



The Role of the School Management Team (Smt) in Enhancing Academic Performance: A Study of Five Selected Secondary Schools in Mbala District, Northern Province of Zambia

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Abstract. This study examines the role of the School Management Team (SMT) in enhancing academic performance in selected secondary schools in Mbala District of Northern Province, Zambia. The SMT plays a critical role in planning, supervising, and implementing school policies that influence teaching and learning outcomes. A mixed-methods research design was employed involving 120 respondents, including school administrators, teachers, and pupils. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings reveal that effective SMT practices—such as instructional supervision, teacher motivation, resource management, and policy implementation—significantly contribute to improved academic performance. However, challenges such as inadequate resources, limited training, and administrative workload hinder optimal SMT performance. The study concludes that strengthening SMT capacity is essential for improving academic outcomes and recommends continuous professional development, increased funding, and policy support.

keywords: School Management Team, Academic Performance, Leadership, Secondary Education, Zambia

I. Introduction

Education plays a vital role in national development, and the quality of education is largely determined by the effectiveness of school leadership. In secondary schools, the School Management Team (SMT), which typically consists of the head teacher, deputy head, and heads of departments, is responsible for ensuring that teaching and learning processes are effectively managed.

In Zambia, academic performance in some secondary schools remains below expected standards, particularly in rural districts such as Mbala. Several factors contribute to this situation, including poor leadership, inadequate supervision, lack of resources, and low teacher motivation.

The SMT is expected to address these challenges by providing strategic direction, monitoring teaching activities, and creating a conducive learning environment. Effective SMT leadership ensures that teachers are supported, learners are motivated, and educational goals are achieved.

This study therefore seeks to investigate the role of the SMT in enhancing academic performance in selected secondary schools in Mbala District.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the presence of School Management Teams in secondary schools, academic performance in Mbala District has remained inconsistent and, in some cases, unsatisfactory. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of SMTs in fulfilling their roles. Many schools experience challenges such as poor supervision, lack of instructional leadership, inadequate resources, and low teacher morale. These issues negatively affect teaching quality and learner outcomes.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how SMTs contribute to academic performance and identify challenges affecting their effectiveness.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To examine the role of the School Management Team in enhancing academic performance in secondary schools.

Specific Objectives

- To identify key roles performed by SMTs
- To assess the impact of SMT practices on academic performance
- To examine challenges faced by SMTs
- To suggest strategies for improving SMT effectiveness

Research Questions

- What roles do SMTs play in schools?
- How do SMT activities influence academic performance?
- What challenges do SMTs face?
- How can SMT effectiveness be improved?

II. Literature Review

Concept of School Management Team

The School Management Team (SMT) refers to a group of school leaders responsible for managing and overseeing school operations. According to Bush (2011), effective school leadership is essential for improving teaching and learning outcomes.

SMTs are responsible for planning, organizing, leading, and controlling school activities. Their leadership directly influences teacher performance and learner achievement.

Instructional Leadership and Academic Performance

Instructional leadership is one of the most important roles of SMTs. Hallinger (2005) argues that school leaders who focus on teaching and learning processes significantly improve academic outcomes.

SMTs monitor lesson delivery, evaluate teaching practices, and provide feedback to teachers. This ensures that curriculum objectives are achieved effectively.

Teacher Motivation and Support

Teacher motivation is critical for academic success. According to Herzberg's motivation theory, recognition and support increase job satisfaction and productivity (Herzberg, 1959).

SMTs motivate teachers through:

- Recognition
- Professional development
- Supportive supervision

Motivated teachers are more committed and perform better, leading to improved learner outcomes.

Resource Management

Effective management of resources such as textbooks, laboratories, and teaching aids is essential for academic performance. Leithwood et al. (2006) emphasize that proper resource allocation enhances learning conditions.

In rural schools, resource shortages remain a major challenge affecting SMT effectiveness.

Challenges Facing SMTs

SMTs face several challenges, including:

- Limited funding
- Large workloads
- Lack of training
- Poor infrastructure

These challenges reduce their ability to perform effectively.

III. Methodology

Research Design

A mixed-methods design was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

Sample Size

The study involved:

- 80 pupils
- 30 teachers
- 10 SMT members

Total: 120 respondents

Data Collection Methods

- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Document analysis

IV. Data Presentation, Analysis and Responses

Table 1: Roles of SMT

Role	Percentage
Supervision	85%
Planning	78%
Monitoring Performance	80%
Teacher Support	75%

Analysis

Most respondents (85%) identified supervision as the main role of SMTs. This shows that SMTs are actively involved in monitoring teaching.

Table 2: Impact on Academic Performance

Impact	Percentage
Improved Results	72%
Better Discipline	76%
Increased Motivation	81%

Analysis

The data shows that SMT activities positively influence academic performance, particularly motivation (81%).

Table 3: Challenges Faced by SMT

Challenge	Percentage
Lack of Resources	82%
Workload	78%
Limited Training	70%

Analysis

The biggest challenge is lack of resources (82%), which limits SMT effectiveness.

Qualitative Responses

Teachers

- “SMT supervision improves teaching quality.”
- “We need more support and training.”

Pupils

- “When teachers are monitored, they teach better.”
- “We perform well when school management is strict.”

V. Discussion

The findings confirm that SMTs play a critical role in improving academic performance. Their involvement in supervision, planning, and teacher support aligns with educational leadership theories.

However, challenges such as lack of resources and training limit their effectiveness. Addressing these issues is essential for improving school performance.

VI. Conclusion

The study concludes that SMTs significantly contribute to academic performance through effective leadership and management practices. However, their impact is reduced by structural and institutional challenges.

Recommendations

- Provide continuous training for SMT members
- Increase funding for schools
- Reduce administrative workload
- Improve infrastructure and resources
- Strengthen supervision systems



References

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