

What's going on in our schools? Citizens' views on recent developments in education

In the last several months, there have been a number of rapid changes in Kenya's education sector, including commencement of the curriculum reform, changes in the Kenya National Examinations Council and radical adjustment of the school term dates. The latter two aimed at curbing cheating and irregularities in national examinations. The second school term, which begun in May 2016, has however faced a myriad of challenges. Nearly 130 secondary schools have been set fire to since June, and the situation is still uncertain. The fires have led to massive loss of property, discontinuation of learning and even severe injury of students. The causes of these fires are yet to be established, but media reports have linked the arson cases to student anxiety as result of mock exams, pressures to close the school earlier and even external forces or cartels that are harmed by the reforms to the national examination process.

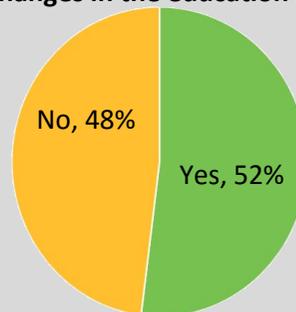
In reaction to the above, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Dr Fred Matiang'i, together with the ministry in charge of internal security, have set up an investigative team, whose work is ongoing. Following the reforms, and now the school fires, public debate on Kenya's education has been lively on all media platforms. In a meeting with civil society partners on 1 August 2016, Dr Matiang'i stated: *"I am out to ensure tangible, real reforms in our education sector. We must understand the challenges facing education deeply, and deal with them decisively and sustainably"*.

So, what do citizens know about these changes? What do they think should be done to address the unrest in schools?

Data for this brief come from Twaweza's flagship *Sauti za Wananchi*, a nationally representative, high-frequency mobile phone panel survey. The findings are based on data collected from 1,783 respondents across the country between 7 and 28 June, and 16 and 30 July, 2016.

Half of citizens (52%) claim they have heard about changes in the education sector.

Figure 1: Have you heard about any changes in the education sector?*

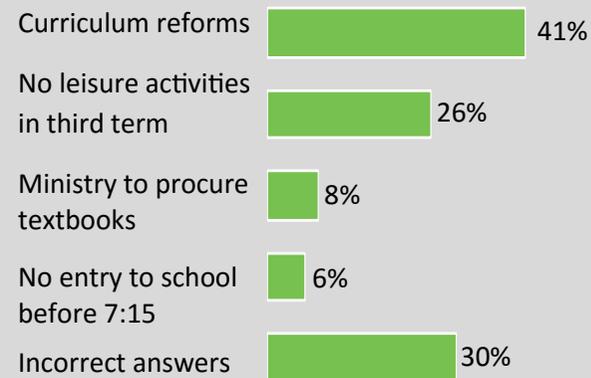


Base: All respondents, n=1,783

Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi, Mobile Phone Survey, Round 4 (June 2016) - Figures 1 and 2

Among those who say they are aware of changes in education, 30% of responses given were incorrect.

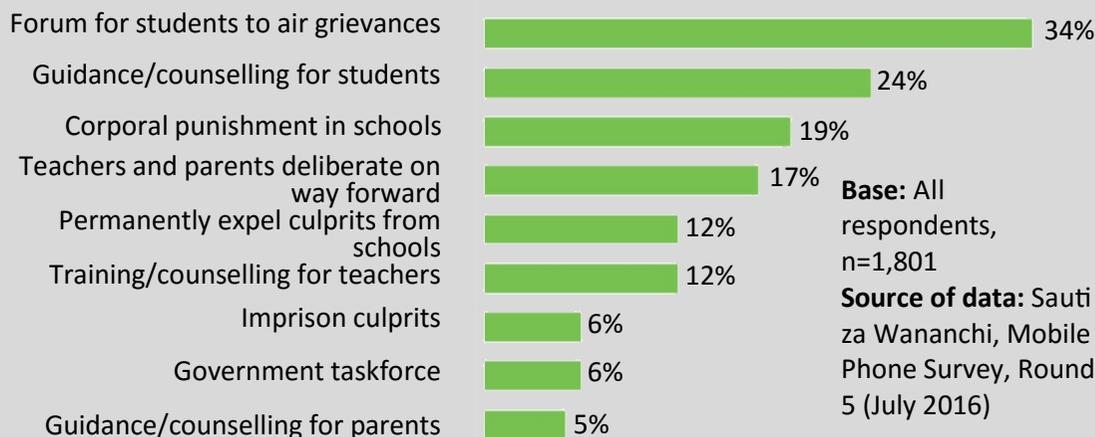
Figure 2: What changes have you heard about?*



Base: Those who have heard about changes in education, n=927

When asked to advise government on how to address student unrest, most Kenyans favour conciliatory approaches rather than punitive ones.

Figure 3: What should the government do to quell student unrest?



Base: All respondents, n=1,801
Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi, Mobile Phone Survey, Round 5 (July 2016)

* Multiple responses were possible so percentages may not add up to 100.