

more fumbling at the margins
or a strategic break?

a choice for the
education donor group in Tanzania

Rakesh Rajani, December 2008

will we be able to look at our
great grand-children and explain
what we did?

outline of presentation

- assessing progress in education
 - the official story
 - the real picture
- what can you (donors) do about it?
 - why its not working
 - what it takes
 - will you do it? possible, but not likely

1.11 state of education: official story

- enrollment in PEDP and SEDP up by 3m+
- MDG for education reached
- secondary school in every ward, through unprecedented expansion.
- 50,000+ classrooms built
- more books – in primary 1:3 ratio reached.
- many more teachers trained and in place – yes not adequately trained but this is a stop gap measure.

1.12 state of education: official story

- there are some problems, but ‘we are working on those’:
 - improving quality
 - access to children with disabilities
 - equity of teacher placements
- PSLE pass rates have increased dramatically from 20s to 50s %
- overall still the biggest achievement of the last 7 years in Tanzania is education.

1.21 the reality: enrolment

- enrolment is a child's name on a list, does not mean that you are attending school.
 - HBS data integrity better, but still limited
 - anecdotally attendance 35-65%? SGACA?
- teacher:pupil ratios far from standards, highly inequitable across regions/districts (and wards?)
 - but actually classroom situation much worse because many teachers not assigned to teach

1.22 the reality: teachers and teaching

- teacher attendance data unreliable, and teachers often don't show up in classrooms (use viranja)
 - Uganda WB assessment showed 18% there
 - my limited sample shows less than $\frac{1}{4}$ in Tz
- teaching still largely chalk and talk, children to copy notes off the board
- teacher training (yebo yebo & vodafasta) a mockery, no in-school support

1.23 the reality: textbooks and libraries

- textbooks data figures unreliable, no solid basis or evidence
- in practice many books locked up in cupboards
- current impasse with publishers has production and distribution constipated
- no libraries to speak of, and innovations such as Tusome atrophying
- bottom line: children don't have reliable access to books

1.24 the reality: funding

- Capitation grant: unreliable, unpredictable, unclear, less money reaches primary school today and it is more opaque than 3 years ago.
- Lessons of 2004 PETS ignored, not clear how much the planned one will succeed
- Spaghetti like funding confusion caused by multiple funding streams/sources prevails (and likely to get worse if CDF gets introduced)
- Little ability to ascertain value for money.
- Despite the PETS mania, little real opportunity for citizens to follow-up, know, have consequences
- In the meantime highly inequitable and harmful unregulated contributions are back...

1.25 the reality: violence in school

- Violence – corporal punishment is rife, in some cases leading to maiming and death
- Sexual harassment commonplace – of female students, but also teachers
- Pregnant schoolgirls tip of iceberg, and discussed but no policy movement
- All this embedded in broader shikamoo culture – autocracy, lack of debate, no questions

1.31 what can we conclude?

- State of education: Veneer of progress, hollow shell of a system
- PSLE fudging and faulty structure explains better results, not real progress
 - Cf. HakiElimu study in 6 districts shows up to 90% not able to read/write at their levels
- Lots of schooling, but no learning
- Schools are failing to live up to policy promises and people's aspirations

1.32 real skills needed

- Students unable to:
 - read, write, arithmetic
 - think
 - analyze, synthesize
 - be creative
 - make good judgments
 - solve problems
 - craft an argument
 - deal with unfamiliar situations
 - etc
- ... and after graduation:
 - Leavers unable to:
 - thrive in higher education
 - secure jobs
 - secure livelihoods
 - cope with a complex world

1.41 the bottom line

- education in a state of real crisis
 - but we pretend its generally fine, in the right direction
- government is failing to provide leadership and policy coherence
 - but not really facing the consequences or accountability
- large resources (money, time, political capital) wasted
 - while yet another generation misses out...

1.42 why does it happen?

- Perhaps its because its other people's children ...
- Perhaps because the incentives are aligned in a way that compels governments and donors alike to tell good story ...
- Or perhaps we are just doing what we are used to, and lack the **imagination** to do something different

2.1 analyzing the problem

- the core problem is lack of government leadership and effective accountability ... but donors are not helping
 - Lose the forest for the trees
 - Throw dialogue & technical solutions to essentially institutional & political problems
 - Don't know how to play an effective post-Paris/GBS role, particularly dealing with conflict of interest
 - Don't know how to handle political dynamics, little club discussions that can get away with going nowhere because of little public accountability

So what then should
donors do?

2.2 make a break

- Understand the gravity of the crisis, stop spin-speak, say it plainly
- This is not the time for incrementalism, make radical changes instead of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic
- Figure out the leadership that this will take on the donor side too

2.3 focus on a few things

- Focus on a few strategic things, e.g.
 - Focus on learning outcomes – what are children able to do (Galabawa policy doc?)
 - Better measure for learning than PSLE, (e.g. explore Uwezo EA based on ASER India)
 - Capitation grant reaching school predictably, everyone knows and can be followed up, and it is well used
 - Govt pact with teachers, govt guarantees A B C in exchange for teachers delivering X Y Z
 - Radically meaningful access to information

2.4 understand its incentives

- Change is not about TA, frameworks, plans, filling in accountability boxes, but about **getting the incentives right**:
 - Teacher/Govt Compact
 - Capitation grant reaching schools
 - Cash on delivery innovation

2.5 change is not about a better version of the same...

- Change is not about improving the machinery of development aid (MKUKUTA, JAS, PAF, sector dialogue) – this is an artificial parallel junket that's ultimately ineffective
 - But replacing it with some in the real world, based on what incentives can be brought to bear

So the real question is not what
donors can do ...

... but what needs to be done and
what it will take in Tanzania to get
it done

2.6 firing the public imagination

This is about public engagement:

- firing the public imagination,
- citizens becoming aware and engaged
- parliaments asking questions
- bishops and imams using moral fervor and follow-up
- media provoking outrage and inspiring people with the possibility of change

3. possible?

Its not business as usual, far beyond your comfort zones, not the sort of things donors do

... I wont bet that you will pull it off because of the extraordinary exercise of leadership and imagination that it will take

... but it is possible, and ethically and strategically the only option you have