying Shule Bora brief, “Principles for Improving School Management in Tanzania: Lessons from global evidence”, suggest the need for a paradigm shift of expectations and behavior required towards the significant role of school managers in teachers’ professional development. Efforts to improve school management practices should be geared to providing better support to school managers to improve the quality of teaching in their schools.



To achieve this goal, head teachers should be provided with:

- (i) clear guidelines on actions they can and should take
- (ii) tools and resources to implement these guidelines
- (iii) monitoring and support from local governments.

Many school management practices proven to affect learning are already part of ADEM’s manual, and the District Education Officers and their teams, who oversee implementation of government policies at the local level, have already an active role in supporting schools. A strategic approach, building on evidence from other contexts but with an adaptive learning strategy to assess and scale up what works best in the Tanzania context, has the potential to yield high returns.

<sup>1</sup> The WMS is a multi-country initiative measuring the quality of management practices. In a random sample of schools in each country, head teachers were interviewed about 20 practices across four broad areas: Operations (e.g., standardization of instructional planning processes and data-driven planning and pupil transitions); monitoring (e.g., continuous improvement processes, performance tracking and review); target setting (e.g., target balance, target interconnection, clarity and comparability of targets), and people management (e.g., rewarding high performers, fixing poor performers, managing talent). Each of these practices are scored using a scoring grid on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates a low adherence to a practice and 5 indicates a high adherence.

<sup>2</sup> Bedoya, Guadalupe; Belyakova, Yulia; Cilliers, Jacobus; Deeb, Antoine: What Do We Know about the Quality of School Management in Tanzania? (English). Washington D.C., World Bank Group.

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