

Primary schools in Dar es Salaam: Overcrowded and without sufficient text books

Key findings

- With an average class size of 81, classrooms in many schools are overcrowded
- 45 percent of surveyed schools do not have enough desks and many pupils sit on the floor
- Availability of text books is a key challenge

“Although Tanzania was recently awarded a prize by the United Nations for excelling in enrolling primary school pupils, the quality of education the country offers is pathetic.”—The Citizen, 19 October 2010.

Introduction

Since 2002, the Government of Tanzania has been implementing the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) with two specific aims: making education more accessible and improving its quality. While significant success has been made in extending access, improving quality remains a challenge.

Dar es Salaam is the largest city in the country and the one closest to where policies are made, so it is often assumed that the situation there is generally better than elsewhere. Still, the media has published anecdotal evidence about schools in Dar es Salaam lacking learning materials and being in dire need of improvement. Against this backdrop, Uwazi carried out a survey between August and December 2010 to assess the quality of amenities in a sample of 40 primary schools in Dar es Salaam’s three districts: Ilala, Kinondoni, and Tembeke.

The data gathered show that, contrary to common belief, public schools in Dar es Salaam face major challenges in providing facilities of adequate quality for pupils. Poor quality and quantity of classrooms, an insufficient number of desks, and a lack of text books are all common occurrences. Uwazi believes that most of these challenges can be resolved, but doing so will require first and foremost an informed public that has access to space to meaningfully engage and contribute to discussions to improve quality in schools.

Finding 1: Classrooms are overcrowded and not conducive to learning

The average number of pupils per classroom in the surveyed schools is 81, much higher than the national target of 40 pupils per classroom that was to have been reached in



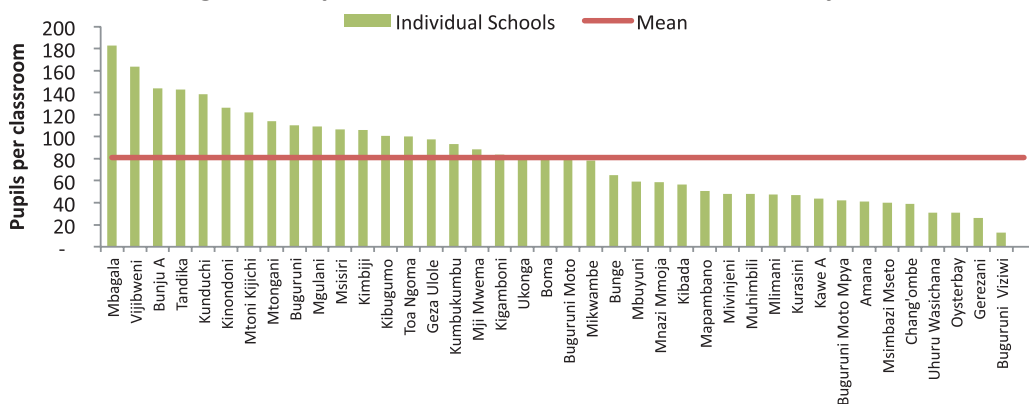
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2010. Considerable variation exists between schools (see Figure 1). At Buguruni Viziwi, Gerezani, Uhuru Wasichana, and Muhimbili primary schools, the class size ranges from 13 to 45, making student-teacher interactions at least feasible. Buguruni Viziwi, a special school for the deaf, outperforms all others in terms of class size, with a pupil to classroom ratio of 10:1. In addition to a low class size, which is required to meet the special needs of pupils, the school also has other amenities that are of better quality compared to most of other schools visited, thanks to financial support from well wishers. Other schools such as Mbagala, Vijibweni, and Tandika (in Temeke district) and Bunju A and Kunduchi (in Kinondoni district) are, however, on the other end of the spectrum, with more than 130 pupils per classroom. Vijibweni, Tandika, and Bunju A attempt to cope with this situation by teaching Standard 1 and 2 pupils in shifts or on a rotation basis.

Figure 1: Pupil to classroom ratio in the schools surveyed



Source of data: Uwazi, 2010.

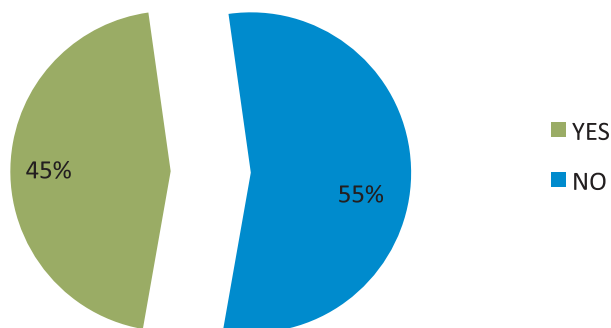
Not all classrooms in schools with a good pupil to classroom ratio are healthy environments for learning. For example, despite having an average class size of 41 pupils, close to the government's recommended standard, Amana Primary School in Ilala district is a 'dying' school. Established in 1947, the school looks as if no repairs have been done since it was built: its walls are mouldy, with paint peeling off, and its windows and ceiling are in total disrepair. Situated in a cramped area in the middle of Ilala, it is hard for a visitor to even recognize that a school exists here. Its low population (288 pupils) reflects the lack of interest in the school shown by residents in the neighbourhood; most parents opt to take their children elsewhere since the environment at Amana does not seem favourable for learning.

"At times there will be loud music coming from neighbouring business and residential buildings which disturb learning," says the head teacher of Amana Primary School. "If the Government still wants to maintain this place as a school, major repairs are needed or (even) construction of (new) storey buildings, after pulling down the existing ones."

Finding 2: In half of the schools, pupils must sit on the floor

On average, five pupils share one desk in the surveyed schools, with considerable variation across schools. In almost half of the schools (18 out of 40) there are not enough desks to cater to all pupils and many children sit on the floor (see Figure 2). Generally, schools that have a high pupil to classroom ratio are also the ones that lack sufficient desks.

Figure 2: Are pupils sitting on the floor?



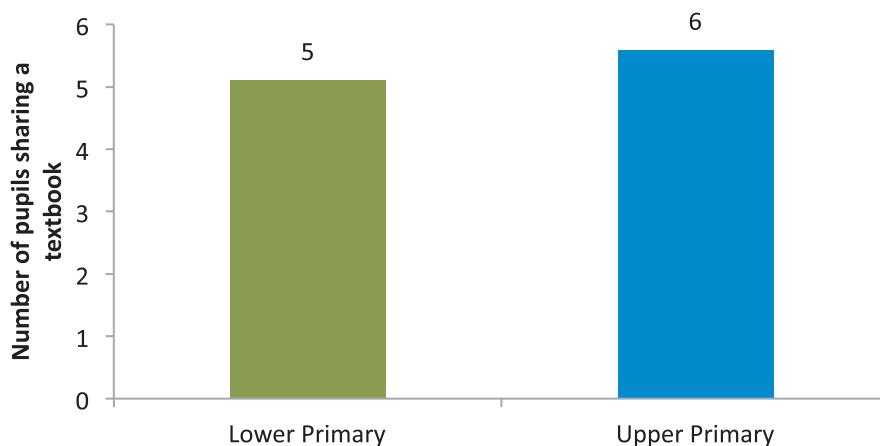
Source of data: Uwazi, 2010.

At Kunduchi Primary School, lack of desks is a major problem. About three quarters of the school's 1,931 pupils do not have desks to sit at, clearly undermining the quality of education the school offers. Without resources from the Government to assist schools like this, the only hope is that other stakeholders become aware of the situation and contribute with donations.

Finding 3: Availability of text books is a major challenge

Availability of text books is critical to learning. However, the survey shows that in most schools, text books are lacking. The average pupil to text book ratio is 5 to 1 in lower primary school classes and 6 to 1 in upper primary school classes (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Average pupil to text book ratio in Dar es Salaam schools surveyed



Source of data: Uwazi, 2010.

Across schools, there is major variation in the availability of books. At 2:1, the pupil to text book ratio at Mlimani Primary School is one of the best among the surveyed schools. This relatively better situation is because most pupils in the school bring books purchased for them by their parents, and not because the school is better funded. At Kunduchi Primary School, the pupil:book ratio for the whole school and across all subjects is 10:1; at Tandika's

Upper Primary School, it is 15:1. At Bunju A, for some subjects the pupil:book ratio is as high as 45:1. At the extreme, the head teacher at Mbagala Primary School reports that in its upper primary schools, only teachers have text books. As in Mlimani, some schools are now taking matters into their own hands. For example, according to the head teacher at Kunduchi, the school has requested parents of pupils in grades 4 and 7 to buy books for their children.

Conclusion

Almost a decade after the start of PEDP, the provision of sufficient school amenities such as class rooms, desks, and text books remains a challenge, even in Dar es Salaam. According to the Basic Education Statistics published by the Ministry of Education, primary schools in Dar es Salaam are better endowed than many others in the country. For instance, in Temeke district, the pupil:teacher ratio in 2009 was reported as 46:1, while the national average was 55:1. In contrast, the average for Geita district in Mwanza which is very far from Dar es Salaam, was 78:1. If amenities in the better resourced districts still leave so much to be desired, as shown in this brief, then there should be significant concerns for the education of children in the lesser funded districts.

Annex: Public primary schools visited in the survey

Temeke District (16)	Ilala District (13)	Kinondoni District (11)
Vijibweni	Buguruni Moto Mpya	Kawe A
Mji Mwema	Boma	Kumbukumbu
Mivinjeni	Amana	Mapambano
Toa Ngoma	Buguruni Viziwi	Mbuyuni
Kibada	Msimbazi Mseto	Oysterbay
Chang'ombe	Gerezani	Kinondoni
Geza Ulole	Muhimbili	Msisiri
Mtoni Kijichi	Ukongga	Mlimani
Kimbiji	Buguruni Moto	Bunju A
Kurasini	Buguruni	Mtongani
Kibugumo	Mnazi Mmoja	Kunduchi
Tandika	Uhuru Wasichana	
Mgulani	Bunge	
Mikwambe		
Kigamboni		
Mbagala		

Source of data

This brief is part of ongoing citizen monitoring at Uwazi, www.uwazi.org. The data were collected through a monitoring survey conducted by Uwazi between August and December 2010. All data can be obtained from Uwazi.