



# **Perceptions of Teachers towards the Use of Human Capital Management Information System (Lawson) in Payroll Management of Public Secondary Schools in Tanzania**

**Ombeni Msuya<sup>1\*</sup> and Paul Loisulie<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Educational Foundation and Continuing Education, College of Education, University of Dodoma, Tanzania.*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, School of Educational Studies, College of Education, University of Dodoma, Tanzania.*

## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author OM designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author PL managed the analyses of the study, managed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

A case study on the perceptions of teachers on the use of Lawson in payroll management in public secondary schools in Tanzania was undertaken. The study sought on assessing the level of satisfaction of teachers in public secondary schools in Tanzania towards efficiency and effectiveness of Lawson in managing payroll. The study employed mixed methods of data collection including the use of instruments such as an interview guide, questionnaires and documentary review checklist. The study found that, teachers in public secondary schools in Tanzania are aware of the existence of Lawson system. Moreover, it was found that Lawson is a reality not a myth in payroll management of public servants in Tanzania. However, teachers in public secondary schools have

narrow understanding of how the Lawson system works. The main reason is that, they are not given opportunity to attend training and orientations about the system. This study recommends the need to venture on other studies to find out the way to enlighten teachers and other public employees on the importance of the Lawson system. This can go hand in hand with the efforts of ensuring that, public employees have a portion to interact with the system.

*Keywords: Human Capital Management Information System (HCMIS); Lawson; public sector; secondary schools; Tanzania.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Novel technologies, business, services competitiveness and customers' expectations are continued shaping most organization around the World. In contemporary organizational management and leadership approaches, use of e-government to access, store and sharing of information among employees and management is vital and inevitable. In most organizations, information is the source of employee's job satisfaction, productivity and organization growth [8]. Payroll management in organization development is a key component to efficiency and effectiveness on the employees' management in the public service in Tanzania.

A well designed and comprehensive Human Capital Management Information System or Lawson (HCMIS) provides the needed information within the shortest period and reduced cost [9]. Payroll management is basically employees' records management which involves creating records, deleting records and save records for employees according to their information given to the administration of the organization. Payroll management deals with the entire lifecycle of the employee from recruitment to retirement [15]. Due to this fact, the government of Tanzania has always bothered to update and reorganize its functions and duties from time to time.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The swiftly growing and use of information technologies has changed cultures of many organizations worldwide. For instance, in UK the government agencies decided to adopt the use of Human Resource Information System as the need to respond to an increasingly demanding public, listing increased customer responsiveness and improved quality of services (Storey [13]). Similarly, most Asians nations decided to adopt the use of Human Resource Information System in change the bureaucratic culture of most government which halted the

adoption of bottom-up approach (community centered approach (The Global Human Capital Study [14].

As results of global development sparks, a decade ago, some organization in Tanzania started to use of Human Resource Information System. Earlier studies by Gupta have unearthed the significances of using Human Resource Information Systems in Tanzania. As pointed by Gupta [6] human resource information system helps in storage of employees' records that can be retrieved and updated easily. In his later study, Bhattacharya ([1]) added that Human resource information system to a great extent facilitate in compiling employee related information for subsequent use of the same for human resource activities also fulfill the strategic intent of the organization. Furthermore, Loisulie and Mselle [7] insisted on the need for organizational change to accept use of Information Technology in the management of their employees.

### 2.1 Significance of the Study

In the current trend of high enrolment of civil-servants and expansions in the public sector in Tanzania, demand to take a new route in the administration and management of the Public Service is impelling. The pressure to transform from a centrally controlled bureaucracy to a more decentralized, flexible and initiative-led institution was no longer inevitable in 2000s. A number of reasons behind this move were outlined such as to introduce new policies, principles and practices that ensured that public servants became motivated, conducted themselves to the highest ethical standards, and that they put their skills and talents to productive use [16]. As the strategies to attain such goals, different initiatives were developed and implemented [15].

One of the initiatives is the Tanzania's Public Service Reform Programme (PRSP) which aimed to streamline government, reduce employment numbers, introduce wage bill

control, and improve public service incentives, accountability, skills, service delivery and management systems [15]. The goal was a smaller, affordable, well-compensated public service with the emphasis on results and outcomes. Streamlining the government and introducing wage bill control alongside with PSRP was the introduction of HCMIS. This information system is introduced in human resources management on the assumption that, greater efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved in public service delivery [16].

Despite the enthusiastic spirit of the current government to curb grand corruption and unwise use of resources by vanishing all ghost workers from the payroll, one may be tempted to assess the perceptions of employees on the use of Lawson in payroll management. Therefore the current study particularly was sought to examine the perceptions of teachers in public secondary schools on the use of Lawson in payroll management in Tanzania.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a mixed research approach. Creswell [4] defined a mixed method research as a procedure for collecting and analyzing data by mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or series of studies at the same moment to understand a research problem. Data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source data were generated through questionnaires and interviews, while the secondary source data were obtained from official documents through documentary review checklist. Data collecting instruments were validated and tested for reliability. Official permission for data collection was sought from the Municipal and District Executive Directors as a relevant authority. Participants of this study were contacted for their consent and participants' names were kept anonymous. The study used a cross-sectional research design to collect data from 100 respondents. According to Cohen et al. [3] a cross-sectional study is one that produces a 'snapshot' of a population at a particular point in time. The study was conducted in the public sector in Tanzania.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings and discussion of this research study are presented in this section. Both

quantitative data and qualitative information collected from teachers and head of schools from public secondary schools are presented and discussed.

#### **4.1 Perceptions of Teachers on Use of Lawson in Payroll Management**

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that, teachers in public secondary schools in Tanzania were neither in favor of positive nor negative statements. In addition, findings in Table 1 further reveal that teachers in public secondary schools in Tanzania were generally unaware of many activities done by the Lawson. This is evident when analyzing the average performance on positive statement on the use of Lawson (Mean = 2.53). Similarly, the average mean performance of the teachers on negative statements on the use of Lawson was low (Mean = 2.45).

Doubtless, the current study findings are an indication that teachers in public secondary schools are not interacting with the Lawson (software) in their day to day activities. However, the findings have clearly revealed that teachers in public secondary schools are familiar with the existence and use of Lawson in managing their payroll and promotion.

On the other hand, the negative perception of teachers in public secondary schools in Tanzania may have been influenced by lack of neutral scale in used the likert scale questionnaire. The used likert-scale type questionnaires had only four scales without the neutral scale. In most studies that intended to measure employees' attitudes, feelings and perceptions use of neutral scale is said to increase the probability of guess responses. As put forward by Clason & Dormody [2] use of four-point scale without neutral response help to minimize undecided responses. Similarly, numerous studies have used four-point [10].

#### **4.2 Perceptions of Head of Schools on the Use of Lawson in Payroll Management**

##### **4.2.1 Lawson ensures records keeping**

Data obtained during the interview with head of schools revealed that Lawson has continued simplifying the tedious work of previous manually approval of staff data in various public secondary schools. Now, the Lawson has simplified process of filling new data and retrieving data for

**Table 1. Teachers’ perceptions on use of Lawson in public secondary schools**

<b>Positive statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>
HCMIS (Lawson) as a system performs excellently	2.56	1.166
HCMIS (Lawson) is well organized	2.51	1.059
HCMIS (Lawson) is somehow expensive	2.74	1.143
HCMIS (Lawson) is a transparent system	2.54	1.086
HCMIS (Lawson) controls payroll malpractices	2.65	1.132
HCMIS (Lawson) has eradicated promotion delays.	2.16	1.269
<b>Average mean</b>	<b>2.53</b>	
<b>Negative statements</b>		
HCMIS (Lawson) is poorly structured	2.21	1.057
HCMIS (Lawson) is difficult to be used	2.13	1.031
HCMIS (Lawson) is too complicated to use	2.15	.936
HCMIS (Lawson) creates godlike HRs	2.51	1.168
HCMIS (Lawson) creates godlike IT experts	2.60	1.163
HCMIS (Lawson) is not a participatory system	2.73	1.213
HCMIS (Lawson) is weaker due to poor power supply, poor bandwidths and poor infrastructure	2.85	1.218
<b>Average mean</b>	<b>2.45</b>	

Source: Field Data, 2016 Key: 4 = completely true, 3 = True, 2 = not true and 1 = completely not true

in-service teachers. It was further argued that, head of schools together with staff from Human Resource department at the respective district or municipal can update any data, add or remove any name of employee than experienced previously. Head of school commended the ability of Lawson to tracking and establish the status of employees in each department and specific school.

In addition, it was argued that use of Lawson has simplified the process of preparing monthly salary and cleaning of ghost workers. This could be further interpreted that, before the use of Lawson there was misappropriation of government funds by paying salaries to ghost (pseudo) workers in Tanzania. During the interview one head of school from city council said that:

*Lawson has been very effective during payroll verification of our staff. Now it is easy to control the teachers who are present and absentees during payroll verification before payment of monthly salaries.*

The above verbatim quote suggests that before the use of Lawson in public sector, it was difficult in managing employees’ records. As pointed out earlier management of employees’ records and removal of ghost workers from the public payroll in Tanzania has been a critical challenge over decades [5]. As observed by Sawe and Maimu [11], despite of the ability to identify some 16,000 ghost workers out of a total of around 350,000

employees of public sector in Tanzania, the follow-up attempts to reconcile the census data with the actual payroll were unsuccessful. Moreover, the current study findings support the contemporary efforts made by the government of Tanzania to lessen the government expenditures for ghost workers amount to \$ 2 million due a month [17].

**4.2.2 Lawson ensures effective communication**

It was noted that Lawson has been an effective communication tool among head of institutions and the government. Data obtained during the interview with head of secondary schools indicated that Lawson has facilitated sharing of reliable information from the government. Moreover, head of schools insisted that Lawson has managed to update employees’ bio data and other information on time.

The above findings corroborate with earlier study by Storey [13] that Lawson is effective to be used by the government agencies to ensure effective communication between employees and institutions. These current study findings are well versed in the previous study by Sawe and Maimu [11] who asserts that the main challenge with Tanzania Civil Service was the lack of systematic data collection and dissemination of information among the employees. As a result, lack of effective communication may lead directly to a crisis in personnel information management and

an inability to target the wage bill and plan human resource deployment.

#### **4.2.3 Lawson ensures transparency and accountability**

During the interview respondents insisted that Lawson has opened room for accountability, transparency and integrity. It was further argued that, head of schools and staff responsible for salary and payroll management do not temper with the salaries and other employees' benefits. During the interview one head of secondary school said that;

*I can assure you that, since its establishment, Lawson has increased accountability, transparency and integrity among the district officials and HR staff. No more corruption and delay of getting information from the district HR department.*

The current study findings had proved the critical challenges of lack of transparent in the previous payroll management of public servants in Tanzania. As noted by Schalkwyk and Widner ([12]) the previous payroll system in Tanzania was coupled with inadequacies in record keeping systems and difficulties integrating the Ministry of Finance and civil service records, which meant that some people continued to collect pay after termination. inadequacies in the payroll and record keeping systems, coupled with difficulties integrating the Ministry of Finance and civil service records, meant that some people (ghost workers) continued to collect pay after termination, while new employees often.

Despite of the very fascinating qualities of using Lawson in public secondary schools, Lawson is said to have some critical challenges that warrant for its review. During the interview, both teachers and head of schools acknowledges that were familiar with some challenges that makes Lawson malpractices.

#### **4.2.4 Late updating of employees' data**

Available data reveal that teachers were complaining of late updating of their bio data and other employment records. It was learnt that, data for new and in-service employee are not instantly updated in Lawson. This delay has caused a number of challenges for employees to get their work benefits instantly and other related rights. It was further argued that inadequate of qualified staff to manage and use Lawson has

created unnecessary delays in promotions and other teachers' benefits.

The current findings affirm the previous study by Schalkwyk and Widner ([12]) who found that some staff responsible for payroll was computer illiterate and unmotivated. Furthermore, Sawe and Maimu ([11]) noted that despite of the influential computer staff responsible for payroll management in Tanzania, deliberately they frustrated the process of updating the payroll as most of them had a stake in the continued existence of ghost workers.

#### **4.2.5 Lawson is not for all employees**

During the interview, teachers were demanding for the personal accessibility to Lawson for effective management of their data and getting information. Teachers were blaming the government for failure to create access of Lawson for every employee in public sector like the open access to UTUMISHI portal. During the interview one teacher said that:

*We are the public servant, trusted to teach students but we cannot access our own employment records through Lawson. Lawson must be made accessible to every public servant to create trust on information and sharing of the results.*

From the above quote, it implies that employees in public sectors could use the Lawson for verification of their bio data rather than waiting for one staff at district level. It can be further interpreted employment data for various employees could be update and used accurately if only every employee could update and verify his or her own data. The above findings are in line with Sawe and Maimu ([11]) who found that 500 employees in public sector in Tanzania were reinstated after mistakenly deletion from the government payroll in 1996.

### **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings of the present study have provided answers to the main objective and suggest that teachers in public secondary schools in Tanzania are aware of the existence of Lawson system. Additionally, it can be concluded that, HCMIS is a reality not a myth in payroll management in Tanzania. Despite of these two facts, the employees have parochial understanding of how the system works. Those who seem to be well

versed with how the system works are the human resources officers and to some extent head of schools. The main reason is that, they are given opportunity to attend training and orientations about the system.

This study recommends the need to venture on other studies to find out the way to enlighten public employees the importance of the system. This can go hand in hand with the efforts of ensuring that, public employees have a portion to interact with the system. Allowing them to interact with the system does not mean leakage of information but creating a mechanism of access control for security purposes.

### DECLARATION

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### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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