

Original Article

# Teachers' Perception of Transferred Headteachers' Self-Awareness Competences in Central Uganda Government Secondary Schools

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Received: 30 September 2024

Revised: 08 November 2024

Accepted: 25 November 2024

Published: 10 December 2024

**Abstract** - Owing to the inherent challenges in the headteacher transfer and succession process in Uganda and the extraordinary new challenges of school leadership, a headteacher's cognitive, academic and technical competencies are no longer sufficient for effective school leadership. This brings emotional intelligence to the fore of effective school leadership. This multiple case study explored teachers' perception of four transferred headteachers' self-awareness competencies in government secondary schools. Using an interview protocol, data was collected from 12 teachers, three from each school. The study established that teachers had a positive perception of the three headteachers, whose self-awareness competence was deemed to be high, and a negative perception of the headteacher, whose self-awareness competence was low. Besides, no direct link was discerned between the nature of headteacher transfer and their self-awareness competencies. Accordingly, the study recommends that all headteachers develop self-awareness competencies needed for effective leadership, particularly in the schools where they are transferred.

**Keywords** - Teachers' perception, Transferred headteachers, Self-awareness competencies, Government secondary schools, Uganda.

## 1. Introduction

Whereas transferring Headteachers (HTs) from one school to another causes a certain level of disruption, policymakers believe that HT transfer is positive and that changing administrators will improve school performance. These expectations provide the rationale for the periodic transfer of HTs whenever needed. In Uganda, HT transfer may be due to voluntary or involuntary factors such as retirement, promotion, overstay, request, rejection, illness, or death [1]. Under normal circumstances, the transfer exercise is motivated by the need to improve school performance and increase HTs' leadership competence.

Traditionally, HTs' competence in Uganda is determined by their academic, cognitive, and technical skills, and to be appointed or promoted as HT, one needs to have proven technical competencies as per the Ministry of Education & Sports-MoES and the Education Service Commission-ESC [2]. So, all HTs must possess the requisite technical competencies to lead the schools to which they may be transferred. One then wonders why some transferred HTs succeed at their new stations while many end up as dismal performers. I, thus, explored the self-awareness competencies

of four transferred HTs in Uganda's government secondary schools from the lenses of the teachers serving under the four HTs.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

In my experience of 15 years as an HT and in my academic study on HT transfer, I have known many cases where transfers have compromised HTs' performance. The transfer exercise is often marred by favoritism, nepotism, and political interference [2] [3] [1], which affects the morale of many hardworking HTs, thereby compromising their performance. Thus, it may come as no surprise that some transfers have led to strikes, resignation, sickness, decline in school performance, and even death [4]. Since all HTs in Uganda have proven technical competencies as a critical requirement for one to be appointed HT in Uganda, why do some transferred HTs perform well at their new stations while many others perform poorly? This brings non-technical competencies, notably emotional intelligence, to the fore of effective school leadership. On this backdrop, I examined four HTs' self-awareness competencies of four HT who were transferred on the grounds of overstay, promotion, requested. I forced considerations through the lenses of the teachers.



### **1.2. Research Questions**

- How do teachers perceive transferred headteachers' emotional self-awareness competency in Central Uganda Government Secondary Schools?
- How do teachers perceive transferred headteachers' accurate self-assessment competency in Central Uganda Government Secondary Schools?
- How do teachers perceive transferred headteachers' service-confidence competency in Central Uganda Government Secondary Schools?

## **2. Methodology**

This section describes the study procedure by giving the methods, population, sample, instrument used for data collection, and approaches to data analysis. The basic purpose of the research was to establish teachers' perceptions of transferred headteachers' self-awareness competencies in Central Uganda government secondary schools.

### **2.1. Study Approach and Design**

The study was qualitative by approach and a multiple case study by design. It was meant to understand and explore teachers' perception of self-awareness competencies of headteachers transferred on the grounds of forced, requested, promotional, and overstay considerations. To investigate this domain of emotional intelligence, one needed to approach participants in their natural setting, and for that matter, a multiple case study was the most apt design for this study. The qualitative approach allowed a deeper understanding of the teachers' perception within a real school setting.

### **2.2. The Study Population and Sample**

The population of the study was all government secondary school headteachers in Central Uganda who were transferred from one school to another in the last five years. However, since this is a qualitative study, I used a purposive sampling technique to select four headteachers in four districts in the study area who were transferred based on forced, requested, promotional, and overstay considerations. After identifying the four headteachers, I selected 12 teachers, three from each school, to serve as the study participants. The 12 teachers were selected because they were already working in the schools when the four headteachers were transferred to those schools. This selection criterion qualified the teachers to give dependable and informed data concerning their respective headteachers' self-awareness competencies.

### **2.3. Research Instrument**

The instrument for data collection in this study was semi structured interview administered by the researcher. The participants' responses from the semi-structured face-to-face interviews were gathered using voice recordings.

### **2.4. Data Collection**

The 12 participants were given detailed information about the study during data collection. Informed consent was

obtained from the 12 participants, who were guaranteed confidentiality. Semi-structured interview tools allowed participants to give detailed views of their respective headteachers' self-awareness competencies. It also allowed probing and in-depth reflections and narratives of the teachers' perceptions of their headteachers' competencies practices. Participants were allowed to choose the time and place of the interview. Most teachers were comfortable meeting the researcher in a secluded place on the school compound to minimize the chances of interruptions and eavesdropping. Participants were also informed of and requested to be audio recorded during the interview sessions for a more accurate capture, transcription, and data analysis. The average duration of interviews with participants was one hour.

### **2.5. Data Analysis Procedure**

In keeping with [5], six stages of data analysis were observed, starting with the data analysis process by familiarizing ourselves with the data collected. Analysis started with listening to interview recordings and writing every word in the recordings. Data was then broken down into words and phrases using open coding, which allowed deep insight while capturing comparisons and divergence patterns. Ideas were coded into groups and sections, using important quotations, critical incidents, and experiences. Ultimately, themes and sub-themes were developed into content. Common sub-themes were identified and written in descriptive narrative form. Three major themes emerged according to the indicators of the self-awareness domain given by [6]. The three themes were: (i) Emotional self-awareness, (ii) Accurate self-assessment, and (iii) Self-confidence.

## **3. Theoretical framework**

This study was guided by the [6] model of emotional intelligence leadership competencies that highlights four domains of resonant leadership: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management competencies; emotionally intelligent leaders need to accomplish fundamental leadership tasks. Each of the four domains adds a crucial set of skills for resonant leadership, and the four domains are closely intertwined, with a dynamic relationship among them. According to this model, an HT cannot manage his/her emotions well if she/he has little or no awareness of such emotions and/or if his/her emotions are out of control, which in turn means that such an HT will not be able to manage relationships. In other words, [6] postulates that self-awareness facilitates empathy and self-management, which allows effective relationship management in the school. In this study, however, focus was given to the first domain of self-awareness.

## **4. Literature Review**

Headteacher transfer is the movement of HTs from one school to another as a requirement in Uganda's public service standing orders. It happens when a change in school leadership

occurs by removing an HT from the school she/he was heading and posting him/her to a different school, voluntarily or involuntarily. Voluntary transfer is where HTs willingly choose to be transferred to other schools for various reasons [7]. Involuntary transfers occur due to unsatisfactory performance or overstay in the same school. In my study, I considered four motives or bases of transfer: requested, overstay, forced, and promotional transfers. Transfer of HTs goes hand in hand with HT succession [8]. Headteacher succession is a process of replacing HTs in schools. It is an interactive sequencing process for changing school leaders that, positively or negatively, change the dynamics of power and decision making that usually disrupts the school's organizational equilibrium [9]. The transition process sustains, alters or eliminates important changes within schools triggered by the transfer of an HT from one school and his/her replacement of the outgoing HT to take over from the one he/she is replacing [10]. Change in leaders may lead to one of four possible outcomes: (i) little or no effect, (ii) negative effect, (iii) positive effect, (iv) any combination of the above three effects or mixed effects. Besides, the possible effects can be perplexing because of the perceived differences between the anticipated transfer effects and those that actually occur [11] [12]. This implies that MoES, governing bodies, HTs, teachers, students, and communities are happy or disappointed when the outcomes of HT transfer meet or fall short of their initial expectations, respectively.

Given that transfer of HTs from one school to another is an education policy practice worldwide, transferred HTs are expected to improve leadership in the receiving schools significantly [4]. In Uganda, HTs are mandated to see the effective leadership of the schools to which they are transferred. However, in order for HTs, in general, and transferred HTs in particular, to play their school leadership roles effectively, they need to possess certain competencies that transcend traditional school leadership competencies of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries [13]. Against this backdrop, transferred HTs' emotional intelligence leadership competencies become Since a change in headship is such a big deal to schools, one wonders how the basis or motive of an HT's transfer shapes or influences her/his leadership competencies, as perceived by teachers in the school an HT is transferred.

There is considerable agreement that leadership is the second most influential school factor in student learning after teachers and a driving force in achieving school effectiveness, improving student achievement, and school culture [14]. In addition, empirical research suggests that the overall impact of increasing HT leadership competencies exceeds the benefit from a comparable increase in the quality of a single teacher [15]. A change in HT impacts the school's social conditions, can destabilize HT-teacher relationships, and prompt new leaders to exercise their leadership in ways that concur with the expectations of those above or below them [16]. In

addition, changing HTs is a challenging and unpredictable process because the new HT can and usually changes the line of communication, realigns power relationships, and affects decision making [17]. All these factors combined can offset the equilibrium of the school's normal activities [18], which implies that a change in HT may be the most important event in the life of a school [10].

However, even with this instability, a common-sense belief in Uganda is that transferring HTs is a positive thing because changing HTs improves leadership and school performance, and thus, is initiated to increase the HTs' leadership effectiveness. So, the potential benefits of transferring HTs provide the rationale for moving HTs when the need arises. The movement of HTs is precipitated by several environmental factors such as principal retirement, illness, death, overstay, promotion, request, and forced [19] [1]. Regardless of the reasons, HTs' career move to other schools is a significant event in their lives and those of their schools.

Accordingly, HT transfer is confusing because of the differences between the anticipated transfer effects. In Uganda, key stakeholders have been disappointed to realize that the HT transfer did not meet their initial expectations [4]. Indeed, HT transfer in Uganda is a mix of unplanned discontinuity and continuity, i.e. discontinuity with the achievements of an HT's immediate predecessor and continuity with, or decline to, the mediocre state of affairs preceding that predecessor. Nevertheless, while HT transfer accounts for varying degrees of disruption in the schools' existing operations, the positive change appears to be anticipated by almost everyone involved [18]. For instance, [20] reported a story about the government's plans to transfer secondary school Head teachers in 2024 massively. As part of MoES standing orders, HTs are under obligation to accept transfer to any school in any part of the country to pave the way for them to get used to other places of work and not overstaying at the same schools as if the schools were established for them [20]. However, while HT transfer is intended to improve efficiency and effectiveness in school leadership, empirical and anecdotal evidence shows that over the years, the transfer has been marred by favoritism, nepotism, and political interference. Some powerful and well connected HTs in government remain confident that they can only be transferred to schools of their choice at the appropriate time [2] [1]. [3] highlight HT transfer practices that contravene formal and established procedural rules, leading to suspicions of corruption in the form of tribal, religious, and gender biases in public office. Whereas the maximum number of years an HT should stay at the same station is seven, [21] reported a story of MoES transferring 100 headteachers and deputies, many of whom had stayed between fifteen to sixteen years at their stations. Furthermore, [1] [2] shows that the transfer exercise sometimes faces resistance from HTs and the schools to which some HTs are transferred.

The media has been instrumental in reporting HT transfer glitches thus: School Stuck with two HTs after one rejects transfer [22]; School rejects head teacher for not being legally married [21]; MoES halts transfer of Mbale School head under allegations of political influence from the Commissioner [23]; Frequent HT transfers and posting HTs nearing retirement age cripple school [24]; Inspector General of Government recommends transfer or demotion of Old Kampala Secondary School HT due to maladministration, abuse of office, and mismanagement of funds [25]. The HT of 3Rs SS in Kasokoso, currently Buikwe District, committed suicide in river Ssezibwa because of transfer related issues [1].

For the less-connected HTs, transfer takes on a very mysterious connotation as they anxiously wait for the announcement of their annual shuffle. So, the circumstances underlying Uganda's HT transfer exercise may encourage deleterious behaviour on the part of the HTs at their new stations. Well-connected people may exploit this situation to adopt a patronizing stance at their new stations. Those involuntarily transferred from reputable and relatively better resourced schools to less reputable and poorly resourced schools may despondently assume duty at their new stations, making it difficult for them to adjust to the new environment they find themselves in. HTs, whose transfer is a promotion from smaller to bigger schools, may be overwhelmed by the politics and hectic nature of the schools' operations [3].

It should, however, be noted that HTs set the tone and mood of the school through their attitudes and actions. Specifically, the emotional climate the HT sets has been found to influence staff performance, including their sense of job satisfaction and commitment. In other words, what distinguishes great HTs from others is their ability to drive the emotions of those they lead in the right direction. Emotional intelligence is all about an individual's ability to understand and manage her/his own and other people's emotions. So, transferred HTs need to know that their emotional intelligence competencies play a significant role in their ability to fulfil their daily responsibilities as leaders, to the extent that these competencies are essential for effective school leadership [26].

This is key because interactions between the HT and members of the receiving school community characterize HT transfer. It involves much more than replacing one HT with another. It means replacing a series of existing social relationships, i.e. replacing social relationships established by the outgoing HT with new social relationships established by her/his successor [29]. This means that HT transfer is more of a human resources issue than just an individual HT issue, which involves integrating human resources into the school organization's strategy [30]. So, HT transfer is about ensuring that the right HT is in the right school at the right time for the right reason [15]. So, today's generation of HTs faces unprecedented opportunities and challenges. Using these

opportunities to mitigate the challenges requires a deeper understanding of the role of HTs and the technical, academic, and emotional competencies needed to carry out that role effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Considerable research shows that HTs are actors in a social setting, responding to situational and contextual characteristics. School organizations' structure and social context largely determine the necessary and appropriate competencies HTs need to apply within their school environment [29]. Different schools have different work environments. A favorable work environment leads to improved performance and high morale, while an unfavorable environment leads to declining performance and morale. But among all the possible factors, an HT's emotional intelligence leadership competencies are key determinants of a favorable or unfavorable school work environment [30] [31].

According to [6], 50% to 70% of employees think the organizational climate is linked to the leader's actions. Given their position, leaders set the tone and mood of the organization, and this mood has been found to influence the entire organization's performance. It can predict employee satisfaction and retention. For example, upbeat moods make people perceive others or events more positively, boosting cooperation, fairness, and performance in a team. On the other hand, distressful emotions can decrease motivation, attention to detail, and ability to make decisions. Negative moods can take hours to fade away and, as a result, take a toll on people's personal lives. This explains why people prefer to work with leaders with high levels of self-awareness, optimism, enthusiasm, and empathy than those who come across as irritable, touchy, or domineering [6].

Since a leader's main responsibility is to get things done through people, their success is influenced by the quality of their relationships with those they lead [6]. People look for support, assurance, and clarity in their leaders, especially in times of uncertainty and/or change. What sets great leaders apart from the rest is their ability to drive the emotions of those they lead in the right direction. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize one's own and other's emotions and to use this information to guide one's thoughts and actions. It is how one manages oneself in life and one's relationships with others. Scholars recognize several emotional intelligence competencies clustered into four domains: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. In my study, I focused on the first domain of self-awareness [32] [6].

In addition, [6] takes self-awareness as having a deep understanding of one's emotions, as well as one's strengths and limitations and one's values and motives. This self-understanding is determined by the capacity of self-reflecting, defined as the ability to think things over in a quiet and peaceful time alone and sometimes even spiritually. Some leaders may rely on prayer or meditation, while others may view this self-reflecting from a much more philosophical

perspective. Once leaders can connect with their deeper selves through self-reflecting, they develop an awareness that allows them to understand their surroundings better. As they acquire experience within the organization, their brains automatically extract appropriate approaches to specific situations in the workplace and learn to operate on an emotional and intuitive level. In this way, the brain continually learns tacitly and begins accumulating wisdom from a life's on-the-job experience. The ability to connect experience with one's emotional side makes self-awareness the main foundation for all the other domains [6]. Finally, [33] state that knowing oneself is the center of the universe because it exemplifies one's awareness of the influence of one's emotions on one's personal and team performance [34], suggesting that only around 10–15 percent of people are self-aware, despite the belief of 95 percent of people that they are. Accordingly, [6] stress that working with coworkers who are not self-aware may cut a team's performance in half and lead to increased stress and decreased motivation. Knowing one's feelings is a crucial step towards becoming an effective leader.

## 5. Results

The results are presented in accordance with the three themes that reflect the three objectives of this study thus: (i) Emotional self-awareness, (ii) Accurate self-assessment, and (iii) Self-confidence.

### 5.1. Teachers' Perception of Headteachers' Emotional Self-Awareness Competences.

Under theme one, 12 teachers were required to give their perception of the HT's emotional self-awareness. The three teachers perceive Benz SS HT as sensitive about her feelings and how her emotions can affect her job performance. BT2 described the HT as "someone who realizes that her emotions can sometimes affect how she does things and how her decisions can affect the staff, students, and even the parents. BT1 elaborated that sometimes she can rebuke a teacher harshly when she is not happy with the teacher's actions, but once she cools down, she always talks to the teachers calmly and even apologizes. BT3 takes the HT as a self-conscious lady who senses the best course of action in challenging situations. To BT3, the HT is open and genuine about her feelings, always says her mind openly and is earnest about her vision of the school.

The three teachers perceive Toyota SS HT as someone who is very reserved, unpredictable, and whose emotions are challenging to interpret. Toyota SS HT is good at concealing his emotions and is an individual who responds to things in a very calm or even indifferent way. "It is hard to tell when he is happy or not, since he does not talk too much.... but he is prompt to take action that he thinks should be taken" (TT3). He is not very open, and sometimes, he can be quite unpredictable about his emotions. He has the school's interest at heart with very strong convictions, using his religious principles as his guiding vision" (TT1). TT2 described the HT

as someone who hides his feelings and responds to matters arising emotionally and erratically. TT1 had this to say about the HT thus;

"I think his religious sentiments and self-righteousness affect his ability to read the situation before deciding. He makes decisions and judges teachers based on hearsay, more so when the teacher in question belongs to a different religion in his mind. The staff who belong to other religions cannot be trusted. He does not reflect on his actions and on how to respond to situations, that is why he continues to have issues with teachers all the time." (TT1)

Teachers perceive Volvo SS HT as someone who understands himself emotionally and is aware that his emotions affect the school community positively and negatively. Specifically, VT1 thinks the HT is a sensitive and self-conscious person. "When angry, he says things he does not mean and afterwards regrets saying such things. We are used to him. One time, he shouted at me for missing my class, but when he learned that I was tending to my wife in hospital, he promptly apologized. I understood his position because he was not aware of my challenge." (VT2). VT3 observed that the HT often prepares himself before engaging with others to ensure he radiates the right image and deals with people correctly. That VSS HT is also a forthright person who means what he says and says what he means. Lastly, teachers perceive the HT Nissan SS as open, transparent, and honest, and he is in touch with himself and the people he leads. "One can tell whether he is in his moods or not.... but in most cases, he is sensitive to how other people feel" (NT1). According to NT3, the HT strives to accommodate his staff and students and is overly accommodating to everyone, even when the other person is wrong. In support of this perspective, NT2 observed;

"He is the kind that identifies one's strengths and focuses on taking advantage of those strengths to offset one's weak points...he sees the good in everybody and always tells us to treat others the way we want to be treated. He also encourages us to be true to our feelings and to let others know how we feel, whether good or bad (NT2).

### 5.2. Teachers' Perception of Headteachers' Accurate Self-Assessment Competences.

Benz SS HT is perceived as an administrator who knows her strengths and weaknesses and always jokes about them. To support this view, BT1 remarked, "She knows her limitations of being a no sense person; sometimes when dealing with attention-seeking, fees defaulting parents, she requests one of her deputies to handle" BT3 perceives the HT as someone willing to learn and humbly takes positive and negative feedback. According to BT3, the HT does not hesitate to ask for help, but sometimes she can be very argumentative. But once you convince her about something, she always appreciates it. Toyota SS HT is perceived as one who does not seem very aware of his strengths and

weaknesses. He is tough, rarely talks about his weaknesses and has issues with different people. He has no sense of humor at all, and more often than not, he sees things in black and white. Describing her HT, TT3 observed, “I do not think he is capable of making accurate self-assessment; he does not seem to know his limitations, and that is why he is always infringing on teachers’ rights; he thinks he is always right.” TT2 had no kind words either; “The HT thinks he is the alfa and omega in this school, he does not entertain criticism, and if you want war with him, question his decisions, his password is rigidity”. TT1 perceives the HT as someone who always gives instructions and rarely entertains alternative views once he makes up his mind on anything. The three teachers perceive Volvo SS HT as one whose self-assessment is accurate. He engages in situations, tasks, and challenges realistically, with explicit knowledge of what he can and cannot accomplish, what he is good at and what he is not good at, as he strives to improve. “He values self-reflection as an individual and as a school, and he often encourages us to continuously reflect on where we are in light of where we want to be...(VT3). VT1 observed that the HT admits it when he does not know something, is willing to learn new things, and every time a resource person is invited to the school to engage with teachers, students, or parents, the HT is often present and active. VT2 validated this; thus, he surrounds himself with mentors to become a better leader who believes in self-improvement and is willing to learn.” Finally, Nissan SS HT is perceived to know his strengths and weaknesses and does not try to hide from his team. “He tells us openly that he does not want to hurt anyone” (NT1), something that would make him look like a people-pleaser, according to NT3;

“He openly tells us he wants the best for everyone and that error is human. Sometimes, it becomes too much that we handle students’ cases without their knowledge. Otherwise, students who know him tend to exploit his weakness to get away with serious offences. Nevertheless, our HT wishes well for the school...he knows what he is good at and what areas he needs to improve (NT3). In addition, NT1 describes the HT as a fair but firm administrator who takes positive and negative feedback well. And who is free to seek help when he needs it.

### 5.3. Teachers’ Perception of Headteachers’ Self-Confidence Competences

Benz SS HT is perceived by teachers as a very confident person in outlook, much as she has her insecurities, just like every other person; BT2 described the HT as she is confident in the decisions she makes and always accurately justifies her decisions by elaborating why such a decision needs to be made.” BT1 described the HT as an iron lady who knows her strength, displays her abilities confidently, and does not shy away from difficult situations; she often radiates a sense of presence and self-confidence that makes her stand out in the crowd (BT2). Toyota SS HT is perceived by teachers as one who lacks self-confidence, much as he always depicts a tough guy persona whose word is the law. She has her insecurities,

just like every other person. According to TT2, “the HT lacks confidence, and he tries to conceal this by waving his authority in our faces. “In many cases, he cannot even justify his decisions based on reason; he seems to be driven by his religious sentiments that he usually uses to justify his decisions.” BT3 described the HT as a scarecrow.... he relies on his people in the MoES for protection; otherwise, he is not fit to run this school.... most of the staff members feel the same way.” TT1 thinks HT lacks confidence because he sits in his office all day and does not interact with teachers in the staffroom. He only comes to the staffroom during a meeting or briefing, which means that all staff does not feel a sense of presence and self-confidence. Teachers perceive Volvo SS HT as a confident person with a positive attitude towards life. He exudes the *we can do it* mindset, and everybody knows he is a winner. He also encourages the staff to think positively and work hard to improve. “Our HT is a confident and ambitious leader with a strong determination to achieve goals” (VT3).

“He confidently presents an issue to the staff during staff meetings, confidently gives his point of view after listening attentively to other peoples’ views and makes decisions based on the merits and demerits of the debate. Once a decision is taken, he encourages those who were not in favor to own it as well” (VT1).

VT2 intimated that I know him as someone who is not afraid of saying ‘no’, and he is not a yes person, but his ‘no’ comes in a way that is not offensive to the other party because he always explains why it cannot be done. In addition, Nissan SS HT is perceived by teachers as having a strong sense of self-worth and capable of making sound decisions, following diligent research, and consulting. He faces challenges head-on with a strong conviction in what is just, as illustrated by NT3;

“Two years after taking over the school, there was a land dispute between the school and some landgrabbers instigated by some board members. He did his research and, armed with valid information, successfully confronted the landgrabbers with much confidence in the following selection of board members. He successfully replaced three members behind the entire saga, earning him a lot of support and respect from many stakeholders” (NT2).

## 6. Discussion

With regard to accurate self-awareness, Benz SS HT, whose transfer was forced, was perceived to be emotionally self-aware and sensitive about her feelings and how they can affect her job performance. She is aware of her strengths and weaknesses and confident, much as she has insecurities, just like every other person. This perception renders Benz SS HT emotionally intelligent if one believes an emotionally intelligent individual can understand his/her emotions, preferences, abilities, strengths, and limitations [6] [27]. On the other hand, the HT Toyota SS, whose transfer was requested, was perceived to be very reserved and

unpredictable, and its emotions were difficult to interpret. He is a leader who does not seem aware of his strengths and weaknesses, is challenged, rarely talks about his weaknesses, and always has issues with people he deals with. He has no sense of humor and is a leader who sees things in black and white. He lacks self-confidence, much as he always depicts a tough guy persona whose word is law. According to [6], Toyota SS HT is a dissonant leader since he cannot establish a resonating climate. Self-awareness is not a quality the HT possesses, which explains why he cannot emotionally connect with their subordinates [29] [35].

Volvo SS HT, whose transfer was a promotion, understands himself emotionally, is aware that his emotions affect the school community positively and negatively, and is sensitive and self-conscious. He engages in situations, tasks, and challenges realistically, with an explicit knowledge of what he can and cannot accomplish, what he is good at and what is not good at, as he strives to get better, and a positive attitude towards life. He exudes the *we can do it* mindset, and everybody knows he is a winner.

He also encourages the staff to think positively and work hard to improve the school. Similarly, Nissan SS HT, whose transfer was due to overstay, is open, transparent, honest, and in touch with himself and the people he leads. After diligent research and consultation, he knows and admits his strengths and weaknesses, has a strong sense of self-worth, and makes sound and informed decisions.

He faces challenges head-on with a firm conviction in what is just. Teachers' perception of Volvo SS and Nissan SS HTs agrees with several studies on the importance of self-awareness and self-regulation [31] [36]. [29] The study, which involved 400 participants, investigated teachers' perceptions of how emotional intelligence was used by school principals to manage mandated changes in schools in South Africa. Another study about self-awareness in leaders [37] explored and described the importance of emotional intelligence as perceived by 12 superintendents in California tasked to hire school principals for eight schools. The findings showed that superintendents prioritized emotional intelligence when hiring school principals.

## 7. Conclusion

I examined teachers' perceptions of their HTs' self-awareness competencies of four government schools in Central Uganda, which were transferred based on forced, requested, promotional, and overstay considerations. I hereby conclude that three of the four HTs (Benz SS, Volvo SS and Nissan SS), whose transfer was due to forced, promotional, and overstay deeply understand their own emotions, strengths and limitations, and values and motives. Their self-understanding was determined by their capacity to self-reflect

and their ability to think things over in a quiet and peaceful time, sometimes even spiritually. The three leaders rely on prayer and self-reflection while mindful of the task ahead. In this regard, teachers perceive the three HTs as leaders with high levels of emotional self-awareness in terms of the ability to identify their own emotions and recognizing their impact, ability to use emotions to guide decisions, accurate self-assessment in terms of knowing their strengths and limitations; and self-confidence in terms of having a sense of self-worth and capabilities. On the other hand, the HT Toyota SS, whose transfer was requested, was perceived to have a shallow understanding of his emotions, strengths, limitations, values, and motives. His self-understanding is hampered by his limited capacity to self-reflect and inability to think things through. Much as he is very religious, prayerful, and mindful of the task ahead of him, teachers perceive him as a leader with low levels of emotional self-awareness due to his limited ability to identify his own emotions and to recognize their impact, inability to use emotions to guide decisions; inaccurate self-assessment in terms of knowing his strengths and limitations; and low self-confidence in terms of having a sense of self-worth and capabilities. Finally, I established no discernible link between the four HTs' bases of transfer and their level of self-awareness competencies.

## 8. Recommendations

I recommend that other than relying entirely on their technical, cognitive, and academic skills, HTs need to develop this set of unique skills that they need to navigate the complex social school environments effectively, resonate with the feelings of others, build relationships, and make informed decisions in a calm and relaxed manner. Secondly, I recommend that HTs endeavour to achieve the ability to connect with their deeper selves through self-reflecting, which allows them to understand their surroundings better. As they acquire experience within the school, they are transferred to, they should extract appropriate approaches to specific situations and learn to operate emotionally and intuitively. Lastly, MoES and the ESC begin to consider emotional intelligence as a key component of prospective and serving HT assessment and evaluation, based on the realization that technical competencies, though necessary, are no longer sufficient for effective school leadership.

## Funding Statement

Martin Muyingo funded their article's research and publication; any bodies or grants provided no financial support.

## Acknowledgments

I acknowledge and recognize Dr. Peter Ssenkusu and Dr. Victoria Tamale Rossette for the guidance and advice they provided me during the manuscript's research and preparation.

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