Coping Strategies of Tanzanian Head Teachers Faced With Critical Shortages of Teaching and Non-teaching Staff

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The government effort to expand secondary schooling in Tanzania has resulted in a tremendous increase in the number of secondary schools. However, this positive achievement has resulted in a critical shortage of both teaching and non-teaching staff. Yet, despite this shortage, schools continue to operate and many students are attending and completing their secondary education. This paper presents the qualitative findings of a study of the coping strategies used by head teachers in situations of critical shortages of teaching and non-teaching staff, which enable them to continue to offer teaching and learning services. The paper also discusses the implications of the strategies used in the teaching and learning process. The study was conducted in ten secondary schools in the Temeke District, Dar es salaam region. The study sample was selected using purposeful, simple random sampling techniques and convenience sampling strategies, and included 10 head teachers, 1 District Educational Officer, 70 teachers and 12 non-teaching staff. There was an acute shortage of teaching and non-teaching staff, forcing the head teachers to cope by: (1) overloading the existing staff through assignment of multiple responsibilities; (2) neglecting some duties; (3) assigning roles to staff members who are unqualified to perform them; and (4) recruiting form six graduates to serve as part-time teachers. Measures for minimizing the shortage of staff and the associated negative consequences the coping strategies are suggested to facilitate teaching and learning in Tanzania.