

Are parents involved in education?



Introduction

Twaweza works extensively on education issues in the East African region. Through the Uwezo initiative, Twaweza conducts the largest household-based assessment of children's basic literacy and numeracy skills in the region. The survey is carried out by citizen researchers who test children's skills in tens of thousands of randomly selected households; in Uganda in 2013, Uwezo tested more than 80,000 children. The data collected are analyzed and then communicated extensively to policy actors, parents, teachers and other stakeholders in education. By communicating widely and creatively, Uwezo aims to spark a movement of committed citizens determined to improve the quality of education in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. There are some distinct categories of methods by which citizens (parents) can work on education issues, including private actions at home to support their children (such as reading together, reviewing homework), actions at school level (such as engaging with teachers, following up on school promises), and direct engagement with (local) government to demand better delivery of promised resources and stronger implementation of policies. One of Twaweza's explicit aims is to promote and enable these types of citizen action.

Twaweza also retains a core focus on the capitation grant for education. When all charges for access to primary education were abolished, the Government of Uganda introduced a capitation grant designed to provide schools with additional resources for teaching and learning materials, extra-curricular activities, administration, and management. The funding allocated through this grant ought to alleviate the pressure on parents to make financial contributions to the school. Moreover, the timely disbursement of this grant is part of the Government of Uganda's commitment to its people and as such, it should be honored by government and monitored by citizens and schools.

Knowing how many people are aware of Uwezo's learning assessment and the results, alongside the capitation grant amount and purpose is critical for Twaweza to understand whether we are on the right track to achieving our aims in education.



Therefore in early 2014, Twaweza worked with Ipsos Synovate to conduct a survey on young Ugandans, aged 15 – 35, and their involvement in children’s education, awareness of the annual Uwezo learning assessment and its findings, and knowledge about the capitation grant. Twaweza sought to establish awareness of this policy as grounds for a decision on whether to undertake a campaign to raise awareness about the capitation grant. This brief reports the survey’s findings in three parts: the first on parents’ general involvement in their children’s education; the second part on awareness of the capitation grant and the final part on awareness of Uwezo.

Of the 2,432 Ugandans between the ages of 15-35, 1,010, or 42% of the sample are parents. The survey asked these parents about their involvement in their children’s education. This brief reports the survey’s findings for parents and non-parents regarding their knowledge of the capitation grant and the Uwezo assessment. Data and questionnaires are available on the Twaweza website www.twaweza.org

This brief includes results based on regression analysis, which is a statistical technique for estimating the relationship among a set of variables. Whereas correlations can tell us about the relationship between two variables (e.g. the association between education and urban/rural status), regressions can tell us about the influence that a set of variables together exert upon an outcome of interest (e.g., the effect that rural/urban status, gender, and wealth when considered together have on education).

¹The estimates reported below have been weighted to account for oversampling of urbanites and correct for other features of the survey design. This includes the fact that the survey was stratified across rural and urban areas, with respondents clustered in enumeration areas within each region. Enumeration areas were selected with equal probability within each region. The survey was analyzed using STATA, which allows for automated correction of survey design effects.

Parental Involvement in Education

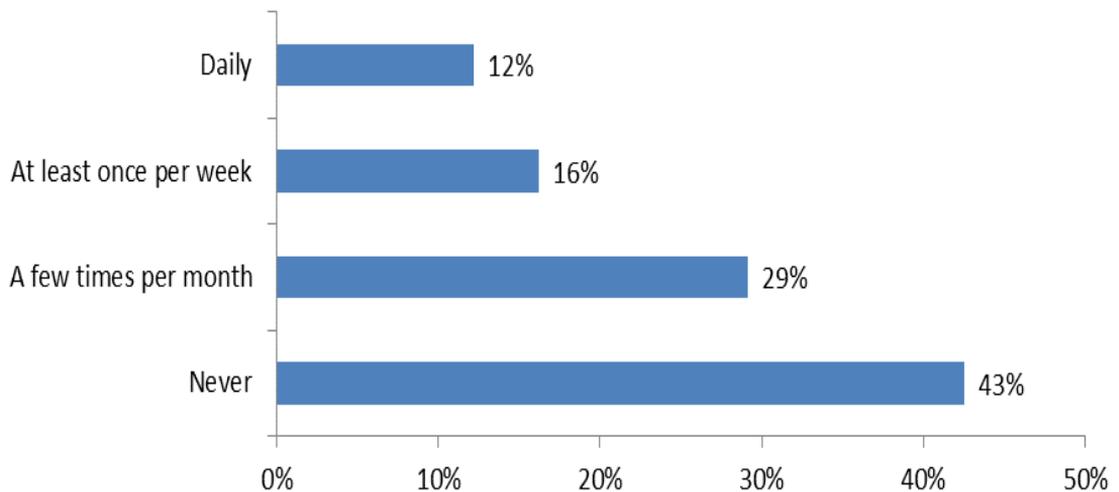
Parents exhibit substantial variation in terms of their involvement in their children’s education. In this brief, we take two indicators of parents’ roles in their children’s education: checking homework and talking to teachers about a child’s progress.

Fact 1: 4 out of 10 Ugandans never check their children’s homework

Figure 1 illustrates the frequency with which parents report checking their children’s homework. We see that a substantial proportion of parents (43%) never check their children’s homework. Of the remainder, 28% check homework once a week or more (12% say they check homework daily), and 29% report checking a few times per month.

Figure 1: Frequency of Checking Homework

N=1,010



We further wanted to find out whether some parents checked homework more than others, according to the characteristics measured in the survey. Using regression analyses, we find that women are more likely to check homework than men, older parents are more likely to check homework than younger parents, and parents higher on the socio-economic scale are more likely to check homework than parents lower on the socio-economic scale. Among these significant factors, socio-economic status and gender had the largest effect on how frequently parents checked homework (whereas age had a lower effect). Living in a rural or urban area had no effect on the frequency of checking homework.

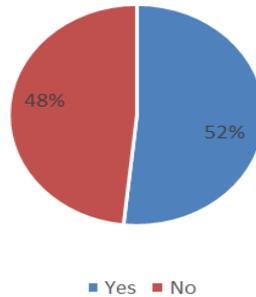
To make this more concrete, consider the average male parent in our sample. Let’s call him Isaac. “Isaac” is 27 years old and is in the middle of the socio-economic scale². The regression model predicts that he would check his children’s homework a bit less than a few times a month. Now, consider “Maria,” a woman, aged 35, high on the socio-economic scale; the model predicts that she would check her children’s homework a bit less than once a week.

²The socio-economic scale measure is based on an index constructed by asking a battery of questions related to asset ownership as well as recent access to different media sources.

Fact 2: More than half of parents talk to teachers about children's learning

About half of all surveyed parents (52%) report that in the past year, they have taken the initiative to talk to a teacher about their children's learning, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Proportion of parents who have talked to teachers in the past year



As in the previous section, we wanted to find out whether some parents talked to teachers more than others, according to the characteristics measured in the survey. Using regression analysis, we find that women are more likely to talk to teachers about their children's learning than men, older parents are more likely to talk to teachers than younger parents, and parent high on the socio-economic scale are more likely to talk to teachers as compared to parents lower on the socio-economic scale.

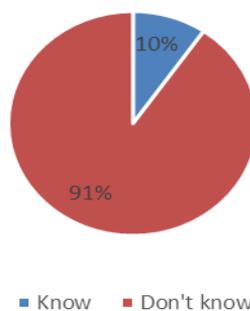
Again, let's consider Isaac (27 years old, and of medium socioeconomic status) and Maria (aged 35, and of high socioeconomic status). The model predicts that there is a 51% chance that Isaac has talked to his child's teacher in the past year. If we consider Maria, the model predicts an 85% chance that she talked to her child's teacher in the past year.

Knowledge of Capitation Grant

In order to demand better implementation of the policy on the capitation grant, citizens need to be aware of it.

Fact 3: Only 1 out of 10 Ugandans know what the capitation grant is

Figure 3: Proportion of respondents who know what the capitation grant is



Only 9.7% of all young Ugandans know what the capitation grant is (as shown in Figure 3), with no significant difference between urban and rural respondents, gender, age, and socio-economic scale. Perhaps not surprisingly, parents are more likely to know the capitation grant than non-parents, although the proportion of parents that know it is still low (12% vs. 8% for non-parents, data not shown).

Given low levels of awareness of the capitation grant, it is clear that young Ugandans, even parents, are not in a strong position to demand its delivery from Government.

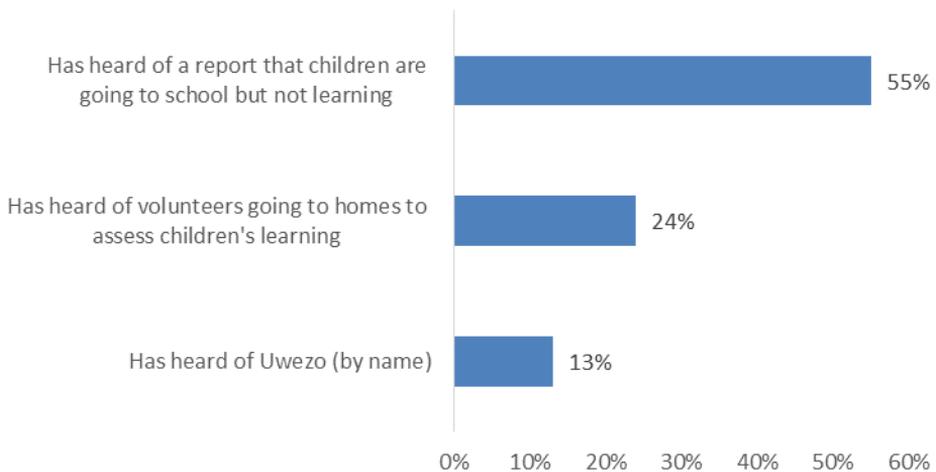
Uwezo at Twaweza

Twaweza’s Uwezo initiative seeks to foster change by galvanizing a concerted movement of citizens demanding better quality education for children. Citizen activism around the issue of learning outcomes will only occur if parents are aware of the low levels of learning in the country.

Fact 4: 6 out of 10 Ugandans have heard of Uwezo, directly or indirectly

Figure 4 shows the different ways respondents have heard of Uwezo. Just 13% of respondents have heard of the Uwezo initiative by name, with no significant differences in terms of rural/urban respondents, age, or gender. On the other hand, over half of all respondents (55%) say that they have heard of a report that says that children are going to school but not learning. Furthermore, nearly one out of four respondents (24%) say that they have seen or heard of volunteers who go to homes to assess children’s numeracy and literacy abilities. Therefore, in the full sample, 61% of respondents have heard of Uwezo directly or indirectly (counting each individual only once, irrespective if he or she heard of Uwezo in more than way).

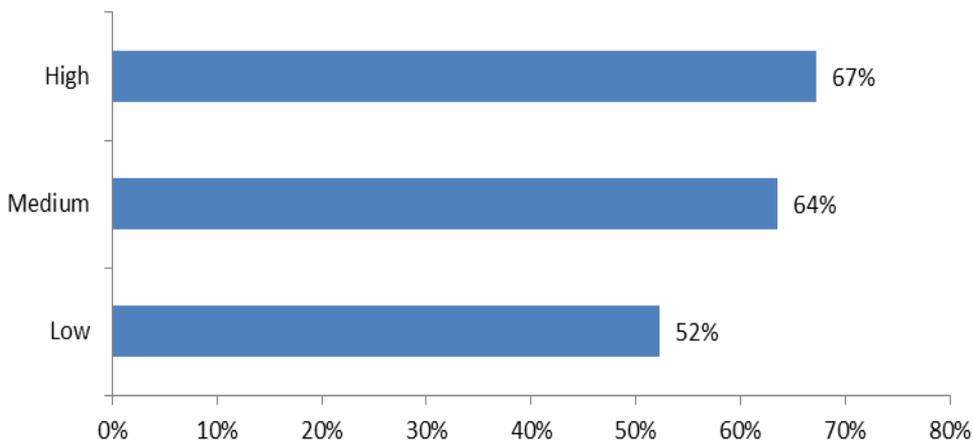
Figure 4: Different ways respondents have heard of Uwezo



Moreover, 2% of respondents report that they have been involved in the Uwezo assessment in some way, a tendency that holds across rural/urban status, gender, age, and social class. This is in line with Uwezo’s use of random sampling to ensure that the data collected are

Figure 5 illustrates how socioeconomic status affects people’s likelihood of having heard of Uwezo, either directly or indirectly. Those higher on the socio-economic scale are more likely to have heard of Uwezo (as compared to those lower on the scale). People higher on the socio-economic scale are more likely to access all types of media (as has been reported in a related brief), particularly newspapers and the internet, and media are the primary channel through which Uwezo can disseminate findings and prompt citizen action.

Figure 5: Proportion of Respondents that have heard of Uwezo, by Social Class



Conclusion

Since the survey focused on Ugandans between the ages of 15 and 35, it does not reveal a complete picture about the behavior of Ugandan parents. However, a substantial proportion of young Ugandans (42%, as reported in this brief) have children. These young parents exhibit a range of involvement in their children’s education and awareness of the capitation grant and Uwezo. On average, parents who are older, female, and of higher socioeconomic status are more involved in their children’s education. On the flip side, parents of low socioeconomic status are significantly less likely to have heard about Uwezo or the results of the learning assessment. It is perhaps not surprising that parents who are more likely to be engaged in their children’s education are also more likely to have heard about the Uwezo assessment and its results through channels used to date; on the other hand, it suggests that different tactics may be needed to reach parents who are currently less involved with their children’s education, and convince them to do so. Other studies commissioned by Twaweza, notably in Kenya, have examined the question of parents’ engagement in their children’s education with greater depth – unearthing important findings about the variety of internal and external factors that influence whether a parent is moved to become more proactively involved in education matters³. A further investigation of such issues among Ugandan parents would be helpful in designing future communication strategies for Twaweza. The indicators in this brief provide a snapshot of the general picture and how much young Ugandans are or are not involved in key education issues, both in the home as well as vis-à-vis the school.

³Lieberman, Posner & Tsai. *Does Information Lead to More Active Citizenship? Evidence from an Education Intervention in Rural Kenya*. World Development Vol. 60, pp. 69–83, 2014. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2014.03.014>