Original Research Article

Changes in senior leadership and its effect on school goal achievement: An experience of Seventh-day Adventist Secondary Schools in Mara Region, Tanzania

Received 15 September, 2021

Revised 18 October, 2021

Accepted 25 October, 2021

Published 3 November, 2021

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This study looked into changes in senior leadership and their impact on school goal achievement. The survey research design was used in the study, and data was collected through a questionnaire from teachers at five Adventist Secondary Schools in the Mara region. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation. According to the findings of the study, senior leadership changes in schools are carried out in an appropriate manner as respondents were pleased with the trends of senior leadership changes and thus willing to support the new leaders in achieving the schools goals and objectives. Teachers rated the achievement of school goals favorably. Based on the findings, it is suggested that school administrators continue with the proper leadership change trend, as this encourages teachers and other school stakeholders to support the newly introduced school leaders. Changes in senior leadership in the school should be based on strategic plans and they should always be accompanied by leadership succession plans. School administrators must maintain good student performance because it is a good marketing strategy for schools to attract more students. Finally, the school administration should maintain a regular leadership change which brings in new blood and has a positive impact on the school goal achievement.

Keywords: Leadership change, goal achievement, Adventist, schools

INTRODUCTION

Change is a process that affects every aspect of life (Hirlak and Kara, 2018). According to Passenheim (2010), change is an alteration of a company's strategy, organization or culture as a result of new trends in the working environment. Leadership change is an important aspect in any institution. According to Ndibalema (2016), the importance of Leadership change includes helping institutions to increase the performance and reducing performance gaps. Ngussa and Makewa (2014) stipulated that school changes refer to educational transformations that convey the image of starting anew, of changing not

only content but also form, of shifting from thinking with the old order to inventing a new order that is found on new assumptions, values and vision. Change helps to rectify activities that may have been done ineffectively in the institution. It helps in solving external or internal pressure and maintaining appropriate institutional culture. According to Hirlak and Kara (2018), leadership change helps to determine plans and strategies accordingly in order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. In Tanzania, a study by Aunga and Masare (2017) found that leadership changes has impact on teachers' performance

since every leader has different behavior and style on how to lead. Therefore, changes that happen in schools may have a positive impact on school goals achievement.

Nazarieh (2015) defined school goals achievement as integrated patterns of learners' beliefs regarding their reasons for engaging themselves in learning tasks. According to Bubić et al.(2015), school goal achievement has impact on students' academic success. Once the schools achieve better learning outcomes, individual students are likely to reach the highest academic achievement and therefore reach their personal goals for attending the schools. According to Acquah (2017), while school employees may have a need for goal achievement, suitable opportunities should be created for them to satisfy it. The need for achievement is the desire to accomplish something difficult, attain a high standard of success, master complex tasks, and surpass others. This implies that for an excellent school management, platforms should be created for teachers to satisfy the need for achievement and by so doing, they will get motivated to put off their best for the academic, moral and psychosocial development of the students.

Leadership changes have been studied from different parts of the world. Ni, Sun and Rorrer (2014), for instance, studied on the subject in the United States of America and found that the extent of leadership change in schools was very high between 2004 and 2010. The average length of time Principals remained in one school was two years to four years. Fluctuation of leadership changes happened year by year whereby in some years, the Principal changes rates in charter schools were higher than 40%. Levin and Bradley (2019) found that 35% of respondents in the country revealed that there is presence of frequent leadership change in their schools whereby school Principals were being at their school for less than two years and only 11 % respondents stated that school Principals have been at their schools for 10 years or more.

Muttaqin (2016) has it that when leadership change happens in schools, it may affect the school development directly or indirectly. Coelli and Green (2012) found that, leadership change in terms of school Principals has effects on student's positive outcomes which may have grown over the time when the previous leadership existed. This suggests that if the incoming leaders fail to sustain what has been set by the previous leadership, negative consequences are likely to face the learning institutions. On the contrary, if school principals were left in respective schools long enough, they could have quite a large positive effect on school goal achievement. At the same time, when the school leadership has messed up, a need to replace it with effective leaders is inevitable.

Machumu and Kaitila (2014) argue that school leadership change may bring positive or negative effect to the school depending on the nature of the outgoing and the incoming leadership. Therefore, management needs to think critically before making school leadership changes so that the changes may bring positive results to the organization. While changes in school leadership cannot be avoided,

there are various factors which can lead to change in school leadership. Promotion is one of factors that can cause changes in leadership positions in organizations. In the school context, leadership change may happen when some teachers are promoted to senior level of leadership. When this happens, effective transition of the change must be maintained for the organization to exist and reach intended goals and objectives. Therefore, much as leadership changes are necessary, the top management must make sure that the changes are made smoothly so that the incoming leaders may continue the efforts of those who came into the leadership before them. Disciplinary measure is another factor that can cause changes in leadership as demotion of one leader opens an avenue for another leader to come and replace.

While Mabeyo (2016) argues that school leadership has potential positive or negative effects on school goal achievement, the working policy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church part E50 states that if during the term for which an employee or a leader was elected, such employee or leader is unable to fully discharge his/her work responsibilities, the Executive Committee of the employing body or appointing entity shall have the authority to effect change of such employee or leader from the elected office. When this policy is misused, frequent leadership changes may take place to the organization unnecessarily. In harmony with this policy, Adventist Secondary Schools in Mara Region have been experiencing frequent leadership changes from time to time as reflected in Table 1.

Positions that experienced frequent change include Heads of Schools, Deputy Heads of schools, Academic Masters, Chaplains and Treasurers. These key positions constitute the management team which determines the direction of the school based on decisions they make individually or corporately. Although there are many school related factors that may affect the academic achievement, which is the main goal for the existence of schools, frequent leadership change may be an important factor worth noting. For that reason, this study sought to find out how the changes in senior leadership affect school goal achievement in the Seventh day Adventist secondary schools in Mara region. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the trend of senior leadership change in Mara region SDA secondary schools?
2. To what extent do schools achieve their goal in Mara region SDA secondary schools?
3. Is there significant relationship between senior leadership change and school goal achievement in Mara region SDA secondary schools?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed the survey research design. It also employed a quantitative approach since survey design goes

Table 1. Frequency of Senior Leadership Change for the past five years (2015-2020)

School	Headmaster	Deputy headmaster	Academic Master	Treasurer	Chaplain
Nyabehore	4	3	4	6	4
Nyasinja	3	4	5	4	5
Ikizu	2	2	3	4	3
Kameya	3	4	3	5	4
Bwasi	4	5	4	4	3
Busegwe	2	5	3	4	3
TOTAL	18	23	22	27	22

Table 2. Reliability Test

SN	VARIABLE	CRONBACH ALPHA	RESULTS
1	Senior Leadership Change	.913	Reliable
2	School Goal Achievement	.914	Reliable

Table 3a. Demographic information of the Respondents

SN	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	Gender of Respondents		
	Male	56	59.6
	Female	38	40.4
	Total	94	100
2.	Education Level		
	Masters	1	1.1
	Bachelor	80	85.1
	Diploma/ Certificate	13	13.8
	Total	94	100

with quantitative technique because it seeks to collect information from a large number of respondents as compared to the qualitative approach.

Population and Sampling

In this study, the population was 94 teachers from Seventh-day Adventist Church owned Secondary School in Mara region where by all the five schools within the region were included. Since the total number of teachers was below 100, the researchers used the whole population to gather data from. Therefore, the questionnaire was distributed to every teacher in selected schools to be filled.

Validity and Reliability

Oluwatayo (2012) defines validity as the degree to which a test or measuring instrument actually measures what it purports to measure or how well a test or a meaning instrument fulfills its function. According to Taherdoost (2016), reliability concerns the extent to which a measurement of a phenomenon provides stable, consist and repeatability result. Testing for reliability is important as it refers to the consistency across the parts of a measuring instrument. A scale is said to have high internal consistency reliability if the items of a scale “hang together” and measure similarly the same construct.

The study employed expert’s judgment to ensure the instrument content measured what it was intended to be measure. Particularly, the research supervisor did the task and thereafter, the panel of examiners during the research proposal defense will do the same. To achieve acceptable reliability, the questionnaire went through a pilot testing to determine the appropriate Cronbach’s alpha coefficient about equal or above 0.7. The pilot test involved one similar school in the country that was not part of the sample. The study therefore ensured reliability of research instruments by calculating the Cronbach’s Alpha through the Statistical package for Social Sciences as indicated in Table 2.

DATA ANALYS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

While it is necessary for readers to know the nature of respondents, this section described those who responded to the questionnaire in terms of gender and level of education.

As Table 3a shows, the male respondent were 56 (59.6%) while the female respondents were 38 (40.4%). Therefore the majority of respondents were male teachers. In terms of education, there was only one (1.1%) master’s holder. Those who held bachelor’s degree were 80 (85.1%) and

Table 3b. Interpretation Scale

MEAN SCORE	RESPONSE
3.50-4.00	Strongly Agree
2.50-3.49	Agree
1.50-2.49	Disagree
1.00-1.49	Strongly Disagree

Table 4. Leadership Change Trends

SN	Items In The Questionnaire	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
1	Changes in senior leadership in leadership positions are healthy	3.0638	.82708	Agree
2	Changes of senior leadership are for the welfare of my school	3.0000	.91581	Agree
3	Changes in senior leadership bring trust to management	2.9468	.84710	Agree
4	Changes of senior leadership done through organizational policy	2.8710	.93513	Agree
5	Changes of senior leadership in my school are derived from strategic plan and school target	2.8602	.91594	Agree
6	Changes in senior leadership always goes with leadership succession plans	2.8298	.91155	Agree
7	Changes of senior leadership in my school are done timely	2.7766	.80528	Agree
8	Changes of senior leadership in my school are done without partiality	2.7660	.95518	Agree
9	Changes of senior leadership are done with a clear succession plan	2.7553	.90025	Agree
10	Changes of senior leadership in my school involve other stakeholders	2.7128	1.00131	Agree
11	Changes of senior leadership in my school are effected in a friendly way	2.6489	.93564	Agree

those with diploma or certificate were 13 (13.8%). Therefore the majority of respondents held bachelor's degrees.

Descriptive Analysis of Data

The descriptive analysis of data is presented according to two research questions regarding the frequency of senior leadership change and the school goal achievement trend. Respondents had to indicate their agreement or disagreement of statements in the questionnaire. Interpretation of mean scores for respondents was as described in Table 3b:

Research Question 1: *What is the trend of senior leadership change in Mara region SDA secondary schools?*

This research question sought to establish the perception of teachers regarding trends in senior leadership changes in schools under investigation. As described in Table 4, the mean score in all 11 items ranged between 2.50 and 3.49, meaning respondents agreed with all the items. Particularly, they agreed that changes in senior leadership positions are healthy, that changes are for the welfare of the school, that the changes bring trust to management and are done through organizational policy. This suggests that the teachers under investigation were pleased with the trends of senior leadership change and therefore possible willingness to support the new leaders to fulfill the goals and objectives of the schools. This finding is commendable since according to Hao and Yazdanifard (2015), leadership changes allows the organizations to catch opportunities to gain a competitive advantage. Ndibalema (2016) further

argues that leadership change helps institutions to increase the performance and reduce performance gaps in that the weaknesses of the outgoing leader are supplemented by the strength of the incoming leader.

Furthermore, respondents agreed that leadership changes in their school are derived from strategic plans that changes always go with leadership succession plans and that changes are done timely and without partiality. This suggests that the senior leadership changes are properly done. The trend of changes considering the strategic plans is commendable by previous studies like that of Rhodes and Brundrett (2005) who found that lack of strategic plan in leadership is a challenging circumstance to Heads of schools in planning and fulfilling their duties to reach the intended goals and objectives.

Finally, respondents agreed that changes of senior leadership are done with a clear succession plan, that changes involve school stakeholders and that changes are effected in a friendly way. Involvement of stakeholders in leadership change is an added advantage for teachers to support the plans set by leaders. In the study of Cieminski, (2018), it was found that succession planning has many benefits for organization and employees. It assists organizations in aligning human capital needs with strategic goals, ensuring that leadership is ready in the event of unexpected events.

Research Question 2: *To what extent do Adventist Secondary Schools in Mara Region achieve their goal?*

The second research question sought to establish the extent to which the schools under investigation achieve their goals. As described in Table 5, the mean score in all 11

Table 5. School Goal Achievement

SN	ITEMS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE	MEAN	STD. DEV.	INTERPRETATION
1	Students' academic performance is on the rise	3.1064	.67947	Agree
2	Teachers in my school are working toward the planed goals	3.0753	.71073	Agree
3	School goals are focused towards the right direction	3.0109	.76308	Agree
4	Teachers in my school improvise and use teaching aids	2.8280	.71663	Agree
5	My school meet its own strategic plan and target of the year	2.8172	.73642	Agree
6	My school has conducive environment for teachers and students	2.7766	.89388	Agree
7	My school meets its obligatory financial dues	2.7312	.78213	Agree
8	My school has sound financial grounds.	2.6882	.77989	Agree
9	My school has enough teaching facilities	2.6277	.80301	Agree
10	My school has good financial position	2.5745	.79635	Agree
11	My school has reasonable students' enrolment	2.4255	.86122	Disagree

Table 6. Correlation between Senior Leadership Change and School Goal Achievement

		Senior Leadership Change	Goal Achievement
Senior Leadership Change	Pearson Correlation	1	.693**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	94	94
Senior Goal Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.693**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	94	94

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

items ranged between 2.50 and 3.49, meaning the respondents agreed that schools are doing well toward school goal achievement. This is commendable by Nazarieh (2015) who argues that school goal achievement is an integrated pattern of learners' beliefs regarding their reasons for engaging themselves in learning tasks. According to Bubić et al. (2015), school goal achievement has impact on students' academic success. Particularly, respondents agreed that students' academic performance is on the rise trend. This indicates that the performance of students, which is the major reason for the existence of the schools, rises from time to time and pleases the teachers. They also agreed that teachers in the schools are working toward the planed goals, that school goals are focused towards the right direction and that teachers in the school improvise and use teaching aids to facilitate good performance of the learners.

Furthermore, respondents agreed that their schools meet strategic plans and targets of the year, that the schools have conducive environment for teachers and students to teach and learn, that the schools meet obligatory financial dues and that schools have sound financial grounds. The perceived sound financial grounds are essential for effective implementation of school goals and objectives.

Hypothesis Testing

This section tested the hypothesis to determine the interrelationship between the independent and the dependent variables. The section was guided by the following research question:

Research Question 3: *Is there significant relationship between senior leadership change and school goal achievement in Mara region SDA secondary schools?*

This research question called for the testing of the following null hypothesis: *there is no significant relationship between senior leadership change and school goal achievement in Mara region SDA secondary schools.*

The research question was analyzed through the Pearson Correlation with the help of the SPSS to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The nature of possible correlations would be either positive or negative and its interpretation based on the Cohen's formula as follows: $\geq .70$ = strong relationship; $\geq .50$ = moderate relationship and $\leq .50$ = weak relationship.

As seen in Table 6, the Sig of .000 leads to rejection of the null hypothesis and therefore maintaining that there is a significant positive relationship between senior leadership change and school goal achievement (Sig=.000, $r=.693$). The change of senior leadership may have been motivating teachers to work hard. This was proved by Aunga and Masare's (2017) study findings that leadership changes has positive impact on teachers' performance which in turn leads into effective performance of students. The nature of the correlation is moderate and therefore suggests the fact that senior leadership changes moderately affects the school goal achievement.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers came up

with the following conclusions of the study regarding senior leadership change and school goal accomplishment:

First, teachers perceived that the senior leadership change in their schools is appropriately done. They were pleased with the trends of senior leadership change and therefore were willingness to support the new leaders to fulfill the goals and objectives of the schools. Furthermore, they agreed that changes of senior leadership in their school are derived from strategic plans and school targets, that changes always go with leadership succession plans, that changes are done timely and that the changes are done without partiality. They also agreed that changes of senior leadership are done with a clear succession plan, that changes involve school stakeholders and that changes are effected in a friendly way.

Secondly, it is concluded that the achievement of school goals was well perceived by teachers. This is because they agreed that students' academic performance is on the rise trend, that teachers in the school are working hard toward the planed goals, that school goals are focused towards the right direction and that teachers in the school improvise and use teaching aids to facilitate good performance of the learners. Furthermore, respondents agreed that their schools meet strategic plans and targets of the year, that the schools have conducive environment for teachers and students to teach and learn and that the schools meet obligatory financial dues and have sound financial grounds.

Finally, it is concluded that senior leadership change is of great benefit in schools under investigation as the more the senior leadership change, the better the school goal achievement.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the study, the researchers came up with the following recommendations regarding senior leadership change and school goal accomplishment:

The school managers should maintain the proper leadership change trend as this will propel teachers and other school stakeholders to support the newly introduced school leaders. The changes of senior leadership in their school need to be derived from strategic plans and school targets. Changes should always go with leadership succession plans and with a clear succession plans.

Secondly, school management needs to maintain the good performance of students as this trend is a good marketing strategy for the schools to attract more students. The management should also ensure that the schools continue to meet strategic plans and targets of the year and have conducive environment for teachers and students to work hard for school goals achievement.

Finally, the school management should maintain the time to time leadership change as this trend brings new blood and affects the school goals achievement in a appositive way.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript.

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