

Head Teacher's Choice of Words: A Communicative Competence for School – Based Team Building in Tanzania

Bahati Kulwa

Agency for the Development of Educational Management

ABSTRACT: The choice of words, holds a special role in instilling and reinforcing school-based team building activities. The reviewed studies based in Tanzania have generally revealed that though head teachers rely predominantly on the use of verbal communication upon building team work; some schools experience weak teams while others experience strong teams. This study was therefore crafted to assess head teacher's choice of words: a communicative competence for school – based team building in Tanzania. Through quantitative correlational approach, the data were gathered from both head teachers and teachers by using questionnaire survey. A multiple linear regression analysis was performed and the findings revealed that head teachers' choice of words had a positive impact on team building. However, cases of variations were determined depending on the nature of words. Particular variations could be attributed by difference in communicative competence among head teachers. As a result, some schools benefit from strong teams, while others face challenges due to weaker collaboration. The study recommends the need for designing a training on head teachers' communicative competence to create a baseline for common understanding and application of communication in team building activities. This will help to have insights on proper selection of choice of words upon building team work.

KEYWORDS: Communication, Communicative Competence, Choice of words and Team building

INTRODUCTION

Choice of words is an essential aspect that plays a vital role in helping educational leaders to achieve team building in an organization. Educational leaders are expected to assume practical application of communicative competence related to choice of words to realize effective team building within educational institutions (Sofia & Shunhaji, 2023). This will eventually contribute to collaboration, commitment, and participation of all experts in quality improvement of school programs as a whole. In the same vein, Lubis, Mesiono, (2023) and Mesiono, Hutagaol, Ismiatun, Saragih, & Nazri (2023) support that, head teachers are expected to have ability to select appropriate words upon engaging school members to work collaboratively. This entails that, through appropriate choice of words; head teachers can best engage students and staff and turn challenges into opportunities hence effective implementation of school activities.

Experiences from the field suggest that head teachers' choice of words has less influenced team building in schools as cases of weak teams and confrontations continue weakening school operations (Don & Arumugam, 2019 and Liou & Bjorklund, 2023). The absence of effective team building promotes isolation from others, and disappointment among the members, hence yielding poor performance in schools. This particular challenge has been common at local and globe level.

Dvir, Commuri, Yang & Romano (2023) working on the impact of words choice on information engagement and decision making in New York indicate that; information engagement varies from place to another depending on word selection competences. This suggests that, interlocutors with appropriate word selection competence enhance the level of information engagement for collective decision making unlike their counterparts.

Moreover, Zhu (2024) working on the power of words in enhancing communication, motivation, and performance in the work place underscores that, word choice fosters cooperation, employee engagement and reduce employee turnover. This situation is also observed in Philippines, Malaysia, China, and Afghanistan (Don & Arumugam, 2019; Dugang, 2020; Xiu, 2019). This suggests that, lexical choice is crucial in promoting collective implementation of school plans.

On the other hand, a study by Jumabayev (2022) on the effect of sentiments in communication indicates that using rude words in communication hinders team building in Austria. This practice has been responsible for the failure of team work among potential

Head Teacher's Choice of Words: A Communicative Competence for School – Based Team Building in Tanzania

stakeholders. Similarly, a study Alinor (2022) working on the real time impact of microaggressions indicates that the use of microaggression words stimulates negative feeling which in turn inhibited collective decision-making approach. Correspondingly, Gombakomba, Oyedele, Chikwature & Oyedele (2017) present that, the application of gossiping words contributes to social separation in Zimbabwe. This phenomenon has contributed to weakening of school programmes.

Tanzania in particular, reviewed studies indicate that, there are multiple barriers hindering effective team building in schools, including poor communication, lack of strong initiatives, and paltry relationships among members of the school community (Makewa, Ngussa, Arego & Kuboja, 2016; Masanja & Chambi, 2020). Nevertheless, communication appears as the most serious and recurrently observed factor hindering effective team building (Masanja & Mwita, 2021; Messang & Mkulu, 2022; Bulindori, 2017). This consistent observation highlights the need for a special focus on communication as a determinant factor for team building. the present study therefore was designed to examine head teacher's choice of words: a communicative competence for school-based team building in Tanzania.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leader's choice of words affects team stability at work place. As evidenced in a study conducted in Israeli; head teachers' choice of words was a pooling factor for teachers transfer. This clearly portrays that decisions are also affected by the words addressed to interlocutors (Datal, 2019; Buskila & Levi, 2021).

According to Sugano-Nicolu (2016), a study on the speech patterns of young learners in Indonesia revealed a prevalent use of profanity. This frequent application of abusive words was found to be a significant catalyst for lack of team building. Furthermore, the research suggests that such words foster an individualistic and isolating learning environment, which impedes sharing of knowledge, skills, and diverse orientations among students.

A study by Coats (2021) on swearwords indicates that men employed a great deal of profanity words. the use of particular words ultimately fostered biasness across generations in Finland. Particular practice limited collaborative engagement among team members. In African context, Dauda, Sunday & Benjamin (2023), observed that the use of clear words, was essential for improving teamwork among diverse stakeholders in Nigeria. The use of clear words helped to create a shared understanding, which in turn boosted accountability and supports towards attainment of educational objectives.

Similarly, in East Africa, careful word choice has been shown to build trust, respect, and team morale. Well-chosen language fosters positive psychological attitudes and reinforces solidarity at both individual and community levels. According to Fontana, Peverelli & Giacomazzi (2022), the deliberate choice of words was crucial in fostering trust, respect, and team work in East African contexts. Their research shows that this deliberate choice of words positively influences people's mindset, which in turn promotes a powerful sense of unity, both among individuals and throughout the wider community.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was guided by two specific objectives: examine choice of words commonly used by head teachers upon building teamwork in schools and assess the influence of head teachers' communication choice of words in team building. A predictive correlational research design was employed to assess the influence of head teachers' choice of words on team building. In terms of respondents of the study, the study comprised a mixture of respondents from different categories (head teachers and primary school teachers), who were purposively and randomly sampled. A criterion-based purposive sampling method was used to select head teachers (n = 20), while a simple random sampling technique was utilized to select primary school teachers (n = 120).

A structured questionnaire was developed and administered to respondents and the collected data were coded, cleaned, and subjected into IBM SPSS Statistics version 20 for analysis. A Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was performed to determine the strength and direction of the association between the variables. Additionally, the study findings were interpreted based on the correlation coefficients, and statistical significance was judged at the thresholds of $*p* < .05$ or $*p* < .01$.

RESULTS

Table 1: Head teachers' choice of words for team building

Communication strategies	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Normal words are used to influence team building	266	3.30	1.184
Words indicating request is used to influence team building	266	3.34	1.228
Convincing words are used to influence team building	266	3.55	1.355
Commanding words are used to influence team building	266	3.00	1.442
Empathetic words are used to influence team building	266	3.09	1.169

Head Teacher's Choice of Words: A Communicative Competence for School – Based Team Building in Tanzania

Threatening words are used to influence team building	266	3.73	1.101
Thankful words are used to influence team building	266	3.67	1.030

Data from table 1 indicate that all the seven items had mean ratings that are greater than average mean of 2.5. In particular, the use threatening words was rated to have influenced team building at the highest mean average of (M=3.73), followed by the use of thankful words with mean average of 3.67, convincing words with mean average of (M=3.55), the use of request words (M=3.34) and the use of normal words (M=3.30). The highest ratings assigned to threatening words and thankful words imply that head teachers consider particular nature of words to have potential benefit in fostering team building. Never the less, the highest rating (threatening words) signifies presence of head teachers with cohesive and authoritative behaviors hence are thought to be detrimental to the growth of team building activities.

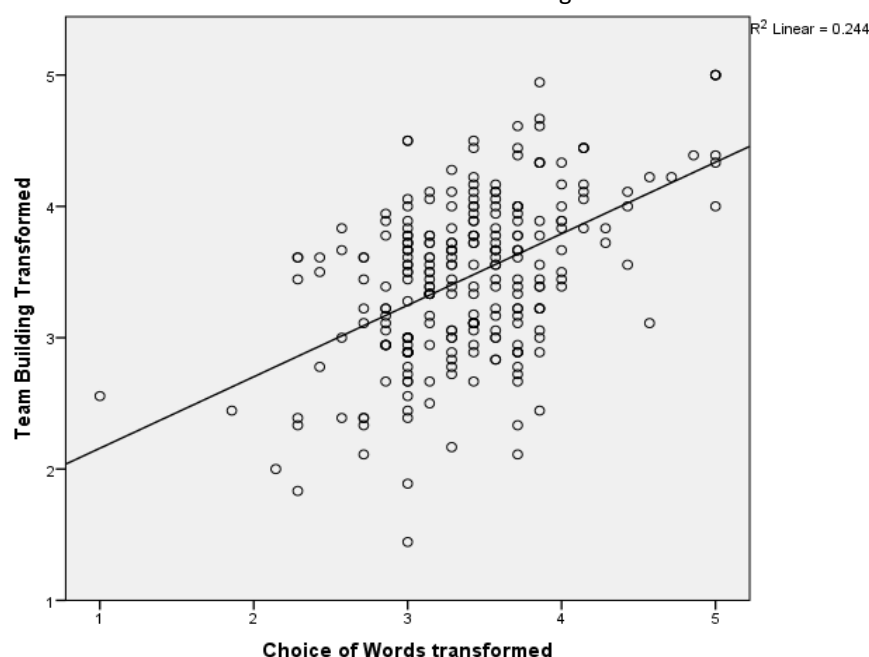
Table 2: The influence of head teachers' choice of words on teambuilding Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	1.614	.202		7.992	.000	1.216	2.011
1 Choice of Words transformed	.545	.059	.494	9.240	.000	.428	.661

a. Dependent Variable: Team Building Transformed

Correlation findings from table 2 show that, head teachers' choice of words had positive influence and statistically significant with a standardized coefficient of 0.545, *P-value* of 0.000 as rated by respondents. Similarly, the results further show that, for every one-unit increase of 0.545 predictor variable (choice of words), the outcome variable (team building) increases at 0.428. This suggests that the choice of words had positive correlation and statistically significant thus causing a linear influence between head teachers' choice of words and team building.

This result is also supported by the results observed from scatter plot in the figure provided. The overall patterns of the scatter plot diagrams indicate that, the points are upward distributed from left to right, signifying that as independent variable (choice of words) increases, the dependent variable (team building) also increases. Additionally, this tendency also implies that, there is a positive influence between head teachers' choice of words and team building.



DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of Dauda, Sunday & Benjamin (2023), leaders' word choices in team building are shaped by their underlying interests and intentions. This perspective is supported by study findings. The current study finding articulates significant and positive impact of head teachers' choice of words in team building activities. Consequently, head teachers' choice of words is essential for cultivating a strong sense of unity and collaboration within the school community. In view of Westdijk (2018), poor selection of words can undermine efforts to build a cooperative institutional culture, ultimately hindering the goal of achieving genuine teamwork.

Based on the study's findings, the initial hypothesis was supported, confirming that a head teacher's choice of words significantly and positively impacts team building. The regression analysis indicates a measurable positive relationship: as a head teacher's communication becomes more deliberate and effective (a one-unit increase), the level of team building within the school improves correspondingly, with coefficients of .031 and .428. This demonstrates that effective verbal communication by school leaders is a key driver in fostering stronger team dynamics in the Tanzanian context

The current results align with those of Rungrojsuwan (2022), who emphasized the importance of a leader's language as a key tool in fostering successful team development within organizations. In a similar vein, Westdijk (2018), from a linguistic standpoint, noted that leaders who employ appropriate words generally succeed in their team building endeavour. Conversely, leaders who tend to use intimidating or threatening words are less successful in promoting team work. This study reinforces the idea that head teachers' word choices significantly impact team-building efforts. As such, it is essential for head teachers to be conscious of their choice of words to cultivate a collaborative environment.

REFERENCES

- 1) Bulindori, O. (2017). School board engagement in resolving conflicts in public secondary schools: the case of Ngara District Council, MAED Thesis, Mzumbe University
- 2) Don, Y., & Arumugam, R. (2019). School Management and Leadership: teamwork in school. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Instruction (MDJI)*, 1(2), 14-36.
- 3) Dugang, M. A. P. (2020). School Teamwork and Effectiveness. *Journal of World Englishes and Educational Practices*, 2(2), 92-102.
- 4) Gombakomba, G., Oyedele, O., Chikwature, W., & Oyedele, O. (2017). Facts and Fallacies on Teamwork between School Administrators and Teachers in Secondary Schools in Mutasa District of Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 239-183.
- 5) Jumabayev, A. (2022). *The Effect of Sentiments in Communication on a Team Performance*, Doctoral Dissertation, Central European University
- 6) Liou, Y.H., Bjorklund, Jr, P. (2023). Understanding teacher networks formation amidst reform: a mixed methods study on collaborative structure, network intentionally, closeness, and school climate. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 143, 104296
- 7) Lubis, Q., Mesiono, M., Azhar, A., Faisal, F., & Kholid, A. (2023). Internal Communication Function of Madrasah Principal (Communication Analysis at Elementary Education Institutions). *Jurnal Basicedu*, 7(1), 944-954.
- 8) Makewa, L.D., Ngussa, B. M., Arego, S. & Kuboja, J. (2016). Correlational team work in secondary schools: A case of Musoma Municipality, Tanzania. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(1), 26-31
- 9) Masanja, N. & Chambi, W. (2020). The effect of team building process on organizational performance: a case of Northern Tanzania Conference. *Contemporary Journal of Education and Business*, 1(1), 25-45
- 10) Masanja, N. M., & Mwita, J. K. (2021). The Effects of Cultural Diversity on Employees' Teambuilding: A Case of Private Organizations in Arusha City. *International Journal of Innovation in Education and Business (IJIEB)*, 3, 23-35.
- 11) Messanga, A., & Mkulu, D. G. (2022). Management strategies on reducing interpersonal conflict in public secondary schools in Tarime Urban, Mara, Tanzania. *Direct Res. J. Educ. Vocat. Stud*, 4(5), 165-173.
- 12) Sofia, S., Syaidah, K. & Shunhaji, A. (2023). Principal's Effective Communication and Teacher Performance: A classroom Perspective. *Kekola: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan*, 10(2), 101-114
- 13) Zhu, Y. (2024). The power of words: exploring the role of psycholinguistics in enhancing communication, and performance in the work place. *Communications in Humanities* 61(1), 7-19



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.