

What does Dar make of education?

Parents' knowledge, opinions and actions in Dar es Salaam



1. Introduction

In August and September 2010 Uwazi at Twaweza, in collaboration with DataVision, conducted a public service delivery survey in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The survey team visited 550 households in Ilala, Temeke, and Kinondoni districts. As part of the survey, households were asked a series of questions about a variety of public services, including education. To understand how Dar es Salaam residents participate in education, respondents, mainly parents, were asked about their knowledge of government policies in education, their opinions about what is going on in their children's schools, and actions that they have taken in relation to education in their communities.

Among the households that were interviewed, 429 had children below the age of 18 years. A majority (291 households) had children attending primary schools, while 152 households had children in secondary schools. Results in this policy brief are based on data from all 429 households, except where the text explicitly refers to primary school issues (in which case results are based on the 291 households mentioned).

This brief presents some of the results from this survey focusing on education at primary and secondary levels. It shows that:

- Parents know relatively little about important aspects of education policies and practices. Almost none know about the capitation grant amount the government is providing to schools.



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- More than 80 percent do not know how their children's school performed in the most recent Primary School Leaving Examinations.
- Two out of five are uninformed about teachers' presence/absence in schools their children attend.
- Nearly half the parents report that they participate in their child's education at some level, including through attending school committee meetings or going directly to the school to speak with teachers about their child.
- Parents are generally satisfied with primary school buildings; few are satisfied with availability of textbooks in primary schools.

Limited information on crucial aspects of schooling means that parents are unlikely to demand or contribute to better teaching and learning for their children.

Nine facts about education in Dar es Salaam

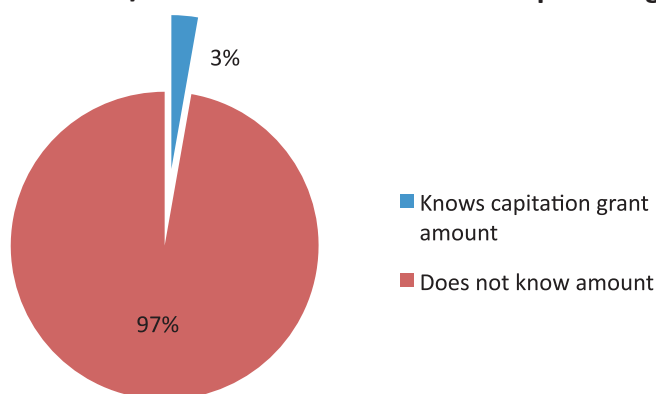
Fact 1: Ninety-seven percent of parents do not know the capitation grant amount

In accordance with the Primary Education Development Program, Tanzania is committed to disbursing a capitation grant to all schools for quality improvements. According to policy, the grant is USD 10 per pupil, which is equivalent to about TZS 15,000 at the 2010 exchange rate.

Given that the funds are meant for school level expenditures, parental knowledge of these funds and involvement in monitoring their use may help ensure that the capitation grants are used well. The survey found, however, that only 3 percent of parents interviewed knew how much money per child schools are supposed to receive via the capitation grant. This is a major challenge because as our other briefs have shown, schools often do not receive the full capitation grant, and do not receive it on time. Informed parents could follow up on government to deliver this money to schools in full and on time. But this cannot happen if parents are unaware about how much money the capitation grant entails on a per pupil basis.

Interestingly, when asked, 86 percent of respondents said that they would feel free to discuss spending of the school budget with the headmaster, if they felt the need to do so. This shows that there is a willingness among parents to engage if given the opportunity.

Figure 1: Parents that know/do not know the amount of capitation grant per child

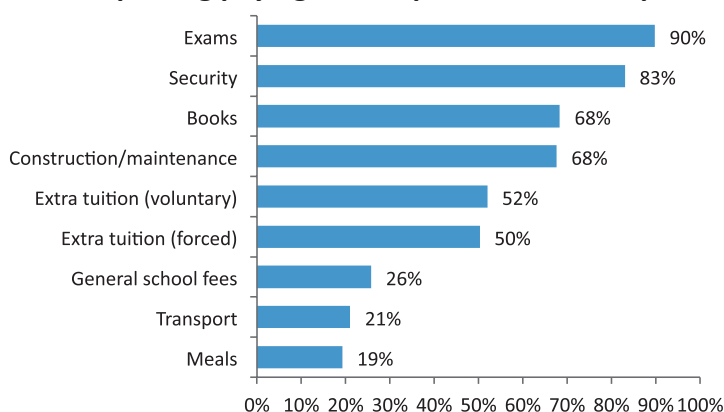


Source of Data: Uwazi, Public Service Delivery Survey, Dar es Salaam, 2010

Fact 2: Despite the policy of free primary education, parents report paying various fees

Payment of fees is still quite common in public schools. While payment for examinations is mandatory, other contributions such as for security and books does not seem to be in line with the current policy. Half of parents report being forced to pay an “extra tuition” fee, while a quarter of parents report paying general school fees, even in public schools.

Figure 2: Parents reporting paying fees to public schools at primary school level



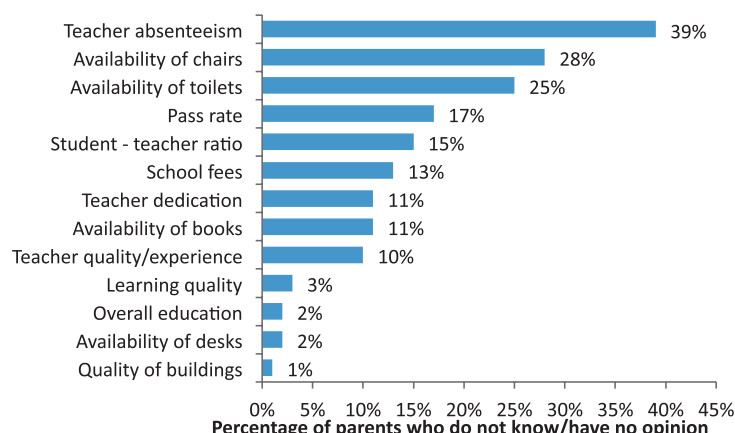
Source of Data: Uwazi, Public Service Delivery Survey, Dar es Salaam, 2010

Fact 3: Nearly 40 percent of parents do not know about teacher absenteeism

Parents seem particularly uninformed about teacher presence or absence at school. Many are also uninformed about the availability of chairs in schools, and proper provision of toilet facilities. This contrasts to other areas, such as quality of buildings, or overall level of education, where few parents selected “don’t know” as their response. This lack of information about absenteeism is important

given that the recent Service Delivery Indicators Survey showed that teacher absenteeism in urban areas in Tanzania is 36 percent.¹ Moreover, a teacher in the classroom is arguably the most essential “input” in the learning process.

Figure 3: Aspects of education about which parents do not have knowledge/opinion

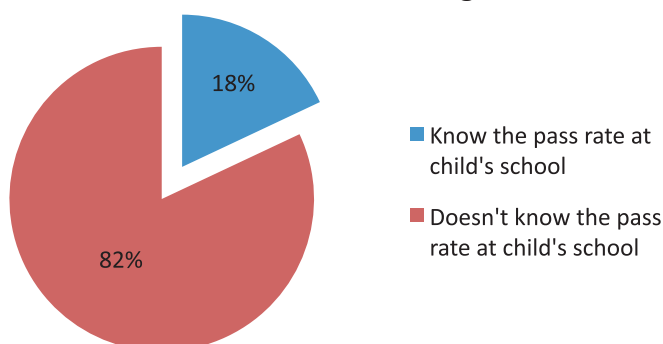


Source of Data: Uwazi, Public Service Delivery Survey, Dar es Salaam, 2010

Fact 4: Very few parents know the pass rates at their child’s primary school

Passing the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) is extremely important in Tanzania as it determines access to secondary school in the public sector. Considering this, one would expect that parents would be keen to know the pass rate at their child’s school and take initiative to find the information. However, only 18 percent of parents report that they know how their child’s school performs in the examinations.

Figure 4: Parents’ knowledge of PSLE pass rates in schools their children are attending



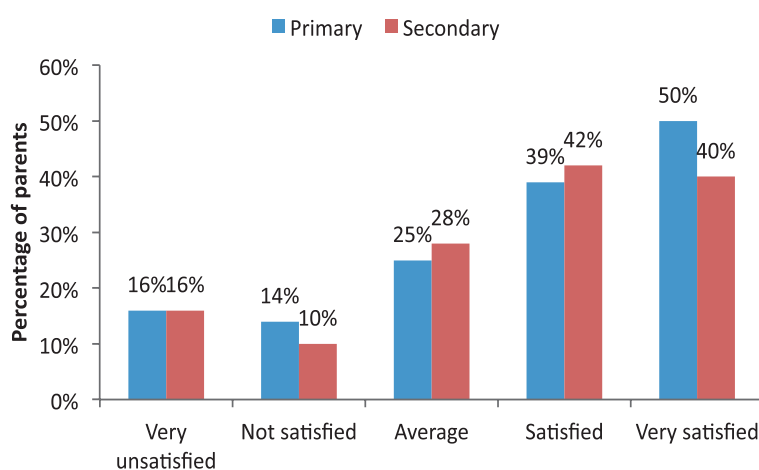
Source of Data: Uwazi, Public Service Delivery Survey, Dar es Salaam, 2010

¹ *Service Delivery Indicators: Pilot in Education and Health Care in Africa* (2011). Washington DC: World Bank and African Economic Research Consortium. This report can be accessed at http://www.aercafrica.org/documents/isd_workingpapers/ISDReportFINAL.pdf.

Fact 5: Parents report satisfaction with education offered

Forty-four percent of parents are satisfied or very satisfied with the education offered in primary schools, and relatively few (16 percent) say that they are very dissatisfied. For secondary education, slightly more parents (46 percent) indicated that they were happy (satisfied or very satisfied) with the quality of education and 26-30 percent were not satisfied or very dissatisfied. The relatively high levels of satisfaction are interesting in light of the relatively low levels of knowledge about basic school aspects. This may in part be due to parents having low expectations or aspirations about schooling.

Figure 5: Parents' satisfaction with education offered in primary and secondary schools



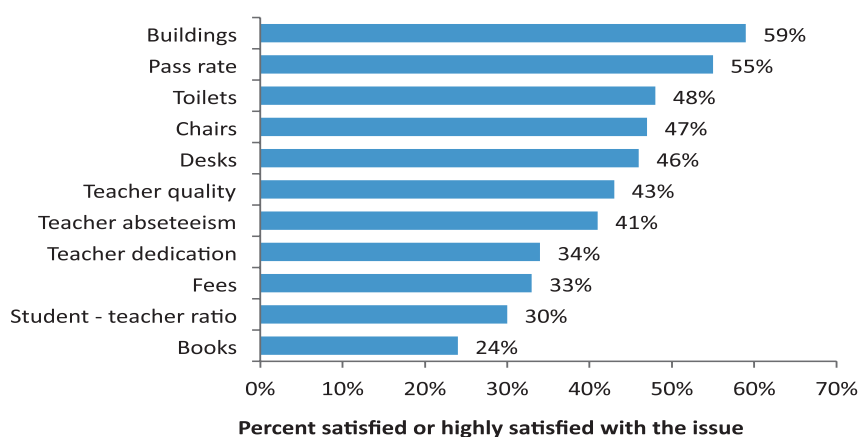
Source of Data: Uwazi, Public Service Delivery Survey, Dar es Salaam, 2010

Fact 6: Parents are generally satisfied with buildings; less with the availability of textbooks

Parents who are happy (satisfied or very satisfied) with the quality of primary education offered in schools appear to base their favorable views on issues such as building quality. Nearly 60 percent of these parents were satisfied with school buildings. Other studies have shown, however, that availability and quality of infrastructure have little bearing on learning outcomes.² Fewer parents revealed highly positive views about teacher quality, dedication, or absenteeism, student-teacher ratio and the availability of books.

² See for example, "Improving Education in the Developing World: What Have We Learned from Randomized Evaluations," Michael Kremer and Alaka Holla (2009), *Annual Review of Economics*, Vol 1, pp. 513-542, as well as the analysis in Uwezo's 2011 report, *Are Our Children Learning: Numeracy and Literacy across East Africa*.

Figure 6: Parents who are satisfied or highly satisfied with amenities in schools

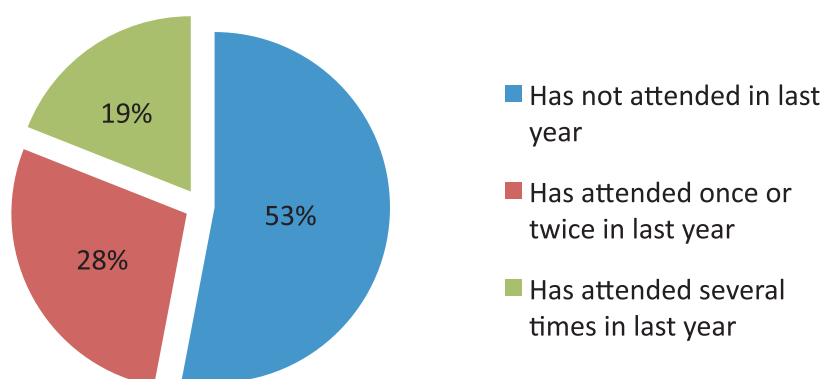


Source of Data: Uwazi, Public Service Delivery Survey, Dar es Salaam, 2010

Fact 7: Half the parents have attended a school committee meeting in the past 12 months

Relatively low levels of knowledge about things such as school performance and the capitation grant do not reflect lack of interest in education. Almost half the parents (47 percent) report that they have attended a school committee meeting at their child's school at least once in the past 12 months. Of those who have attended meetings, 61 percent believe that their committee is an effective body. However, 24 percent of parents were unsure whether there was a school committee in existence at their child's school.

Figure 7: Parents' participation in school committee meetings



Source of Data: Uwazi, Public Service Delivery Survey, Dar es Salaam, 2010

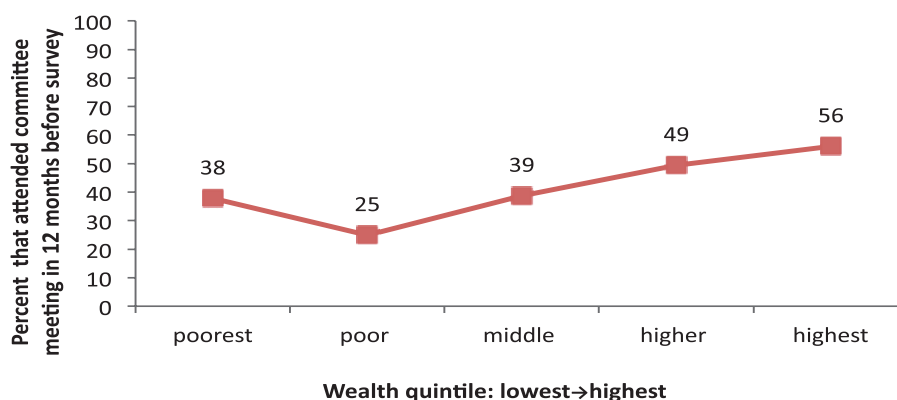
With respect to formal participation in education oversight institutions (i.e. via school committee), Dar es Salaam parents appear to fall into three groups:

frequent participators who report attending several meetings in the last year (19 percent), sporadic participators who have attended at least one meeting in the past year (28 percent), and inactive parents (53 percent) who have not attended any meetings over the last 12 months. It is also notable that having a child in private school does not have any effect on the likelihood of a parent attending committee meetings.

Fact 8: Parents from wealthier households are more likely to attend school meetings

Parents from wealthier households are more likely to attend school committee meetings compared to parents from poor households. More than half the parents in the wealthiest income quintile reported attending school committee meetings in the 12 month period before the survey (Figure 7). This number drops to about one third of parents in the two lowest income quintiles.

Figure 8: Parents from wealthier households are more likely to attend school meetings

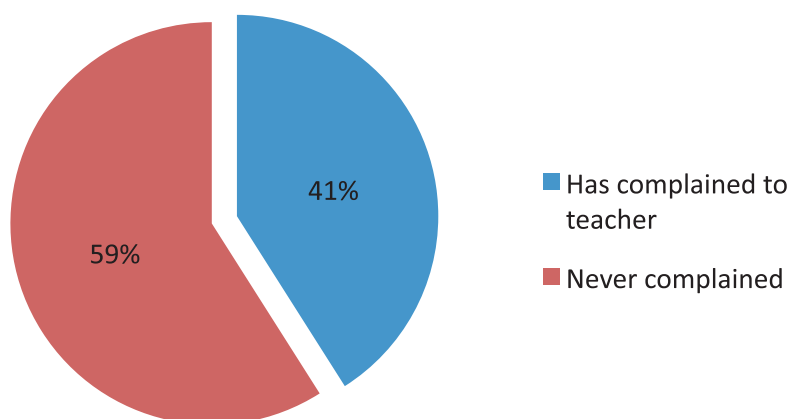


Source of Data: Uwazi, Public Service Delivery Survey, Dar es Salaam, 2010

Fact 9: Two out of five parents have made a complaint to their child's teacher

Forty-one percent of respondents report that they have at some point made a complaint to their child's teacher, and 44 percent could recall the last time that they had been to school to speak to teachers about their child. Moreover, talking to teachers seems to be effective. Of the 130 parents who report having complained to their child's teacher, 72 percent report that they were satisfied with the way their complaints were addressed.

Figure 9: Parents raising complaints with teachers about their children



Source of Data: Uwazi, Public Service Delivery Survey, Dar es Salaam, 2010

3. Conclusion

This brief sheds light on parents' level of awareness, opinion and participation in the education of their children in Dar es Salaam. It shows that parents know relatively little about important aspects of education policies, quality and practices. On policy, almost none know about the capitation grant amount the government is providing to schools. On quality, more than 80 percent do not know how their children's school performed in the most recent Primary School Leaving Examinations. Furthermore, two out of five are uninformed about teachers' presence/absence in schools their children attend. Nevertheless, nearly half the parents report that they participate in their child's education at some level, including through attending school committee meetings or going directly to the school to speak with teachers about their child.

The fact that large numbers of parents are not well informed about critical factors affecting learning outcomes in their children's schools suggests a breakdown in the information and accountability loop. Parents who lack information about essential schooling inputs are not likely to demand or be able to effectively contribute to better teaching and better school conditions for their children, even when they attend school committee meetings. They may express relatively high levels of satisfaction with schooling, but this satisfaction may be a result of being ill-informed. If parental involvement is crucial to improving children's learning, improving the quality of public information and public debate may be a good place to start.