



Press Release

A new study uncovers lack of information and involvement in education matters among parents

Parents' knowledge about important education policies and practices is unacceptably low, an indication that they are unlikely to demand or take action to contribute to better teaching and learning for their children. These findings are presented in a policy brief entitled "*What does Dar make of education? Parents' knowledge, opinions and actions in Dar es Salaam*" which was released today.

The brief is based on a survey that was conducted in 2010 by Uwazi at Twaweza and DataVision, among 429 randomly selected households in Dar es Salaam. It shows that 97 percent of parents do not know about capitation grant; and that they do not know the amount the government is supposed to provide schools per pupil during school year. When asked about recent primary school leaving examination results in their children's schools, more than 80 percent of the parents had no idea. Furthermore, over 50 percent of the parents did not attend a school committee meeting in the course of the year preceding the survey.

Presence of such large numbers of parents who are not well informed about important factors affecting learning outcomes in their children's schools suggest existence of a breakdown in the information and accountability loop. People who lack information about essential schooling inputs are unlikely to demand or take initiative to contribute to better teaching or schooling conditions for their children. According to Nyankomo Marwa, Research Analyst at Twaweza, this lack of information can jeopardize implementation of important government policies:

"Normally consumers vote with their feet when a service providers fail to provide quality. However, lack of crucial information among parents about their children's schools performance may keep them from moving the children to alternative schools which may provide better teaching quality."

Despite the challenges mentioned above, the study reveals at the same time that 44 percent of the parents are satisfied with the education offered and nearly 60 percent are satisfied with the school infrastructure, in particular buildings. Moreover, majority of parents said they would assume an active role in monitoring the quality of education and learning outcomes if they had the relevant information.

These findings present a challenge to citizens who, through active participation, can play a role in reversing the breakdown of the information and accountability loop in the education sector. Such an effort will help to increase awareness, transparency and citizen agency in monitoring and preserving the quality of learning and education outcomes.

Other actors can play their part too. For instance, the government should make sure that the information on capitation grants disbursement and other education policies is widely available. Donors, media and civil society organizations should work jointly with the government to disseminate the relevant information. Also academicians and civil society organizations should invest

more in evidence-based research to diagnose parts of the system that are not delivering and share the results widely with key stakeholders.

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