

Community Participation in the Decentralized Secondary Education in Mtwara Region, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study sought to establish the community participation in the decentralized secondary education in Mtwara Region. The study employed the cross-sectional descriptive design. The population consisted of 627 secondary school teachers, 48 councilors, 48 WEOs, two DEOS, two DSQAOs and 119,952 parents and board members. A total of 129 teachers were sampled using a simple random sampling procedure. In addition, 48 councilors, 48 WEOs, DEOs and two DSQAOs were selected using the census sampling method. Furthermore, 50 parents and board members were selected using the convenient sampling procedure. Therefore, the total sample was 279 individuals who filled questionnaires. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics. The study revealed that parents and community members perceived to be involved in attending village meetings. They also attended school meetings for education matters but were not effectively engaged in budgeting and decision making. They agreed that they participated in monitoring and implementation of school projects but their involvement in setting priorities was minimal. Furthermore, they raised a concern regarding rare feedback from school administrators. On the contrary, teachers and school managers perceived a high participation of parents and community members. Therefore, much as parents and community members were involved in the decentralized secondary education, their involvement still needs improvement in such areas as budgeting, priority setting and decision making.

Keywords: Decentralization; Community Participation; Education; Demand Side; Supply Side.

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Introduction

The significance of educational decentralization in recent decades emanated from the recognition that it makes schools more effective in the provision of education (Brosio, 2014; Mushemeza, 2019). In most developed countries, the provision of education has been decentralized for a very long

time from central governments to local governments and communities (McGinn & Pereira, 1992). Evidence of education decentralization can be seen in the United States of America (Edwards & DeMatthews, 2014), Australia and Canada (Winkler & Gershberg, 2000). In developed countries, education is highly decentralized than in emerging and developing countries (Edwards Jr. &

DeMatthews, 2014). As a result, the impact of decentralization on students' academic performance differs between developed and developing countries. Though, in emerging economies of Latin America and East Asia education decentralization is higher than in African countries, its impact is not clear (Cuéllar-Marchelli, 2003; Brosio, 2014; Di Gropello, 2014; Pradhan et al., 2020).

Smoke (2003), Kessy (2008) and Sow and Razafimahefa (2015) argued that the best performance of decentralized education delivery depends on multi-factors, namely institutional arrangement, accountability of education actors, institutional capacity and community participation. Marijani (2017), Kessy (2018) and Liwanag (2019) ascertained the importance of community participation in delivery of social services and in management of development projects such as education. In many countries, community participation in management of development projects and delivery of social services is an important concern since community is the most important stakeholder designated as 'the beneficiaries' (Smoke, 2015; Marijani, 2017).

In education sector, community participation is an important concern. It is a way of pooling resources of the surrounding community to support the management of education and enhancing the academic performance (Smoke, 2015). Community participation is a prerequisite for effective decentralization (Masue, 2014; Kisumbe et al., 2014). Carlitz (2016) and Wulandary and Herlisa (2017) ascertained that in the education sector, community involvement enhances effective teaching and learning.

In African countries, several studies show mixed results regarding community participation (Winkler & Gershberg, 2003; Galiwango, 2008; Oduro et al., 2008; Tidemand et al., 2008; Sikayile, 2012; Carlitz & Boex, 2017; Mushemeza, 2019; Kessy, 2020). As a result, community participation in decision-making is not conclusive (Cooksey & Kikula, 2005; Chaligha, 2008; Mollel, 2010; Mkatakona, 2014; Muro & Namusonge, 2015) since studies reported contradicting results (Kibona, 2013; Kuluchumila, 2013; Kopweh, 2014; Matete, 2016; Koissaba, 2018). Smoke (2003, 2015) posit that different levels of commitment and limited resource levels might be the reason for most developing countries to

experience varying results in attempt to improve governance in Local Government Authorities.

Recognizing the importance of community participation in education delivery, the government of the United Republic of Tanzania implemented several policies and strategies to improve community participation in delivery of decentralized education. The key reform to increase participation of community in education management was decentralization (Masue, 2014; Matete, 2016; Kessy, 2020). In Tanzania, decentralization started in the form of deconcentrating from 1972 to 1982, where some amount of administrative authority was handed over to regional offices of central government ministries, departments and agencies (Max, 1991). However, during the decentralization by deconcentrating, meaningful community participation was not established as leaders tended to make decisions on behalf of their citizens (Picard, 1980).

Due to ineffective results of deconcentrating, decentralization by devolution was adopted (URT, 1998b; URT, 1998a). Decentralization by devolution is the transfer of decision-making about crucial management decisions such as selecting secondary school heads and power to allocate school budgets from the central government to the regional/city/municipal/district council school board so as to increase community participation. To increase effectiveness, decentralization by devolution was implemented under the framework of Local Government Reform Program (LGRP). Furthermore, Secondary Education Development Program phase two (SEDP II) was implemented to improve, among others, community's participation for effective delivery of secondary school education (Kessy, 2008; URT, 2010; Masue, 2014). Despite those efforts, community participation in school management and delivery of decentralized education are still not impressive and are marred with inconsistent reports (Muro & Namusonge, 2015; Matete, 2016). Thus, due to the inconclusive results of decentralization, LGAs' performance in education delivery in Tanzania continues to be a matter of concern (Mollel & Tollenaar, 2013; Likwelile & Assey, 2018). Therefore, this study intended to examine the level of community participation in Tandahimba and Mtwara district Councils, and to ascertain its contribution on the current status of academic performance of secondary school students in national examinations of form two and form four. To produce good

academic outcomes, parents and community members need to encourage a learning atmosphere at schools and out of schools. In that way, parents and community members play an important role in management of education delivery (Kudari, 2016). However, studies in Tanzania show that school managements had been complaining that it is difficult to enlist active participation of parents/community members in managing schools (Mkatakona, 2014; Masue 2014; Nyembeke, 2016; Charamba, 2016). On the other hand, parents and community members have been blaming schools' management for not creating good environment for communities to participate in fundamental activities of the schools (Kambuga 2017; Godda, 2014; Masue, 2010; Masue 2014). As a result, this has led to the shifting blame among parents and teachers regarding the issue of community participation in management of education delivery in schools and the meagre academic performance of students (Nyembeke, 2016).

In one hand, parents and community members demand to be involved by school management in strategic activities of schools such as planning, decision making and monitoring of education projects and plans at school level in order to improve delivery of quality education (Mkatakona, 2014). On the other hand, school management teams have to deliberately involve parents and community members to participate in management of schools. The school management team must create friendly environment so that parents and community members can participate impactfully. In principle, parents and community members create a demand side of community participation as they demand to be involved in management of schools and education delivery (Lufunyo, 2017; Kessy, 2020). On the contrary school management teams are by the decentralization reforms required to involve the community in every step of decision making, planning, implementation and monitoring of school projects and plans. Thus, they offer a chance of communities to participate in management of decentralized education delivery. Therefore, they are regarded as a 'supply side' of the community participation (Lufunyo, 2017).

Regardless of the efforts to improve the community participation in education management, still, decentralization has not resulted in the delivery of quality secondary school education since the results of national form two and form four students in Mtwara and Tandahimba have remained low

(NECTA, 2016; 2017; 2018). In the national form two results of the year 2016, out of the last ten secondary schools with poor performance, nine secondary schools were from Mtwara (NECTA, 2016). Among these secondary schools, five are located in Tandahimba District and two in Mtwara District. The poor academic performance might be a result of the low participation of community members in school management. Therefore, this study intended to establish the level of community participation in school meetings, planning and budgeting, implementation and monitoring of educational plans/projects.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study was underpinned by the Public Choice Theory which was put forward by James Buchanan and Tullock (1962). In this theory, decisions are a result of dealings involving various groups with dissimilar interests like voters, politicians and bureaucrats. Education system in Tanzania comprises of collaborative efforts between parents or community members (voters), politicians (councilors) and bureaucrats (District Executive Directors, District Education Officers, teachers, District School Quality Assurance officers and Ward Education Officers). The theory states that politicians and bureaucrats decide in their favor without much consideration for the participation of the public 'community' (Lemieux, 2004). Lack of community participation may lead to poor quality of service which hinders the participation of these groups in the administration of the local government. As a result, when the general public is ignored, bad governance and low efficiency are resultant. The theory builds on the fact that community participation in school management increases the chances of desired results.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 indicates the influence of decentralization on educational service delivery. The theory contends that the general public must participate in decision making to achieve desired goals. In this study, decentralization is viewed as the process in which the community is part and parcel.

Methodology

Research Design

The study involved the cross-sectional descriptive design. The descriptive design was adopted because it can be applied in a situation of dealing with multiple subjects within the population

(Denscombe, 2010). This study was conducted across a sample which was a representative of the population. Moreover, descriptive design was chosen due to its usefulness in explaining a phenomenon in detail; to explain the extent of community participation in delivery of decentralised education toward improving the academic performance of secondary schools. The cross-

sectional design was suitable for this research because the researcher collected data at a particular point in time. Additionally, the cross-sectional design was used because most studies on influence of decentralised education were limited to qualitative nature and hence lacked the generalisation base (Mdee & Thorley, 2016; Carlitz, 2016; Maulid, 2017; Mushemeza, 2019).

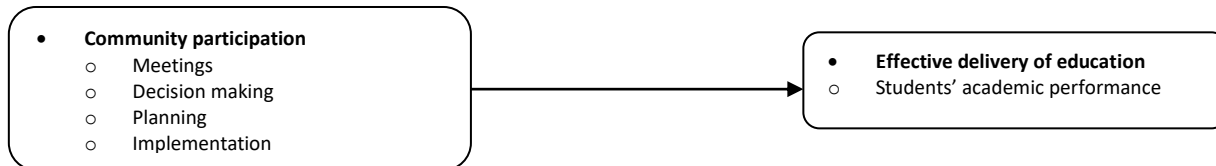


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for D by D and Improved Education Delivery

Population and Sampling

The population in this study consisted of 627 secondary school teachers, 48 councilors, 48 WEOs, two DEOS, two DSQAOs and 119,952 parents and board members. A total of 129 teachers were sampled using a simple random sampling procedure. In addition, 48 councilors, 48 WEOs, DEOs and two DSQAOs were selected using the census sampling method. Furthermore, 50 parents and board members were selected as part of the sample using the convenience sampling procedure. Therefore, the total sample was 279 individuals.

Validity and Reliability

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what is intended to be measured. In this case, findings must accurately describe the phenomena being researched and must ensure that elements of the main issue covered in the research are fair representations of the wider issue under investigation.

To ensure the reliability of the quantitative data, a pilot study was conducted in one government secondary school in Mtwara district council. The reliability was tested using the Cronbach's alpha coefficients. As a rule of thumb, the values above 0.7 represent an acceptable level of internal reliability (Cohen et al., 2007). The test yielded the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of greater than 0.70. Data triangulation, the use of multiple sources of data enhanced the reliability of results.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the results of the study. It is guided by specific research questions.

Research Question 1: What is the extent of community participation in school meetings for education delivery?

The results in Table 1 indicate that 80.0% of surveyed parents and school board members reported that they are involved in school and village meetings intended to discuss education matters; the meetings largely are at school or village levels. According to the public choice theory, this finding supports the delivery of decentralized education. The theory posit that if LGAs and schools clearly express and communicate required target of decentralization to the lower level of the community through meetings, then it will ensure the participation of the community in education matters and thus influence delivery of education and improve students' academic performance. However, the ground reality is that academic performance is low in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs.

When parents and board members were asked if they participated in identifying education priorities in their areas, only 52.0% agreed while 48% disagreed. Though the overall decision seems to be that the majority of parents agreed that they are involved in identifying priorities, those who disagreed are a significant portion to be ignored. Thus, it is this study's view that community participation in priority identification is not impressive. Parents' opinion on this matter is somewhat not decisive.

However, in case of item 'Community members actively participate in meetings, majority (62%) of surveyed parents and school board members disagreed to have been actively involved in those meetings. In addition, when parents were asked if they have freedom to voice out their priorities

regarding education issues and activities at the school and or village meetings, 62.0% of them disagreed to be free to air out their education priorities. According to the public choice theory, these findings restrict the implementation of decentralization. The theory establishes that

community participation in educational planning and decision making can influence the delivery of education and improve students' academic performance. The findings might be the resultant factor as to why academic performance is low in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs.

Table 1: Level of Community Participation (N=50)

SN	Item in the Questionnaire	DISAGREE		NEUTRAL		AGREE	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Community Participation on School Meetings							
1	Community actively participate in the school/village meetings	31	62	13	26	6	12
2	Participate in priority identification at village meetings	24	48	0	0	26	52
3	Community voice out their education priority at village meetings	31	62	0	0	19	38
4	Citizens attend village/school meeting for education matters	5	10	5	10	40	80
Community Participation on Planning and Budgeting for Schools							
5	Involved in planning process	36	72	0	0	14	28
6	Planning of budget for education delivery	42	84	2	4	6	12
7	Consulted to give opinion on the budgeting	37	74	0	0	13	26
Community Participation on Implementation and Monitoring							
8	Involved in implementation of school's projects	38	76	2	4	10	20
9	Receive feedback from school board	28	56	6	12	16	32
10	Involved in the execution of the education plans	13	26	0	0	37	74
11	Take part in monitoring of education delivery	18	36	0	0	32	64
Community Participation on Decision making							
12	Participate in deciding education matters at school	18	36	11	22	21	42
13	The school management team themselves make decisions	7	14	0	0	43	86
14	Passively consulted on deciding issues of education	13	26	5	10	32	64
15	Informed on the decisions of the school management	13	26	0	0	37	74
16	The decision to appoint school board	39	78	6	12	5	10

The aim of decentralisation was to strengthen community participation in education delivery as it was thought to improve the collaboration in educational management in order to guarantee better access, quality and delivery of secondary education by providing some mandate to community and parents in the administration of secondary schools (Masue, 2014; Koissaba, 2018). The decentralisation is associated with increased citizen's participation in social service delivery including education services. The decentralisation replicated Tanzania's well-built zeal that community has to be directly involved in shaping the decisions that affect their lives. However, the findings entail that community members attended the school and village meetings with very little chance of being able to participate actively in the meetings so as to voice out their priorities regarding the management of secondary schools. Therefore, the decentralisation intended to ensure that every actor in education

sector plays his/her role to make sure that quality education is delivered.

There are duties which parents and school need to do jointly from time to time and at different occasions to support education delivery and students' academic performance (Tsuyuguchi & Kuramoto, 2014). The relationship between teachers and parents must be built on a trust, honest and cooperation (Shibuya, 2020). The school management team has to trust parents and influence parent's participation in decision making processes and management of core activities (Tsuyuguchi & Kuramoto, 2014). This improves the delivery of education and supports the academic performance (Kambuga, 2017).

Under decentralization, an active community participation in education process contributes to development of better school climates for teaching and learning, improves the curriculum development process, enhances acceptable students' behaviour

and motivates teachers to teach effectively. In secondary schools, it has been argued that parental involvement has greater impacts on education delivery and academic performance. Simuforosa and Rosemary (2014) revealed that despite the expected role of community involvement in school management in South Africa, there has been no satisfactory involvement of community members in managing school affairs. This is because community participation in school management in many African countries is not complete (Simuforosa & Rosemary, 2014). The community is usually partially or passive in strategic issues such as identification, planning and implementation of school development plans.

Research Question 2: Are community members involved in planning and budgeting processes of school activities?

Results in Table 1 further indicate that 72.0% of surveyed parents and board members disagreed to have been involved in the planning process of school activities. Moreover, the majority (84.0%) of them disagreed to have been actively involved in planning the school budget. In addition, results show that 74.0% of the respondents disagreed to be consulted by school management or school board or village and Ward Leaders in order to provide their opinions on the planning of school budget. Based on the findings, this study has a view that the community is not effectively involved in school planning and budgeting processes. These findings do not match the assertion of the public choice theory, which states that community involvement in planning of school budget supports the implementation of decentralization and improves students' academic performance. Thus, the low participation of the community in planning of school budget might be the reason of low academic performance status in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs.

Budgeting process ensures that school budget is planned, discussed and approved in collaboration between the community and the village and Ward Leaders and the school management. Under decentralization, active community involvement or participation in planning of school budget is critical in influencing the education delivery (Adam, 2005; Cooksey & Kikula, 2005). However, in practice, the community is overlooked and thus their opinions are not taken. Mollel (2010) posits that the community is entitled to participate in the stages of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating

educational programs. On the contrary, Mkatakona (2014) found that community participation in planning was to the lower extent in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania. Similarly, findings of Mollel (2010), Fjeldstad *et al.* (2010) and John (2015) conform to the results of this study that the extent of community participation in planning school budget is very low.

Research Question 3: What is the level of community participation in implementation and monitoring of school projects, plans and activities?

Table 1 indicates that 76.0% of respondents disagreed to be involved in implementation of school income generating projects. Furthermore, 56% reported that they don't receive feedback from school boards regarding the implementation and monitoring of school projects, plans and activities. These findings contradicts the public choice theory, which explains that community involvement in implementation and monitoring of school projects, plans and activities is essential to support the implementation of decentralisation so as to improve students' academic performance. Thus, the low participation of community in implementation and monitoring of school projects, plans and activities might be the reason of low academic performance status in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs.

On the contrary, table 1 shows that 74.0% of respondents agreed to have been participating in implementation and monitoring of schools education plans/projects. The study was informed by parents and board members during FGD that the common education plans which community is highly involved include remedial classes, study/ academic camps for classes with national examinations, lunch program and monthly or weekly tests. The study found that parents were highly involved in execution of these plans because schools depended on parents for financial resources to fund those programs. This finding agrees with the public choice theory which explains that community participation supports the improvement of delivery of education and the subsequent academic performance. Ndungu and Karugu (2019) came up with similar findings in their study about community participation and performance of donor funded youth projects in Korogocho, Nairobi.

Research Question 4: What is the status of community participation in decision making processes?

Table 1 indicates that 86% of respondents agreed that school management teams make decision themselves without involving the community. Furthermore, 64.0% of respondents agreed that the community is passively consulted on academic or education issues. The table also shows that 74% agreed to have been informed on the decision made by school management teams. Furthermore, 84% disagreed that the school board members are appointed at village meetings. Finally, the findings show that 36.0% of surveyed parents disagreed and 42.0% agreed to have participated in deciding education matters at schools.

These findings imply that the extent of community participation in decision-making process for education issues is low as the school management teams make decisions and the community is only informed of what has been decided. Thus, the take of this study is that the community does not participate in decision making because it is not involved by school management. These findings

contradict the theoretical foundation of the public choice theory which explains the importance of involving the community in school management issues such as decision making. Thus, the low participation of community in decision making might be the reason for the low academic performance status in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs. The point of course is not that school plans and projects as well as activities should be based entirely on community-level decisions but the issue is getting the balance right between the community and school. These findings are similar to a study conducted by Mkatakona (2014) who found that community participation in decision making was to the lower extent in Ilala District, Tanzania.

Research Question 5: What is the opinions of teachers and Education Managers regarding community participation?

This research question sought to establish the opinions of teachers and Education Managers regarding community participation.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Level of Community Involvement (N=229)

SN	Item in the Questionnaire	DISAGREE		NEUTRAL		AGREE	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
1	DEO conduct meetings with stakeholders/ community	7	3.1	21	9.2	201	87.7
2	Head of school conduct meeting with community	19	8.4	33	14.4	177	77.3
3	Heads of Schools provide feedback to the community	14	6.2	40	17.5	175	76.4
4	Heads of Schools Frequently conduct school meeting with parents	9	3.9	9	3.9	211	92.2
5	Board members convene regularly	12	5.2	32	14.0	185	80.8
6	Board provide feedback to community	22	9.6	23	10.0	184	80.4

Majority of teachers and education managers, as indicated in table 2, agreed that District Education Officers conduct meetings with stakeholders and that Heads of Schools conduct meetings with the community, provide feedback to the community and effectively conduct school meeting with parents. The results in table1 and table2 show that the extent of community involvement reported by teachers and education managers is contradictory. While teachers and school managers indicated high participation, parents and community members registered limited participation. The difference may be attributed to the common practice of shifting blames to the other side. Results for Mkatakona (2014), Masue (2014) and Adam (2005) found a similar trend Therefore, it could be true that parents and community members were involved but their participation was limited.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that parents and community members perceived to be involved in attending

village meetings. They also attended school meetings for education matters but were not effectively engaged in budgeting and decision making. They agreed that they participated in monitoring and implementation of school projects. However, they perceived their involvement in setting priorities to be minimal. Furthermore, they raised a concern regarding rare feedback from school administrators. Therefore, parents and community members considered their participation to be low and therefore not supporting the intended decentralization for effective delivery of education. On the contrary, teachers and school managers perceived a high participation of parents and community members.

Therefore, much as parents and community members were involved in the decentralized secondary education, their involvement still needs improvement in such areas as budgeting, priority setting and decision making. Schools and LGAs need to enhance community participation in decision

making regarding delivery of decentralized education for maximized results to be realized.

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