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Professional Competence of School Board Members and Teacher Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Morogoro District, Tanzania

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Abstract: **This study evaluated how the professional competence of school board members affects teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Morogoro District, Tanzania. A convergent mixed-methods design, grounded in a pragmatist research philosophy, was employed. Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 80 teachers selected through simple random sampling from ten public secondary schools, and qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with ten heads of school and ten school board members purposively selected from the same schools. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively using SPSS version 20, and qualitative data were analysed thematically. The questionnaire items on professional competence showed high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.848). Teachers rated board members' knowledge of educational policies and practices lowest among the ten competence items (mean = 3.77), yet strongly agreed that board expertise improves their motivation (mean = 4.66) and the quality of decisions affecting teaching (mean = 4.54). Interview evidence suggested a domain-specific rather than general competence gap: boards were described as performing well in financial governance and community relations but as weaker in educational policy and curriculum governance, a gap that several board members acknowledged. Interpreted through Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, board competence appeared to function as both a hygiene factor and a motivator, while the policy-knowledge gap pointed to a hygiene-related weakness. The study concludes that board members' professional competence supports teacher job performance, but that this contribution is constrained by a specific and correctable gap in knowledge of educational policy. Structured, institutionalised training for school board members in educational policy and governance is recommended.**

Keywords: **school board competence; teacher job performance; educational governance; Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory.**

1. INTRODUCTION

School governance has become central to efforts to improve the quality and accountability of education systems, and school boards are widely recognised as governance bodies expected to translate policy into functioning institutional practice at the school level (OECD, 2023). In Sub-Saharan Africa, boards of governors and similar local structures form part of the governance and management of secondary schools, including the management of teachers (World Bank, 2008). Within this governance function, the professional competence of individual board members, meaning their knowledge, skills, and understanding of the responsibilities they hold, has been identified in the literature as a factor that shapes whether governance structures actually support the schools they oversee.

Evidence from Kenya shows that school Boards of Management have often operated with members whose formal education and training in policy interpretation, strategic planning, and financial management fell short of statutory expectations, which constrained the boards' capacity to discharge their functions effectively (Mbii, Magoma, & Waweru, 2020). A more recent study in Wajir County, Kenya, found a significant positive correlation between capacity-building strategies for school boards of management and effective school governance, and respondents reported little effort by schools to strengthen board capacity through training (Nyambane & Botha, 2025). The pattern suggests that statutory governance responsibilities are frequently assigned to board members whose competence has not kept pace with those responsibilities. Neither study, however, measured teacher job performance as an outcome.

In Tanzania, school boards established under the Education Act are mandated to oversee school management, financial accountability, policy implementation, strategic planning, teacher welfare, and institutional performance. Recent Tanzanian scholarship has examined related governance functions, including school leadership and instructional supervision (Mabula & Mkulu, 2022) and school board effectiveness in relation to teacher job performance more broadly (Kapelela & Manyengo, 2024). The specific contribution of board members' professional competence, as distinct from supervision or resource management, to teacher job performance has received comparatively little direct empirical attention within this body of research.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

School board practices, including the professional competence of board members, are expected to shape key dimensions of teacher performance through their influence on governance decisions, institutional support, and the working environment in which teachers operate (OECD, 2024; Kapelela & Manyengo, 2024). Where board members possess adequate professional knowledge, they may be better placed to make informed decisions, provide strategic guidance, and support effective school management; where such competence is limited, governance may instead be associated with weaker decision-making and reduced institutional support for teachers (Macha & Mhagama, 2022).

Existing evidence on school board competence, most directly the Kenyan studies noted above, has examined board composition, training, and capacity building without directly measuring teacher job performance as an outcome variable. The relationship between board competence and teacher performance has therefore remained a plausible but largely untested proposition in the literature reviewed for this study. In Tanzania, and specifically in Morogoro District, no known empirical study was identified that has examined the contribution of school board members' professional competence to teachers' job performance in public secondary schools. The gap matters because Morogoro District has experienced continuous expansion in secondary school enrolment, which increases the governance demands placed on school boards and makes the adequacy of board members' capacity to meet them a question for direct empirical examination. The present study addresses this gap by examining how school board members' professional competence relates to teacher job performance, drawing on teachers' perceptions alongside the accounts of heads of school and school board members themselves.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To address this gap, the study set out to evaluate how the professional competence of school board members affects teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Morogoro District, Tanzania.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, distinguishes between two categories of workplace factors: hygiene factors and motivators (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Hygiene factors are extrinsic conditions, such as supervision, organisational policy, and working conditions, whose absence generates dissatisfaction but whose presence does not by itself produce motivation. Motivators are intrinsic factors, such as recognition, achievement, and opportunities for growth, that actively enhance job satisfaction and performance. A central proposition of the theory is that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not opposite ends of a single continuum but are produced by two distinct sets of factors, so that removing a source of dissatisfaction does not, by itself, create satisfaction.

Although the theory was developed outside the education sector, it continues to be applied and tested across organisational settings, including schools, more than six decades after its introduction. A recent systematic review of fifty peer-reviewed applications found moderate positive relationships between motivator factors and job satisfaction, and between hygiene factors and the prevention of dissatisfaction, across service-oriented organisations (Kehui, Loong, Yuan, Xinyue, & Marimo, 2025), which supports its continued relevance to occupational settings such as schools.

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4.2 Relevance of Herzberg's Theory to Professional Competence of School Board Members and Teacher Job Performance

Applied to school governance, Herzberg's framework suggests that the professional competence of board members is not confined to a single category of factor but may operate across both dimensions at once. As a hygiene factor, competence shapes the basic institutional conditions under which teachers work: sound decision-making, coherent policy implementation, and informed governance oversight remove sources of dissatisfaction associated with administrative confusion, inconsistent decisions, or weak institutional support. Where board members lack the knowledge to interpret policy or engage meaningfully in academic matters, this hygiene function may be only partly fulfilled, leaving a governance-related source of dissatisfaction unresolved.

Competence may also extend into the motivator dimension. Where board members are seen as knowledgeable and able to give strategic direction, this may work as a form of institutional recognition of teachers' professional needs, contributing to their sense of achievement, confidence, and aspiration to perform better, effects more closely associated with motivators than with the mere avoidance of dissatisfaction. This dual positioning offers a plausible mechanism through which board competence, or its absence, may be experienced by teachers not simply as background governance quality but as a directly felt influence on their working conditions and motivation.

This framing does not fix professional competence as either a hygiene factor or a motivator. It offers an interpretive lens for understanding why teachers might respond differently to specific dimensions of board competence, valuing the general presence of expertise strongly while remaining more critical of particular components, such as policy knowledge, where that expertise appears less developed. This distinction between the general presence of competence and the specific domains in which it may be lacking forms the interpretive basis carried into the empirical review and, later, into the findings of the study.

5. EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical attention to the professional competence of school board or governing body members has been limited compared with research on school leadership and supervision. The literature reviewed for this study draws mainly on evidence from Kenya, together with more recent work on school governance and teacher outcomes, including Tanzanian studies.

Mbii, Magoma, and Waweru (2020) reviewed empirical research on the composition and practices of secondary school Boards of Management (BOMs) in Kenya. They found that, in some boards, members held only primary-level education against policy requirements, and that training of BOM members in policy interpretation, strategic planning, and financial management was not treated as a priority despite being a statutory requirement. The review concluded that inadequate composition and training constrained BOMs' competence and effectiveness as school managers, and it recommended mandatory, regular training for board members. Because it is a review of existing Kenyan studies and not a new primary data collection, it describes patterns established across several individual studies rather than a single fresh dataset. Importantly, it did not directly measure teacher job performance as an outcome; its focus was board composition, training, and managerial effectiveness. The present study extends this line of inquiry by examining, through direct data collection in Morogoro District, whether a comparable competence pattern is associated with teachers' own reported job performance.

Nyambane and Botha (2025) used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to investigate capacity-building strategies for school boards of management in public primary and secondary schools in Wajir County, Kenya. They concluded that the capacity of board members influences how effectively schools are governed, and they reported a significant positive correlation between capacity-building strategies and effective governance. Respondents' agreement that schools strengthen board capacity through training and professional development was very low (mean = 1.92 on a five-point scale), and respondents called for government-led programmes that include training on education policy development and implementation, on the grounds that board members who understand how policies affect schools can contribute to better educational outcomes. The study is relevant here because it points to the same domain, educational policy, in which the present study locates the board's main weakness. Its outcome of interest, however, was the effectiveness of school governance and not teacher job performance.

Within Tanzanian scholarship, Kapelela and Manyengo (2024) examined school board effectiveness and teacher job performance and reported reservations among teachers about board members' knowledge of educational policy, particularly in schools where board membership criteria do not require formal educational qualifications. This finding is directly relevant here because it identifies the same domain, policy knowledge, as a point of concern in a Tanzanian setting, and so offers a

basis for comparison with the present findings. Ejeh (2025), who examined school governance and teacher effectiveness in developing countries, found that decision-making quality was significantly higher in schools whose board members had relevant educational and professional expertise, and that schools where board members were perceived as lacking such expertise experienced lower teacher morale, greater resistance to governance decisions, and weaker overall school performance. This evidence links board expertise to both decision quality and morale-related outcomes, which is useful for interpreting teachers' confidence in governance decisions in the present study.

Mwenda (2025) examined institutional support and teacher job performance in Tanzanian secondary schools and identified institutional support from knowledgeable governance bodies as an important contributor to teachers' intrinsic motivation and aspiration to perform at a higher level. This offers a direct point of comparison for the motivational dimension of board competence, although Mwenda addressed institutional support broadly and did not isolate the professional competence of school boards as a distinct governance function. Abonyi (2024), who examined participatory leadership and teacher engagement in secondary schools, associated participatory and competent school governance with greater teacher engagement and professional performance. This broader governance perspective is consistent with the expectation that competence and participatory practice together shape teacher outcomes, although the study did not isolate professional competence as a variable in the way the present study does.

Taken together, the literature reviewed establishes a reasonably consistent pattern: board competence is associated with governance effectiveness, decision quality, and, in some studies, teacher morale or motivation. However, the Kenyan studies that most directly examine board competence and capacity (Mbii et al., 2020; Nyambane & Botha, 2025) did not measure teacher job performance as an outcome, focusing instead on board composition, training, capacity building, and governance effectiveness. The more recent studies (Kapelela & Manyengo, 2024; Ejeh, 2025; Mwenda, 2025; Abonyi, 2024) move closer to outcomes related to teacher performance, but they do so within broader governance or leadership framings. None of the studies reviewed combines a focused examination of board members' professional competence with integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence from teachers, heads of school, and board members themselves.

5.1 Research Gap

The literature reviewed reveals a gap that can be characterised along four related dimensions.

First, a geographical and contextual gap exists. The most direct empirical evidence on board competence reviewed for this study comes from Kenya (Mbii et al., 2020; Nyambane & Botha, 2025). Comparable direct evidence situated in Tanzania, and specifically in Morogoro District, was not identified.

Second, a substantive gap exists in the Tanzanian literature reviewed. Tanzanian scholarship relevant to school governance has addressed transformational and democratic leadership, instructional supervision by heads of school, and general school board effectiveness (Mabula & Mkulu, 2022; Kapelela & Manyengo, 2024), with comparatively little attention to the professional competence of board members as a governance dimension distinct from supervision or resource management.

Third, an outcome gap exists in the studies most directly concerned with board competence. Mbii et al. (2020) examined board composition, training, and managerial effectiveness, and Nyambane and Botha (2025) examined capacity building and governance effectiveness, but neither measured teacher job performance as an outcome variable, so the relationship between board competence and teacher performance is inferred rather than empirically demonstrated.

Fourth, an empirical gap specific to Morogoro District follows from the above: no known empirical study was identified that has examined the contribution of school board members' professional competence to teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in this district.

The present study responds to these gaps through a convergent mixed-methods design in Morogoro District. It examines how teachers themselves perceive the relationship between board members' professional competence and their own job performance, and it draws on the accounts of heads of school and board members about the domains in which board competence is, and is not, well established. This design lets the study speak more directly to the outcome gap than the composition- and training-focused work it builds on, while remaining cautious about the descriptive, cross-sectional nature of the evidence it generates.

5.2 Conceptual/Analytical Framework

The analytical framework guiding this study focuses on the pathway between school board members' professional competence and teacher job performance, drawing on the theoretical positioning outlined in Section 4 and the empirical patterns reviewed above.

Professional competence, understood as board members' knowledge of educational management, policy, and governance responsibilities, is theorised to shape teacher job performance through several related channels. First, competent board members are expected to be better placed to make informed decisions and provide strategic guidance on matters affecting teaching and learning. Second, this competence is expected to shape the quality of governance support available to teachers, including the board's capacity to respond to academic challenges raised within the school. Third, these governance-level effects are theorised to shape teachers' working environment, their confidence in governance decisions, and their motivation, consistent with the dual hygiene-and-motivator function outlined in Section 4.2. Finally, these intervening conditions, namely confidence, motivation, and a supportive working environment, are theorised to shape teacher job performance itself.

This pathway, professional competence → informed decision-making, strategic guidance, and governance responsiveness → teachers' working environment, confidence, and motivation → teacher job performance, is offered as an analytical framework for interpreting the associations examined in this study. It is not presented as a tested causal chain. The convergent mixed-methods design allows the study to examine associations between teachers' perceptions of board competence and their perceptions of their own job performance, and to draw on qualitative accounts from board members and heads of school to illustrate plausible mechanisms underlying these associations, but it does not permit claims of statistical mediation or causal proof between the stages of the pathway. The framework is therefore used throughout the remainder of the manuscript as an interpretive structure for organising the findings and not as an established causal model.

6. METHODOLOGY

This paper reports one of the three objectives of a wider study on school board practices and teacher job performance. The study was underpinned by a pragmatist research philosophy, which allows researchers to draw on different methods and sources of evidence according to the nature of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), and it adopted a convergent mixed-methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analysed separately, and then integrated. It was conducted in Morogoro District, Tanzania, which was selected because its public secondary schools differ in student, teacher, and management characteristics and because active school boards are involved in school governance. The target population comprised 736 teachers, 36 heads of school (one for each of the 36 public secondary schools), and 396 school board members, according to official records held by the Secondary Level Officer (S.L.O.) of Morogoro District Council. Following the criterion of Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) that a sample of 10 to 30 per cent is appropriate where the population is below 10,000, 10 of the 36 schools (about 28 per cent) were sampled. Within these schools, 80 teachers (about 10.9 per cent of the 736) were selected by simple random sampling: a sampling frame of teachers was prepared, each teacher was assigned a unique number, and participants were drawn by lottery so that every teacher had an equal chance of selection. One head of school and one school board member from each sampled school, 10 of each, were selected purposively because of their administrative responsibilities, firsthand experience of board operations, and ability to provide detailed information on school governance.

Data were collected in May 2026. Quantitative data came from a structured questionnaire administered to the 80 teachers. Its professional competence section contained ten items rated on a five-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree; six items were selected for in-depth analysis, and all ten are reported in Table 1. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the 10 heads of school and 10 school board members, guided by an interview guide that covered board members' knowledge and experience, their contribution to decision-making on teaching and learning, and their influence on accountability, cooperation, and professionalism among teachers. Responses were recorded through note-taking and, where permission was granted, audio recording. All 80 questionnaires were returned and all 20 interviewees took part, giving a response rate of 100 per cent in each category; interviewees are identified by codes (HOS A–HOS J and SBM1–SBM10). The instruments were reviewed by research experts at Jordan University College and pre-tested in public secondary schools outside the sample, and amendments were made before data collection. Reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha, using 0.70 as the threshold for acceptable internal consistency (Trizano-Hermosilla & Alvarado, 2016; Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020); the professional competence construct recorded 0.848, the highest of the three constructs in the wider study (supervision practices, 0.721; resource management practices, 0.755). Questionnaire data were analysed with SPSS version 20 using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. Interview data were transcribed verbatim, coded, and grouped into themes aligned with the study objective, and the qualitative findings were then integrated with the quantitative results. Research permission was obtained from Jordan University College and from the relevant authorities in Morogoro District, and an introduction letter from the university was presented to educational authorities and heads of the selected

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schools. Participants gave informed consent, took part voluntarily, and were told that they could withdraw at any stage without negative consequences; the names of participants and schools were not disclosed, and codes were used to protect identities.

7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Overview of Findings

This section presents findings on how the professional competence of school board members relates to teachers' job performance in the sampled public secondary schools. Quantitative evidence is drawn from six items on the teacher questionnaire, selected for in-depth analysis on the basis of the strength of the item and the depth of the corresponding interview evidence. Each result is presented alongside qualitative evidence from the ten heads of school (HOS A–HOS J) and ten school board members (SBM1–SBM10) interviewed, so that the interview accounts help to explain the patterns in teachers' responses. The section closes with an integrated discussion that draws the six items together, interprets them through Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and compares them with the literature reviewed in Section 5.

Table 1 presents the full distribution of responses from the 80 teachers who participated in the study. The six items examined in depth in Sections 7.2 to 7.7 are drawn from this table; the remaining four items are reported for completeness and are not discussed individually.

Table 1: Teachers' Responses on Professional Competence of School Board Members and Teacher Job Performance (n = 80)

SN	STATEMENT	SD		D		U		A		SA		MEAN
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	School board members demonstrate adequate knowledge of educational policies and practices.	9	11.2	5	6.2	2	2.5	43	53.8	21	26.2	3.77
2	The professional expertise of board members enhances the quality of decisions affecting teaching.	0	0.0	2	2.5	1	1.2	29	36.2	48	60.0	4.54
3	Competent board leadership contributes to a conducive teaching and learning environment.	1	1.2	3	3.8	2	2.5	22	27.5	52	65.0	4.51
4	I trust decisions made by board members who demonstrate high professional competence.	2	2.5	3	3.8	2	2.5	34	42.5	39	48.8	4.31
5	The board's understanding of instructional needs positively influences my teaching effectiveness.	2	2.5	3	3.8	4	5.0	29	36.2	42	52.5	4.33
6	Lack of expertise among board members undermines my confidence in school governance.	1	1.2	1	1.2	2	2.5	17	21.2	59	73.8	4.65
7	Skilled board members provide strategic direction that supports teacher performance.	4	5.0	3	3.8	1	1.2	29	36.2	43	53.8	4.30
8	The board's ability to address academic challenges improves my instructional delivery.	0	0.0	5	6.2	3	3.8	14	17.5	58	72.5	4.56
9	Professional competence among board members promotes accountability and performance standards.	3	3.8	3	3.8	2	2.5	30	37.5	42	52.5	4.31
10	The board's expertise in educational management motivates me to achieve higher performance levels.	1	1.2	0	0.0	1	1.2	21	26.2	57	71.2	4.66

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree U = Undecided A = Agree SA = Strongly Agree F = Frequency % = Percentage

Source: Field Data, 2026

7.2 School Board Members' Knowledge of Educational Policies and Practices

Teachers' agreement that school board members demonstrate adequate knowledge of educational policies and practices was the weakest of the six items examined, with a mean of 3.77. Of the 80 respondents, 43 (53.8%) agreed and 21 (26.2%) strongly agreed, while 9 (11.2%) strongly disagreed, 5 (6.2%) disagreed, and 2 (2.5%) were undecided. The nine respondents who strongly disagreed represent the highest proportion of strong disagreement recorded on any item in the questionnaire, which sets this item sharply apart from the other five discussed in this section. The 17.4 per cent who disagreed or strongly disagreed is also the largest share of disagreement on any of the ten competence items.

School board members' own accounts corroborated this pattern. SBM10 identified policy knowledge as the board's principal weakness, describing it as "the most significant gap that exists in our board," and specifying "a clear understanding of what education regulations actually say, what teacher performance standards genuinely require, and what governance practices best support professional excellence in our schools generally." SBM4 gave a more differentiated account: "The board performs well in areas of financial governance, community relations, and strategic oversight, areas where members' diverse professional backgrounds are an asset. Where we are weaker is in the specific domain of educational policy, curriculum governance, and teacher professional standards." SBM3 pointed to unevenness within the board, describing its weakness as "uneven knowledge among the members," with those who lack this knowledge tending "to follow the lead of others without adding substantive input." A head of school likewise described board members as moderately professional and consultative.

Read together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence indicates that teachers' comparatively critical rating of this item corresponds to a gap that board members themselves acknowledged. Competence in the sampled schools is therefore not reported as a uniform quality that the board either has or lacks; it appears to be unevenly distributed across domains, with knowledge of educational policy the area of greatest reported weakness. This agrees with Kapelela and Manyengo (2024), who reported similar teacher reservations about board members' policy knowledge in Tanzania, and with Kenyan evidence that board members often fall short of statutory expectations in policy training (Mbii et al., 2020) and that policy-focused training for boards is considered necessary (Nyambane & Botha, 2025).

7.3 Professional Expertise and Quality of Decisions Affecting Teaching

In contrast to the item above, teachers strongly agreed that the professional expertise of board members enhances the quality of decisions affecting teaching (mean = 4.54). Of the 80 respondents, 29 (36.2%) agreed and 48 (60.0%) strongly agreed, while 2 (2.5%) disagreed, 1 (1.2%) was undecided, and none strongly disagreed.

SBM4's account helps to explain why this item was rated so much higher than the policy-knowledge item. The board, SBM4 said, performs well in "financial governance, community relations, and strategic oversight," areas in which members' varied professional backgrounds are an asset, but is weaker in educational policy, curriculum governance, and teacher professional standards. A head of school added that board members hold decision-making authority across governance, policy-making, human resource management, and finance. Teachers therefore appear to distinguish between the board's general contribution to decisions, which draws on members' diverse backgrounds, and the narrower, education-specific knowledge examined in Section 7.2. The strength of agreement here suggests that they do not carry the policy-knowledge weakness over into a general view that board decisions are poorly informed. This is consistent with Ejeh (2025), who found that decision-making quality was higher where board members had relevant educational and professional expertise.

7.4 Competent Board Leadership and the Teaching and Learning Environment

Teachers also strongly agreed that competent board leadership contributes to a conducive teaching and learning environment (mean = 4.51). Of the 80 respondents, 22 (27.5%) agreed and 52 (65.0%) strongly agreed, while 3 (3.8%) disagreed, 1 (1.2%) strongly disagreed, and 2 (2.5%) were undecided.

A head of school linked board competence directly to this wider environment, stating that competent boards support academic development, teacher growth, and effective oversight. SBM3, however, qualified the picture. The same account that identified a competence gap described the board's weakness as "uneven knowledge among the members," noting that those who lack this knowledge "tend to follow the lead of others without adding substantive input." Building on this, the present analysis suggests, as an interpretation and not as a claim made by SBM3, that the conducive environment teachers report may be sustained by the more knowledgeable members and not by uniformly strong competence across the whole

board. This does not contradict the strongly positive quantitative result. It offers one plausible reading of why a favourable environment and acknowledged unevenness in competence were reported together, and it points to a risk: relying on a few highly competent members is less secure than ensuring adequate competence among all of them.

7.5 Board Expertise, Motivation and Higher Performance

The item with the highest mean among the six examined concerned the motivational effect of board expertise: teachers strongly agreed that the board's expertise in educational management motivates them to achieve higher performance levels (mean = 4.66). Of the 80 respondents, 21 (26.2%) agreed and 57 (71.2%) strongly agreed, while 1 (1.2%) strongly disagreed and 1 (1.2%) was undecided.

HOS J linked this motivational effect to the board's contribution across several dimensions of institutional life, stating that "competent board members guide school development, support teacher training, and encourage collaboration between leadership and staff," and that board expertise "strengthens institutional growth, ensures continuous professional learning opportunities, and fosters a cooperative environment where administrators and educators work together toward shared goals." SBM8, reflecting on the board's own limitations, connected the fuller realisation of this effect to further training, stating that the board "would benefit enormously from structured governance training that equips members with the necessary expertise to make better decisions," and that such training "strengthens collective understanding, promotes consistency, and ultimately enhances our support for educators."

SBM7 gave a specific account of how a gap in educational knowledge was reported to affect a decision with consequences for teachers' professional development. Describing a board discussion on professional development allocations, SBM7 explained that "members without education backgrounds did not appreciate the connection between professional development investment and classroom performance outcomes," and that, as a result, "the discussion itself remained brief, and the allocation approved was minimal." The account is informative because it goes beyond the general statement that competence matters and describes a concrete resource decision in which the absence of relevant knowledge among some members was reported to have limited investment in teachers' professional development, one of the channels through which board expertise is theorised to relate to teacher motivation and performance.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that teachers report a strong association between board expertise and their own motivation. The qualitative accounts indicate that board members themselves see structured training as the means of realising this effect more fully, and they describe at least one instance in which a gap in educational knowledge was reported to have produced a more limited outcome for teachers. The result is consistent with Mwenda (2025), who identified institutional support from knowledgeable governance bodies as an important contributor to teachers' motivation and aspiration for higher performance.

7.6 Lack of Board Expertise and Confidence in School Governance

Teachers strongly agreed with the negatively worded statement that a lack of expertise among board members undermines their confidence in school governance (mean = 4.65). Of the 80 respondents, 17 (21.2%) agreed and 59 (73.8%) strongly agreed, while 1 (1.2%) disagreed, 1 (1.2%) strongly disagreed, and 2 (2.5%) were undecided. Because the item is negatively worded, agreement reflects a critical view of the consequences of inadequate board expertise and not a positive assessment of governance. The near-unanimous agreement confirms, from the opposite direction, the concern reflected in teachers' comparatively low rating of policy knowledge in Section 7.2.

The most direct qualitative evidence came from SBM6's account of personal limitations: "I do not have a formal education background, and I have not received any training in school governance. I follow rather than lead in those discussions, and as a result, teachers can sometimes be poorly served by governance decisions that are made without adequate understanding." This self-report offers a specific reason why teachers might associate limited board expertise with reduced confidence in governance: at least some board members recognised the same limitation in themselves and its possible consequences for the decisions they help to make. A head of school gave a milder, external assessment pointing the same way, describing the board as moderate overall and in need of becoming more professional. These accounts suggest that the gap teachers perceive is real and not simply a matter of perception, a pattern consistent with Ejeh (2025), who found that perceived lack of board competence was associated with lower teacher morale and weaker school performance.

7.7 Board Ability to Address Academic Challenges and Instructional Delivery

Teachers strongly agreed that the board's ability to address academic challenges improves their instructional delivery (mean = 4.56). Of the 80 respondents, 14 (17.5%) agreed and 58 (72.5%) strongly agreed, while 5 (6.2%) disagreed, 3 (3.8%) were undecided, and none strongly disagreed.

A head of school connected competence to the board's handling of academic matters, stating that competent members support academic programmes and transparency. SBM7's account of the professional development budget discussion, noted above, is also relevant, since it describes a case in which the board's engagement with an academic matter, investment in teacher professional development, was reported to have been constrained by some members' limited appreciation of its link to classroom outcomes. Read alongside the strong agreement recorded for this item, the evidence suggests that where the board engages effectively with academic challenges, teachers report a meaningful association with their instructional delivery, while the professional development example indicates that this engagement was not uniformly strong across all types of academic decision.

7.8 Integrated Discussion of Findings

The central pattern. Considered together, the six items show a pattern that is more specific than a general judgement of board competence as adequate or inadequate. Knowledge of educational policy recorded the lowest mean of the six items (3.77) and the highest proportion of strong disagreement (11.2%) of any item in the questionnaire. The other five items, on decision quality (4.54), the teaching and learning environment (4.51), motivation toward higher performance (4.66), confidence in school governance (4.65, negatively worded), and instructional delivery (4.56), all recorded strong agreement, with means between 4.51 and 4.66. The four items not examined individually, on trust in the decisions of competent members, the board's understanding of instructional needs, strategic direction, and accountability and performance standards, show the same favourable picture, with means between 4.30 and 4.33 (Table 1). Teachers therefore do not appear to make a single, undifferentiated judgement about board competence. They separate one domain in which the board is seen as comparatively weak, educational policy, from the wider effects of board expertise, which they rate consistently highly across several aspects of their work. The two highest-rated items, the motivating effect of board expertise (4.66) and the negatively worded item on lost confidence where expertise is lacking (4.65), are almost identical in strength, which suggests that teachers notice the presence or absence of board competence and respond to it as a directly felt influence on their work and not as a background condition. SBM4's account of a board that performs well in financial governance, community relations, and strategic oversight but is weaker in educational policy, curriculum governance, and teacher professional standards offers a plausible explanation of how teachers can rate the general effects of board expertise very highly and one specific component of it considerably lower.

Mechanisms suggested by the interviews. The interviews suggest several ways in which this domain-specific gap may relate to the outcomes teachers reported. SBM3's account of uneven knowledge, and of less knowledgeable members following the lead of others, suggests that the positive results on decision quality and the teaching environment may depend on a subset of more knowledgeable members contributing disproportionately. SBM6's account of having no formal education background or governance training, and of following and not leading in discussions, offers a self-reported explanation for why teachers' confidence in governance falls where expertise is lacking, a link between the results in Sections 7.2 and 7.6. SBM7's account of the professional development budget discussion is the most concrete illustration in the data of how a gap in educational knowledge affected an actual decision relevant to teachers: the discussion was brief and the allocation minimal. SBM8, for their part, linked the fuller realisation of the board's motivational contribution to structured governance training.

What each strand of evidence shows. The two strands of evidence contribute different things. The quantitative results show that teachers as a group rated policy knowledge lower than the other competence items and rated the effects of board expertise on decision quality, the working environment, motivation, confidence, and instructional delivery consistently highly. The interview accounts do not establish a measured causal pathway between these results; they offer plausible, illustrative explanations drawn from board members' reflections and specific examples. That board members themselves acknowledged the gap that teachers rated lowest strengthens confidence that the pattern reflects a real feature of board functioning in the sampled schools and not teacher perception alone. Even so, the data are teachers' self-reported perceptions analysed descriptively in a cross-sectional design, so the relationship between competence and job performance is best described as an association evident in the data and not as a demonstrated causal effect, and the results should not be generalised beyond the sampled schools.

Theoretical integration. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory offers a useful interpretive lens for this pattern, although it does not prove it and the study does not claim to have validated the theory empirically. Where board expertise was reported to function well, in decision-making, the working environment, and academic engagement, the findings are consistent with the possibility, introduced in Section 4.2, that competent governance operates on both dimensions of the theory: it contributes to favourable working conditions that may reduce dissatisfaction caused by weak or inconsistent governance, and it is also associated with recognition, professional growth, and motivation, which are functions closer to motivators. The highest mean of the ten competence items, on the motivational effect of board expertise (4.66), fits this dual reading because it links board competence to teachers' aspiration toward higher performance and not only to the avoidance of dissatisfaction. By contrast, the policy-knowledge item and the closely related item on governance confidence fit the hygiene side of the theory more closely. The low mean for policy knowledge and the near-unanimous agreement that lack of expertise undermines confidence are consistent with the reading that this specific gap is an unresolved source of dissatisfaction in the governance environment, one not offset by the generally positive perceptions on the other items. This is offered as a plausible reading of the findings through Herzberg's framework and not as evidence that the theory has been tested or confirmed.

Comparison with the empirical literature. The pattern corresponds with findings in the literature reviewed in Section 5. Mbii, Magoma, and Waweru (2020) found that Kenyan Boards of Management frequently had members whose education levels and policy training were below statutory requirements, which parallels the policy-knowledge gap described by SBM10, SBM4, and SBM6 in this study. Nyambane and Botha (2025) found that respondents in Wajir County wanted government-led training for board members that includes education policy development and implementation, which corresponds to the policy-knowledge gap identified here and supports the training recommended in Section 8.2. Because neither Kenyan study measured teacher job performance as an outcome, the present study adds evidence by asking teachers directly about the relationship between board competence and their own performance, and by pairing their ratings with board members' accounts of specific decisions, such as the professional development budget discussion described by SBM7, in which a competence gap was reported to have shaped an outcome relevant to teachers. The findings are also consistent with Kapelela and Manyengo (2024), who reported similar reservations among Tanzanian teachers about board members' knowledge of educational policy, particularly where board membership criteria do not require formal educational qualifications; the policy-knowledge result here (mean = 3.77) corresponds to that reservation in a specific district setting. Ejeh (2025) found that decision-making quality was higher where board members had relevant expertise and that perceived board incompetence was associated with lower teacher morale and weaker school performance; the result on decision quality (mean = 4.54) is consistent with the positive side of that relationship, and the governance-confidence item (mean = 4.65) with its negative side. Mwenda (2025) found institutional support from knowledgeable governance bodies to be an important contributor to teachers' intrinsic motivation and aspiration to perform better, which corresponds to the motivational result here (mean = 4.66). Abonyi (2024) associated participatory and competent school governance with greater teacher engagement and professional performance, and the results on the teaching and learning environment (mean = 4.51) and instructional delivery (mean = 4.56) are consistent with that finding, although the present study isolates professional competence and does not examine participatory governance as a combined construct.

Contribution of the findings. The study adds context-specific evidence from Morogoro District on teachers' perceptions of the relationship between school board members' professional competence and their own job performance, and it identifies knowledge of educational policy as a particular competence gap and not a general deficiency in board capability. It extends the Kenyan evidence, which examined board composition, training, and capacity building without directly measuring teacher job performance, by linking a comparable competence pattern to teachers' reported job performance in a Tanzanian district.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusion

This study set out to evaluate how the professional competence of school board members affects teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Morogoro District, Tanzania. The findings indicate that professional competence is associated with teacher job performance, but that this association is uneven across domains and not uniform across all aspects of board functioning.

Teachers rated board members' knowledge of educational policies and practices as the weakest dimension of competence examined, with the lowest mean of the ten competence items (3.77) and the highest proportion of strong disagreement recorded on any item in the questionnaire (11.2%). At the same time, they reported strong positive associations between board expertise and several outcomes central to their professional experience: the quality of decisions affecting teaching (4.54), the teaching and learning environment (4.51), motivation toward higher performance (4.66), confidence in school governance (4.65), and instructional delivery (4.56). Teachers therefore do not evaluate board competence as a single, undifferentiated attribute. Interview evidence indicates that competence is unevenly distributed across domains: a board member described the board as performing well in financial governance, community relations, and strategic oversight but as weaker in educational policy, curriculum governance, and teacher professional standards.

Qualitative evidence from school board members themselves corroborated this pattern. Board members described uneven knowledge among members, acknowledged gaps in formal education and governance training, and identified policy knowledge specifically as an area requiring strengthening. One account illustrated how this gap was reported to have shaped an actual governance decision on teachers' professional development, suggesting a plausible link between the competence gap identified in the quantitative data and outcomes of direct relevance to teachers' professional support.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that the professional competence of school board members plays an important role in teachers' working environment, motivation, and confidence in governance, and is associated with teachers' reported job performance in the sampled schools. This contribution, however, appears to be constrained by a specific and identifiable gap in board members' knowledge of educational policy and governance responsibilities, and not by a broader deficiency in governance capability. The distinction is consistent with the study's theoretical framing: where board expertise was reported to function well, it appeared to operate as both a source of stable working conditions and a source of teacher motivation, while the policy-knowledge gap appeared to act as an unresolved source of dissatisfaction within the governance environment. Given the cross-sectional design of the study, these findings should be understood as evidence of association between board competence and teachers' reported experience, not as proof of a direct causal effect.

8.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations follow directly from the findings and are intended to be realistic within the governance and resource context of public secondary schools in Morogoro District.

School boards should treat the gap in educational policy knowledge identified in this study as a specific and addressable area for improvement and not as a general weakness in governance capability. Board members should prioritise strengthening their knowledge of educational policies, curriculum governance, and teacher professional standards, consistent with the gap they themselves described, and should take part actively in structured governance training where it is available. Boards should also take deliberate steps to ensure that members without formal education backgrounds are briefed and included in discussions on teaching and learning, so that decisions affecting teachers' professional development, such as the professional development allocation discussed by one board member in this study, rest on a shared understanding of their connection to classroom outcomes. At the same time, boards should maintain and continue to draw on the areas of competence reported as comparative strengths, including financial governance, community relations, and strategic oversight, since these appear to underpin much of the positive contribution teachers associate with board expertise.

Heads of school should continue to work closely with school boards on matters that require specific educational knowledge, given that board members themselves acknowledged relying on others in these discussions. Where it falls within their existing role, heads of school should provide boards with relevant information and clarification on curriculum governance, teacher professional standards, and professional development, helping to address the gap identified in this study without displacing the board's broader governance role.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and District Education Officers should provide or coordinate structured governance training for school board members, institutionalised as a regular in-service programme and not left to occasional provision. The training should give particular attention to educational policy, curriculum governance, and teacher professional standards, the domains identified as comparatively weak in this study, and should complement and not duplicate the competence boards already show in financial governance and strategic oversight.

8.3 Concluding Remark

The findings suggest that strengthening school board members' knowledge of educational policy and governance responsibilities is a targeted and practical means of supporting teacher job performance in public secondary schools in Morogoro District. The evidence points to a specific, identifiable area for capacity building, one that board members themselves recognise and that, if addressed, could help boards extend their broader governance competence into more consistent support for teachers across all areas of their professional responsibility.

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