

Low quality of public schools drives parents towards private education in Tanzania

Policy Paper



Based on a study by ActionAid, this policy paper shows how the right to education in Tanzania is undermined by the low quality of public education. The Government of Tanzania has the duty to ensure the right to free, public education of good quality for all but the low quality of public schools is driving parents to pay for private education. Privatisation aggravates existing inequalities and the marginalisation of vulnerable groups and children from poor families. The government of Tanzania must fulfil its responsibility and ensure free, public education of good quality for all children.

Education is a human right and duty of the government of Tanzania

The right to free, quality education is established by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*,¹ and reaffirmed with the *Sustainable Development Goals*.² In Tanzania, the Constitution recognizes the right to education as a fundamental objective (though not as a human right). The government should therefore ensure free education of good quality to all citizens. But a recent study by ActionAid shows that the government does not live up to this, and leaves a large part of its responsibility to the private sector (ActionAid, 2017b).

Low quality of public education in Tanzania

In 2001, the Government of Tanzania declared free primary education which led to a massive increase in enrolment. From 2004 to 2013 public primary schools increased enrolment by 15.1% and public secondary schools by a remarkable 326.1% (Government of Tanzania, 2014, p. 48). The President of Tanzania announced in 2016 that about 1.3 million students have enrolled in primary schools since the enforcement of free education.³ However, this impressive expansion has not been accompanied by a proportional increase in resources for teachers, classrooms, and school material. This has resulted in a drastic decrease in the quality of education. The primary pupil-classroom ratio has grown from 66:1 in 2010 to 77:1 in 2016 and is especially high in urban areas (MoEST, 2017, p. 3). For many children in Tanzania, schooling does not mean learning. One study notes that just over 50% of all children at the end of the primary cycle were able to read a Standard 2 level English story (HakiElimu, 2015b, p. 8). A lack of effective monitoring and inspection has led to high levels of teacher absenteeism. In 2016 a World Bank survey found that 14% of teachers were absent from school, and 47% were absent from the classroom. The same study estimates that pupils are receiving only 50% of scheduled teaching time (Wane & Martin, 2015, p. 50). This has been linked to the very difficult working and living conditions that teachers in Tanzania have to endure such as substandard classrooms and housing, lack of teaching materials and excessive workloads (Sumra, 2005).

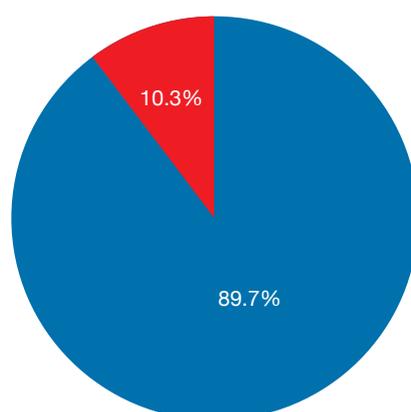
Low quality drives parents to pay for private schools

The search for better quality education drives parents to pay for private schooling. In Tanzania, only 10.3% of schools are private, but they are absorbing more and more students at all levels, especially in urban areas, where more parents can afford to pay the high fees.

Figure 1: School types (primary and secondary) Tanzania 2015

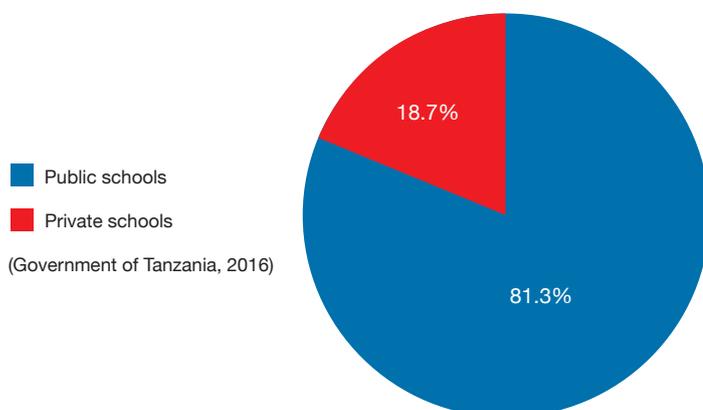
- Public schools
- Private schools

Source: (Government of Tanzania, 2016)



In secondary education, 18.7% of students go to private schools. From 2011 to 2015, there was a remarkable 19.8% increase in secondary private schools and a 8.3% decrease in public schools (Government of Tanzania, 2016, pp. 79, 125).

Figure 2: Secondary enrolment per type of school Tanzania 2015



The government limits access to public secondary education

The right to education in Tanzania is hindered in several ways, but one major barrier lies at the end of primary education. Many students are expelled from the education system because they fail the Primary School Leaving Exam (PSLE). According to the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA), 68% of students (65% girls, 72% boys) passed the PSLE in 2015. This means that some 245,000 students could not continue to secondary education. The government does not allow children who fail the PSLE to repeat the exam or to repeat Standard 7, so the only option is to leave school or to go to a private school – an option only open to wealthier families who are able to pay for education. The government appears to be using this exam as a selection mechanism to reduce the number of children passing to secondary education. This hinders the right to education of Tanzanian children, which also bears consequences for child protection, as many children are pushed to child labour, and many girls to early marriages (Human Rights Watch, 2017, p. 42).

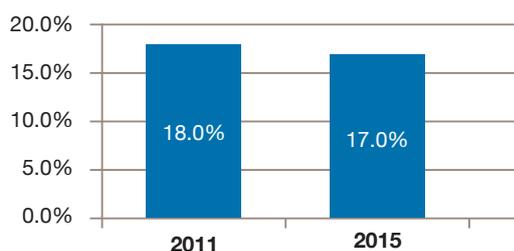
Existing inequalities are aggravated by private education

Private schools in Tanzania are only affordable to the middle and upper classes. Fees are not effectively regulated and can go from \$1,000/year for a community school to \$17,000/year for an international school.⁴ HakiElimu describes a “dual education system which is creating two kinds of citizens” (HakiElimu, 2015a, p. 16). The middle and upper classes are not using public education because of its perceived poor quality and the majority of poor children attend public schools, which suffer from high pupil-teacher ratios and poor quality learning. Tanzania has reached the point where public education is stigmatised, and there is a risk that the rising polarisation could lead to a fracture in society.

Funding of public education is insufficient and inefficient

The share of the national budget of Tanzania allocated to education has been declining and in the between 2011 and 2015 stagnated at 17% (HakiElimu, 2014a, p. 6).

Figure 3: Education budget as a percentage of total public expenditure, Tanzania



Source: (HakiElimu, 2014a, p. 6)

Over the past few years the government has not managed to raise the income it has expected. Not all the budget approved for education is disbursed, and not all the disbursed budget is utilised, which results in a very poor level of funding actually reaching schools. For years, the resources for schools were sent to the districts, where funds were often diverted to other political priorities. Recently, the Ministry of Education has announced that it will send capitation grants directly to schools. The amounts are not very high but at least schools have some resources, which is essential given that the government prohibited schools from asking

families for contributions.⁵ It is not clear though, if these grants will be sufficient to run the schools or if parents will still need to contribute, because there is a lack of clarity on enforceability of the law.

The government should ensure free, public education of good quality for all

The Government of Tanzania should take appropriate steps to ensure equitable access to education and equality of learning opportunities, by eliminating direct and indirect school costs and improving the quality of education in public schools. The government must allocate sufficient resources to meet the minimum education standards (such as pupils-qualified teacher ratio, safe facilities, etc.) and ensure effective monitoring of schools and the improvement of data collection. Adequate resources should be allocated to improving the quality of learning by attracting, training and retaining good teachers, and investing in infrastructure and learning materials. Investment is also needed to expand access to secondary education, ensuring that there are enough places for all children to continue from public primary to public secondary schools.

The education sector budget must be maintained to meet international targets of a minimum of 20% of total public expenditure or 6% of GDP, with an increased percentage of the total budget spent on basic education. The percentage of the budget spent on education development should also be increased. The national budget should also be expanded through more progressive and effective taxation. A recent study by ActionAid estimated that in 2014/15 the country suffered a \$760 million revenue loss from tax incentives provided by the government (corresponding to 1.5% of GDP). This amount could increase the education budget by 28% (ActionAid, 2017a, p. 48). The education budget should promote equity and improve the learning opportunities of disadvantaged groups such and girls and children from poor families. The allocation and utilisation of the education budget should be scrutinised (through participation in decision making processes and constant monitoring) at all levels by civil society organisations and parent teachers associations among other stakeholders.

Recommendations

The Government of Tanzania should:

- **Right to education** – Ensure that the new constitution is adopted, guaranteeing the right to free education for all children, ensuring that it is recognised as a human right and rendered legally enforceable.) Primary (and progressively secondary) education must be free and compulsory, not only in law but also in reality The government should not delegate its responsibility for ensuring the right to education to the private sector.

- **Education financing** - Maintain the education budget at at least 20% of the national budget or 6% of GDP; increasing the size of the overall budget by expanding the tax base through progressive and effective taxation; increasing the sensitivity of the budget by allocating more resources to promote equity and increasing scrutiny to ensure that the budget is allocated and utilised efficiently. The education budget should be managed by the Ministry of Education and the budget for basic education should be clearly
- **Cost of education for parents** - Ensure that primary (and progressively secondary) education is free, not only in law but also in reality. This means abolishing all compulsory direct and indirect costs (e.g. enrolment and exam fees, uniforms and learning materials amongst others) to parents and ensuring that the State education budget adequately covers all these costs.
- **Quality education** - Improve the quality of public schools so that parents do not feel the need to pay for private education. Allocate sufficient resources to attracting, training and retaining qualified teachers, to providing sufficient learning materials and to improving school infrastructure such as classrooms, toilets and playgrounds.
- **Teachers** - Ensure that all children are taught by a properly trained and qualified teacher with a pupil-teacher ratio of not more than 40:1 (in line with the national benchmark) investing more in female teachers, better quality training, more equitable deployment and incentives for working in remote areas.
- **Regulation and monitoring of schools** - Strengthen the regulatory control of private schools, holding them to account and inspecting them regularly to ensure that they comply with national education standards. Impose sanctions if private schools do not comply with requirements relating to teacher salaries and conditions, level of fees, etc. Ensure transparency by reporting accurate and detailed data on private schools (including data on school owners, profits, categories of schools etc.).
- **Gender equity** - Take firm action to achieve gender parity and equality in education by ensuring appropriate policies are funded and implemented in order to tackle persistent barriers to girls' education, including but not limited to: gender-related school-based violence; lack of sanitation facilities; lack of female teachers and gender bias in teaching and learning materials. Engage with communities, civil society and policy-makers to shift deep-seated discrimination against girls at all levels.

Civil society organisations in Tanzania should:

- **Right to education** - Raise citizens' awareness and hold the government to account for delivering the right to free, compulsory, quality education. Expose violations of the right to education arising from the privatisation of education.
- **Education financing** - Raise awareness and support citizens to advocate for the government to increase the size of the overall budget to 6% of GDP by expanding the tax base through progressive and effective taxation; increase education's share of the budget to at least 20%, increase the sensitivity of the budget by allocating more resources to promote equity and increase scrutiny to ensure that the budget is allocated and utilised efficiently.
- **Cost of education to parents** - Raise awareness and support citizens to carry out participatory budget monitoring and analysis in order to fully understand what is spent on education by government and by households and to campaign for an end to compulsory direct and indirect costs to parents for public education.
- **Quality education** – Hold government to account for providing quality education for all children, making the case for the financing of sufficient quality trained teachers, improved school infrastructure and learning materials.
- **Regulation and monitoring of schools** – Hold the government to account for ensuring that private schools are properly regulated and regularly inspected to ensure that they comply with national education standards.
- **Gender equity** – Engage with communities and policy makers to raise awareness and shift deep-seated discrimination against girls. Identify, highlight and oppose issues such as violence against girls in schools and child marriage. Promote positive alternatives of quality inclusive and equity-focused education.



Tanzania Zanzibar North.
PHOTO: RACHEL PALMER/ACTIONAID

Please see national report for list of references.

Notes

1. United Nations, 1948, Article 26. http://www.un.org/en/udhr-book/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf
2. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
3. <http://answersafrica.com/tanzania-sets-free-education-in-motion-with-a-62-million-allocation.html>
4. Interview with civil society representative, Dar Es Salaam, February 2017.
5. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35111666>



School children, Tanzania.
PHOTO: EMANUELA COLOMBO/ACTIONAID

WAXBARASHO చదువు การศึกษา KWAN Giáo Dục
 Kakaran 79yct ବିଶ୍ୱା DZIDZO MmATA
 UBUREZI Kogale शिक्षा ELIMU शिक्षा
 SIKOLO విద్య تعليم و تربيه Opron
EDUCATION
A RIGHT IN EVERY LANGUAGE
 MAPHUNZIRO adzesua Nunven atche we Uddannelse

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