



The Teachers' Service Commission and Problematical Handling of Promotions on Tanzania Mainland

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores teachers' views on the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) handling of promotions on Tanzania Mainland. Specifically, the study examined teachers' opinions on the TSC's delayed promotions between 2011 and 2020, and explored the factors that hindered feedback for their delayed promotions. It employed qualitative research approach, specifically a phenomenological design. Non-probability sampling techniques were used to select subjects. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and documentary reviews, with Braun and Clarke's six steps guiding the thematic analysis. Findings revealed that teachers are dissatisfied with the TSC's handling of their promotion. Lack of transparency and bureaucracy was the primary factors hindering teachers from receiving feedback on their promotion evaluation results. To address this, the TSC requires sufficient funding and adequate personnel to operate efficiently. Thus, the government should make purposive efforts to empower the TSC to own solely authority and power to teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal is a management system that evaluates individual worker performance against goals set by an organisation to maximise productivity (Maria-Telesphora & Adam, 2022; Kasonde & Mutti, 2020). The system encourages competition among workers to boost effectiveness and efficiency in industries and institutions (Ilomo & Anyingisye, 2020). The origin of the performance appraisal management system dates back to 1914, when organisations worldwide adopted Frederick Winslow Taylor's Scientific Management Principle (Reeves, 2016). Historical records indicate that in the 1950s, the performance appraisal system practice expanded to industries in Europe and America, where employee evaluation was conducted formally through individual performance assessments, with a focus on increasing physical outputs (Reeves, 2016). Literature also indicates that in the 1970s, many institutions in African countries adopted the practice of evaluating workers based on their performance (Chimazi, 2018). Moreover, the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionally promote economic development and market liberalisation in Sub-Saharan African countries through austerity measures, infamously known as SAPs or Structural Adjustment Programmes, to enhance performance appraisal evaluation for workers (Oniver et al., 2024; Dauda, 2018). Like other countries in Africa, the Tanzania government introduced the Open Performance Review Appraisal System (OPRAS) in 2004, characterised by openness, transparency and regular feedback to evaluate the performance of all employees. Circular No. 2 of 2004 and the Public Service Act No. 8 of 2002, Part II, Section 15 insist that all public employees' promotions shall be based on merit and performance qualification (The Public Act No. 8 of 2002, p. 80).

Likewise, promoting secondary school teachers in Butiama district in Mara region is akin to that of other workers in all districts and regions on Tanzania Mainland. Data from Tanzania Teachers Union headquarters indicate that during the years 2011 – 2020, teachers were promoted through OPRAS, which was supervised by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC). Act No. 1 of 1989 established the TSC as an independent body under the Ministry of Education and Culture with full authority and power over teachers' welfare. The TSC core functions include appointing, promoting, and supervising teachers' discipline aimed at ensuring equitable deployment and distribution of teachers in schools and resolving appeals from decisions of disciplinary authorities (Sanga et al., 2024; Mbukwin & Matoka, 2023; Elitumaini et al., 2021).

Literature further shows that in Butiama district, teachers' complaints about timely promotion to TSC date back to 2015, during which many teachers were promoted through a circular that instructed a group to be promoted without considering either the standing

orders or seniority backlog (Nchimbi, 2019; Matete, 2016). Circular No. PSC/TSD/FA.346/452/01/29 dated December 1, 2015, directed the TSC on how to promote teachers. During the 2016/2017 period, teachers due for promotion were those employed in 2013 or those whose last advertisements were endorsed in 2013, contrary to the Standing Orders of 2009, which stipulate that promotions should be based on seniority and performance (Laurent & Pambas, 2019; Ayege, 2019; Mollel et al., 2018). Inevitably, these promotions have become a bone of contention among teachers, as Table 1 further illustrates:

Table 1: Teachers' OPRAS promotion by year and number, July 2011 to January 2020.

S/N	Year	Teachers who were due for promotion	Teachers who were promoted on time	Percentage of promoted teachers	Not promoted	Percentage of un-promoted teachers
1.	2011/12	39,800	20,808	52%	18,992	48%
2.	2012/13	40,000	22,886	57%	17,114	43%
3.	2013/14	57,114	37,623	75%	19,491	25%
4.	2014/15	60,000	35,487	59%	24,513	41%
5.	2015/16	120,000	85,945	72%	34,055	28%
6.	2016/17	123,000	0	0%	123,000	100%
7.	2017/18	126,100	0	0%	126,000	100%
8.	2018/19	130,000	0	0%	130,000	100%
9.	January 2019 to January 2020	135,000	0	0%	135,000	100%

Source: TTU Headquarters (2020).

As the data in Table 1 demonstrates, the number of teachers due for promotion on Tanzania Mainland increased every year. Moreover, not all teachers whose promotions were due benefited from the prompt elevations that followed the onset of the OPRAS. Data further shows that, besides the authorised independent body dealing with teachers' promotion, the TSC was earmarked to offset promotions from 2016 to 2019, during which there were no promotions, no increments, and no recruitment.

In reality, the promotion practices revealed that the TSC is not a solely independent body responsible for teachers' promotion on Tanzania Mainland (Sanga et al., 2024). Typically, three departments are responsible for promoting teachers: The Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), which holds key responsibilities, including maintaining teachers' records on a seniority basis and issuing letters of promotion to higher levels; the District Executive Director, who is responsible for preparing the budget and reviewing teachers' OPRAS forms; and the Treasury in the Ministry of Finance, which is responsible for authorising a budget and implementing the new salary scale (The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 1977). These three departments can cause confusion for teachers when it comes to executing the promotion process transparently, as the duties of each department lack clear clarification. Consequently, it is problematic for teachers to determine which department is responsible for addressing a particular issue related to their promotion process. Hence, the reason for undertaking this study is to address the following research questions: How do teachers view the TSC for delayed promotions that occurred between 2011 and 2020? What factors hindered the getting of feedback on teachers' delayed promotions?

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

The study employed a qualitative research approach, which was suitable for the topic due to its flexibility in collecting data through interviews during field research (Rudolph et al., 2020; De La Croix et al., 2018). Specifically, the study employed a phenomenological design, aligning with its purpose special to examine human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved (Fusch et al., 2018). The units of analysis were teachers from four secondary schools, who were due for promotion from 2011 to 2020 but were not promoted and one teacher each from four selected secondary school who were timely promoted.

Research Site

This study was conducted in the Mara region, particularly in Butiama District. The Mara Region was purposely selected based on the Teachers Service Commission and Chama cha Walimu Tanzania data of 2020, which revealed that from 2011 to 2020, Mara was the leading region with the highest number of unpromoted teachers, at 67%, compared to other regions. Additionally, the purposive sampling technique was employed to select the study area. Butiama District was purposely selected because it had a large number of unpromoted teachers compared to other districts in Mara Region. According to CWT and TSC data from 2019, the Data revealed that Butiama district had a total of 359 secondary school teachers, whereby 230 (64%) were due for promotion since 2015. However, up to January 15, 2020, they had not received a promotion. Data for other districts are as follows: Tarime 40(11%); Rorya 30(10%); Bunda 20(05%); Musoma 40(10%) and Serengeti 30(8%).

Participants

The study's targeted sample consisted of 31 participants in total. The following categories of respondents were purposely selected based on their typicality and expertise possession; one Tanzania Teachers Union leader (TTU), four Ward Education Officers (WEOs), one Teachers Service Commission officer (TSC), four Heads of government secondary schools, one District Human Resource Officer (DHRO) and 20 government secondary school teachers. The sampled population were selected because it was considered to be more knowledgeable and experienced to give out their views (Adler, 2022).

Critical case sampling technique used to select 20 teachers (Four teachers who were timely promoted and 16 teachers who were suffered to delayed promotion) based on gender and experience. These cases were purposely chosen likely to yield information with the highest impact in this study (Farquhar et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2018). The researcher selected five teachers in each sampled secondary school in Butiama District. The use of the document known as "Tange ya Walimu" (Tange ya Walimu is the book at the TSC office which contains teachers' information in seniority list) helped to get schools with many unpromoted teachers. Then, the teachers were grouped in small cases based on gender and the number of years they worked that is four to five years, six to seven years, eight to nine years, ten years and above while unpromoted. From this technique, two males and two female teachers in each selected secondary school were purposely selected. The outcome of this process managed to get 16 teachers; there after one teacher who was promoted timely was purposely selected in four schools to get four teachers thus make a total of 20 teachers. These teachers were given pseudonyms to ensure ethical issues.

Data generation

Data were generated through interviews, Focus Group Discussions and documentary review. A total of six interview sessions were conducted at the participants' workstations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather detailed information from the participants. The research questions, "What are the teachers' views towards TSC on delayed promotion between 2011 and 2020?" and "What were the factors which hindered feedback for teachers' delayed promotion?" guided the interviews. The interview provided the researchers with the opportunity to establish rapport with respondents and restructure the questions whenever necessary to elicit detailed information for the study. Each interview session lasted for about 30 to 45 minutes (Mitchell et al., 2018).

The focus group discussion was used to collect data from secondary school teachers who had an extra promotion problem (Teachers who have not been promoted for two or more phases, meaning that those who have been employed for 08 years now without getting any promotion and have never committed any disciplinary problems). The identified teachers were six (three male and three female). These teachers were purposely selected from 20 teachers based on the issue of extra promotion. Two FGDs were held. All six teachers participated in the focus group discussion, which was conducted at the school compounds of "SA" and "SD". Each session lasted for sixty minutes.

Secondary data was collected through a documentary review. A documentary review was used as a supplement to the data collected through other methods (Monrouxe & Rees, 2020). This technique was used to collect data from the TSC office documents. The documents which were reviewed included the teachers' data book, which is commonly known as "TANGE YA WALIMU". This book contains the names of all the teachers in the district, listed in order of seniority. Furthermore, teachers' files. Fifteen letters written by teachers to remind them of their promotion, as well as those from the ministry level concerning promotion issues, were also reviewed.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using a thematic data analysis strategy, which involved six stages revealed by Braun and Clarke (2013). The researcher became familiar with the data, generated initial codes, searched for themes, reviewed these themes, defined and named them, and ultimately produced the report, as described by Braun and Clarke (2013). Thematic data analysis was adopted due to its flexibility, which provides researchers with a valuable tool to deal with complex accounts, capturing and interpreting data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The aim was to analyse the data collected from the field to arrive at the same conclusion as stated by Adler (2022) and Israel (2013).

Ethical statement

The University of Dar es Salaam provided clearance letters for conducting the study. The Regional Administrative Secretary from the Mara Region and the District Administrative Secretary from Butiama district provided permission to collect the data. The researcher sought participants' consent to participate in this study. The consent forms provided participants with the freedom to stay or withdraw from participation at any time. Moreover, the study uses pseudonyms for participants and secondary schools to maintain confidentiality. Heads of school were represented by H1-H4 whereas W1-W4 stand for Ward Education officers and "SA", "SB", "SC" and "SD" are substitutes for Secondary schools. Furthermore, all the 16 participating teachers go by their respective pseudonyms. The names Atende, Asiwemo, Aweza, Ahidi, Aziza, Asha, Achiva, Apewe, Akiba, and Afadhali are for female teachers whereas Jopo, Japota, Juhudi, Jiunge, Jichoshe, Jualika, Juma, John, Jumbani, and Jeshimo are for their male counterparts. All the female names started with the letter "A" whereas male names start with the letter "J".

FINDINGS

Teachers' Views on TSC and Delayed Promotions between 2011 and 2020

The objective examined the teachers' views on TSC's delayed promotions between 2011 and 2020. The findings revealed that interviewed teachers were disgruntled with the Teachers' Service Commission for delaying their promotions. For example, during focus group discussion with teachers, various views emerged regarding TSC in the context of promotions. One of the participants said:

The Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) is not an independent body when it comes to handling our promotions. They seem to be reluctant to act effectively on our promotions. I wish the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) managed all the teachers' employment and promotion, as it did in the past. In my view, leaving promotion issues under the TSC has only created more challenges for us (FGD: 15th March, 2020).

Moreover, during an interview, the researcher noted that the delayed recognition of teachers' promotion could affect their terminal benefits, which are calculated based on an employee's final salary. In this regard, one interviewee revealed the presence of teachers who are set to retire in the next two months that were also complaining about their delayed promotions from TGTS E to TGTS F since 2015. Also, respondents pointed fingers on associated benefits, including salary increases and unpaid salary arrears. In short, teachers' views on the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) regarding delayed promotions were largely too hostile because findings confirmed that were teachers received promotion letters, before any changes in their salaries were made. However, in they received a letter cancelling their promotion. Teacher Afadhali from (SD) had this to confirm:

I was supposed to be promoted since 2016. I received a promotion letter in 2016, but my salary did not change for a year. Surprisingly, the Teachers' Service Commission Office (TSC) did not provide any explanation for this. In 2017, I received another letter that cancelled the 2016 promotion letter. Neither salary nor arrears provided. Similarly, in 2019, I received a letter from the TSC office that cancelled the 2017 promotion letter. To this day, my salary has not been adjusted. So, where do I stand? (Interview: 08th March, 2020).

Respondents comments compelled the researcher to delve into the reality. During an interview, a TSC officer said:

I am aware that teachers' comments to TSC are often not satisfactory. Teachers should understand that we are here for their welfare. Although in this incidence I have witnessed the need for seminars to empower teachers to understand their responsibilities, ethical issues and the rights of promotion inclusively. There were promotions which were cancelled and we provided feedback to teachers. We are now finalising their promotion (Interview, 19th April, 2020).

On the other hand, a document review reveals that TSC officers are tasked with representing teachers' welfare and discipline. As such, they can serve as inspectors and intellectual comfort managers who have focused on the teachers' commission's vision and mission. The document review further revealed that TSC officers should serve as teacher simulators and provide daily training to impart new knowledge to teachers about their rights, including their right to prompt promotion. As the 2016-2021 Teachers' Service Commission Strategic Plan confirms:

TSC has a vision to be an excellent organisation in quality service delivery to Primary and secondary school teachers in the public service, with a focused mission to deliver and ensure timely quality services to teachers through appointment, promotion and disciplinary actions for quality education (p. 19).

Implicitly, the TSC has an obligation to ensure quality service delivery among both primary and secondary school teachers, including the timely handling of their promotions. Moreover, findings also revealed the need of government to make purposive effort to empower the TSC officers to get sole authority on teachers as their employer including provision of adequate financial and professionally trained human resources who can volunteer to deal with demotivated teachers. The adequate financial resources will help the TSC officers to conduct regular capacity building seminars for both the pre-service and in-service teachers ethical value and OPRAS issues. Currently, findings noted the presence of teachers who are just complaining while their information revealed that are not yet to be promoted

Findings also, confirmed the need for transport facility to TSC officers that can manage officers capable of paying regular visit of schools to check teachers working environment while adherence to professional rules and regulations through dissemination of professional guidelines and policies. It is evidenced that the TSC officers' regular visits in schools will provide teachers with an opportunity to share their ethical dilemmas they encounter regarding the OPRAS to enhance on time promotion.

On other hand, during the interview with the TSC and DHRO officers it was revealed that there are different criteria used to promote teachers, including: factors such as seniority which serving as an additional advantage, an excellent working performance and discipline. Although they insisted that timely promotion depends heavily on the budget, that is the precisely amount of money allocated by the employer for salary increments and arrears. The DHRO evidenced that they are responsible to make a budget which later effect promotion process but sometimes they counter a challenge in the ceiling from the central government; in which only few workers managed to be promoted while other fail to receive new salary rank on time. Furthermore, DHRO pointed out that sometimes during promotion process Lawson can face network connection during uploading names or employee's particulars hence disturb the process that can result into promotion delaying to few employees.

These findings imply that the mentioned challenges were easily been solved through provision of feedback and close communication. Finding from this study noticed the need of transparent during promotion process. In order to minimise ambiguity, the demarcation of functions to all departments deal with teacher's promotion should clearly identified in the transparent ways. The findings also evidenced that in 1980s to 2013 an innocent teacher was likely to get promotion on every three years but currently is four years. Thus, the TSC officers were required to provide regular feedback to teachers on this change, but the ongoing wait remains frustrating. Findings also highlights the need for training on factors which hinder timely promotion.

DISCUSSION

The research question of this study examined teachers' views on TSC on delayed promotion between 2011 and 2020. The results indicate that participants were not fully satisfied with the Teachers' Service Commission's handling of their promotions. This finding aligns with Kabarata (2023), whose study on the effectiveness of the Teachers' Service Commission in ensuring quality services to public secondary school teachers in Ruangwa district revealed that the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) has been an ineffective organ, as it has failed to promote teachers promptly. The study also noted that the TSC's failure to promote teachers promptly is an indication that the commission is underperforming (Kabarata, 2023). Moreover, the study participants in this study revealed that, from 2011 to 2020, Butiama teachers' promotions had not been systematic, resulting in confrontation between teachers and the TSC office.

Further analysis, conducted through a document review, validated these findings. Specifically, Circular No. PSC/TSD/FA.346/452/01/29 of 1st December 2015, which provides instructions to the TSC on how to promote teachers. This circular has doubled the number of teachers' complaints to TSC, as it has increased bureaucracy in the promotion process. Teachers who believed they were liable for promotion by receiving a promotion letter had their promotions cancelled by the secular authorities. The findings contradict those of Oniver et al. (2024), who noted that a successful employer values its employees by promoting them promptly. Moreover, a study by Nchimbi (2019) on OPRAS enforcement in Tanzania's local government authorities found that the promotion procedures should be handled with great care to avoid negative attitudes among employees towards their organisation. The study suggested that vice versa can lead to employees leaving, resulting in a lack of qualified employees for some positions.

The respondents contended that the TSC office should make a purposeful effort to resolve the existing enmity. Teachers contend that, as their employer, the TSC's positive relationship with the TSC office is inevitable. These findings align with the study by Wanjala and Baariu (2019) in Merti Sub-County, Kenya, which recommends that the TSC develop fair criteria for the deployment, transfer, and promotion of teachers to mitigate complaints and unnecessary confrontations. Moreover, Kareithi's (2018) findings on the effect of the performance appraisal System on the performance of Secondary School Teachers in Kirinyaga West Sub-County, Kenya, revealed that Kenyan teachers felt that TSC policies were unsupportive of issues related to remunerations and promotions. Similarly, a study by Ogot and Chui (2017) on the critical analysis of the influence of teacher management on learners' academic performance in public primary schools in Kenya noted that, in 2013, the national court of Kenya ordered a 50-60 per cent increase in teachers' salaries. Surprisingly, the TSC betrayed teachers and rushed to the Court of Appeal on such a salary increase. This action led to a confrontation between the Kenya Teachers Service Commission and teachers, resulting in strikes that contributed to poor academic performance in schools (Rutto and Nchanga, 2022; Ogot & Chui, 2017). Implicitly, the TSC office needs to institute significant changes in the provision of services to employees and teachers. The TSC office typically mandates substantial changes in the supervision of teachers, as highlighted by Swai and Malingumu (2022) in their study on the impact of the reward system in motivating teachers in public secondary schools within Ilala Municipality. Their research indicates that both rewards and motivation play a vital role in cultivating a harmonious work environment among staff.

On the other hand, findings confirmed that teachers' delayed promotions lacked transparency in reality that the TSC officers were not open enough to provide teachers with feedback regarding their delayed promotions. The findings were inconsistent with Raj et al. (2020) and Ayege (2019), who emphasised the importance of appraisal, evaluation, and feedback for both employers and employees. Implicitly and crucially, feedback helps employees identify areas for improvement and future development. Moreover, feedback assists supervisors in job rotation, determining training needs and providing motivation to employees. In connection with this aspect, Matimbwa and Masimba's (2018) study on the benefits of OPRAS in the Kilolo District Council, Tanzania, revealed that without feedback, teachers will lose the opportunity to improve their performance and practices, which could enhance their competence.

These findings align with a study by Mbukwin and Matoka (2023) on the effect of OPRAS on employees' performance in Mtwara Municipality, which highlighted how both positive and negative feedback to employees is crucial for OPRAS to be effective. This imply that teachers perceive transparency and regular feedback regarding their delayed promotion as a means to increase trust and confidence. In this regard, empirical studies reviewed (for example, Frederico et al., 2021; Elitumaini et al., 2021; Murphy, 2020) suggest that performance appraisal feedback is a crucial process that helps workers identify their strengths and weaknesses, and it also enables supervisors to make informed decisions about promotions, demotions, or terminations for their employees.

LIMITATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study was limited to just four public secondary schools. To enhance the credibility of the findings for generalisation purposes, it is recommended that further research be conducted in different districts and regions across Tanzania. The findings indicated that the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) offices require adequate resources to facilitate regular visits to schools, fostering a close and supportive environment to address teachers' issues, particularly concerning promotions. Furthermore, it is essential for the TSC headquarters to develop a policy outlining the rights of senior, high-performing, and disciplined teachers regarding timely promotions to address the existing promotion backlog.

CONCLUSION

The study findings reveal three essential insights. Firstly, teachers experience uncertainty concerning their employer, the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), reflecting a lack of confidence in the organisation's operations. Secondly, the research insisted transparency and feedback in every step on promotion evaluation results. This lack of timely feedback was contrary to the teachers' expectations. Finally, the study has highlighted that, for the TSC to function more efficiently and effectively, it is crucial to ensure they are equipped with adequate financial resources and a sufficiently staffed workforce. Such an investment in both human resources and capitation could further improve the TSC's handling of teachers' promotions.

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Conflict of interest: The authors have no conflict of interest. The study is relevant to the content of this article.

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