

The Role of Community Participation in the Ongoing Construction of Ward Based Secondary Schools: Lessons of Tanzania

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to examine the role of community participation in the ongoing construction of ward based secondary schools in Tanzania with respect of two wards namely Makulu and Nzuguni in Dodoma Municipality. The government of Tanzania introduced secondary education development plan (PEDP) phase one starting from 2004 -2009 and phase two from 2010 – 2015. It is during this period when the idea of having ward based Secondary Schools throughout the nation was put in place aiming at opening more space for secondary education. Data for the study were collected from Ward Executive Offers, Ward Education Officers, Village Leaders and village members using semi-structured and free talk interview. A total of 35 respondents participated in the study.

The research findings indicated that community participation in the ongoing construction of secondary schools takes different forms of either cash contribution or labour power contribution. The nature and extent of community participation for the majority of local communities in cash contribution and labour power contribution is generally limited. Villagers are generally not actively involved in decision making, planning, monitoring and evaluation processes.

Based on these findings, it is concluded that mobilization of political support is a very important aspect because it makes people aware of their participation and the kind of help they are likely to honor supports. Community members should be politically mobilized through education and training on the importance of their development initiatives and to make them feel that an initiative project belongs to them. In this regard people will be in a position to honor support and participate in decision making on matters concerning their social development.

Key Words: Ward based secondary school, Decision making, Community and Participation

1. Introduction

The Government of Tanzania recognizes the central role of education in achieving the overall development goal of improving the quality of life for her citizens. It considers the provision of quality education as the most reliable way of building a sustainable future for the country as it can enhance to fight against three enemies such as ignorance, diseases and poverty. Consistent with Tanzania's Vision 2025, the education to be sought is not one of any kind or quality. Rather:

“Education should be treated as strategic agent for mind set transformation and for the creation of well educated nation, sufficiently equipped with the knowledge needed to competently and competitively solve the development challenges which face the nation.

In this light the educational system should be restructured and transformed quantitatively with the focus on promoting creativity and problem solving¹ (URT, 2005)”

Studies from newly industrialized countries, e.g. Japan, China, South Korea, India and Brazil) indicated that, investing in education leads to faster economic growth. Countries that have equalized their education achievements for men and women in the last several decades have on average grown faster. It is for this reason that Tanzania is now paying greater attention to investment in education (Galabawa, 2005 & Mnarana 2010). In order to achieve sustainable economic development, Tanzania had decided to change the nature and character of economic system by improving access and quality of service delivery, strengthening local government financially through local taxation aimed at reducing dependency on the central government and increasing local contribution through community development policy, which ultimately increase community participation (empowerment) in development activities in implementing and decision making process.

In 2004, the Government of Tanzania launched its secondary education development plan (PEDP) aiming significantly to renovate the secondary education system throughout the country. Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) was formulated in line with the development of ward based secondary schools. The goal was to ensure more access and equity of participation across geographical, gender, disadvantaged group, and the marginalized among the community. Such a critical plan was to curb the substantial increased number of pupils enrolled in primary schools, thereby creating an upward demand for increased access to secondary education. In 2005, nearly 124,884 students were enrolled in forms 1-6 and 1,602,752 respectively in 2012. By any measures these are large enrollment increases over a short period of time. Despite the fact that enrolment had increased by 51% classrooms remained unsatisfactory. The classrooms available are 35,374, while the actual number of classrooms to accommodate the present figure of students enrolled in all secondary schools from forms 1-6 was 51,133. This indicates that there is an acute shortage of 15,759 which make 25.2% of the classroom shortages across the Country ²(BEST, 2012-2013).

There has been a deliberate initiative by the government to make sure that every child in the country attains primary and secondary education for free, but persistent poverty and debts have limited the Government capacity to provide adequate resources for education; that is why communities were required to join efforts by the government in the development program like construction of classrooms in ward based secondary schools so as to ensure that all students who passed examinations and were supposed to join secondary school could not miss such opportunities.

¹ URT: The abbreviation of the United Republic of Tanzania, 2005.

² BEST: National Bureau of Education statistics of Tanzania, 2012-2013

Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to examine the role of community participation in the ongoing classroom construction of ward based secondary schools well known (³Shule za Kata) with reference to Dodoma municipality.

2. Research Questions

In view of the introduction and purpose of the study, it is necessary to raise relevant questions about community involvement in the ongoing construction of ward based secondary schools to the strategic practitioners, rather than accepting straightforward solutions. It is an opportunity to ask two questions to guide this study:

1. What are the roles of community involvement in the ongoing classroom construction of ward based secondary schools?
2. What are the factors which hinder community involvement in the ongoing construction of ward based secondary schools?

3. Research Methods

A case study was employed and data were collected in Dodoma Municipality. A case study approach was adopted because of its flexibility in terms of varied data at the district and guarantee of in-depth investigation of the unity of inquiry. Literature suggests that the use of case study is useful “when” ‘why’ or ‘how’ questions are asked about set of events over which the researcher has no control (Creswell, 2003).

It is from this perspective that the researcher decided to select and examine two wards, namely Nzuguni and Makulu with the intention of getting different feelings, aspirations and attitudes towards the ongoing construction of secondary school classrooms in their wards.

3.1. Selection and Sampling

The study was carried out in two administrative wards Makulu and Nzuguni of Dodoma Municipality in Tanzania. They were selected through non- probability purposive sampling method.

Thirty five (35) respondents who participated in the study came from the two administrative wards. Four (4) ward representatives (Ward Education Coordinators and ward Executive Officer), two (2) Village Chairpersons, two (2) Head masters/mistresses and twenty seven (27) village members’ representatives. Purposive sampling was employed to select ward leaders and random sampling was employed to obtain representatives among villagers of which 17 were men and 10 were women to represent the entire gender.

³ Shule za kata: Is the Swahili name give to secondary schools built in each ward over the whole country.

Table 1: Respondents' Distribution in the Sampled Wards

N/S.	Types of respondents	No. of Respondents
1	Ward education coordinator	2
2	Ward executive officer	2
3	Village chairperson	2
4	Head master/mistress	2
5	Community representatives (Villagers)	27
Total respondents		35

Source: Field data, 2013

4. Data Collection Instruments

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative data. However, more qualitative approach were employed because of its contextual nature as it allows collection of data and other relevant information's in the participants' settings (Creswell 2009). Quantitative information like number of classrooms constructed, teachers' houses and toilets was obtained from wards government and school documents. The use of qualitative techniques enabled the researcher to discuss with the respondents. This allowed the respondents to freely express their feelings and experiences (Bond, 2006).

5. Data Analysis

The researcher collected qualitative and quantitative data which were processed and summarized into appropriate tables. The information collected enabled the researcher to construe the research questions and accomplish the study questions from which the conclusion and recommendation were made.

6. Discussion of Findings

Tanzania is implementing development vision 2025 which seeks to have a well educated, knowledgeable and skilled population to compete and cope with political, social, economic and technological development and challenges from the grass-root to international level. To achieve this objective, ward based secondary schools have been established as efforts of community and government throughout the country to accommodate standard seven leavers who pass primary school examination. Community to continually honor support to classroom construction will depend largely on how local authorities are interactive enough to encourage people to honor support in the development issues. Besides, the presence of accountability and transparencies in local authority expenditures and community control over local decision and resources will determine the commitment of community members to participate in development project like of classroom construction, teachers' houses and toilets.

6.1. Roles of Community Members in the Ongoing Construction of Ward Based Secondary Schools

Community participation has received increased attention in international and national policy in recent years. It is considered important as an end in itself (as a democratic right), as well as a means to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty alleviation (Stiglitz, 1997). The interest in community involvement has occurred simultaneously with an intensified focus on achieving gender parity in education, and community participation may be seen as one of the means to achieve this goal. One of the potential outcomes of community involvement as an end in itself is the transformation of gender relations, allowing the opportunity for women to participate alongside men in decision-making. As a means to an end, community participation in education is seen as a way to increase resources, improve accountability of schools to the community they serve, ensure a more cost-effective use of resources and, importantly, be responsive to local needs. As a result, it intends to improve equitable access, retention, quality and performance of schooling.

Community participation in schooling has always been apparent in many countries around the world Tanzania in particular. The forms of support for school construction have become more formalised in policy in recent years with new forms of community participation emerging. In the context of Tanzania, community members were involved in the construction of classrooms, teachers' houses and toilets and management of schools, although the extent to which the community is involved can vary considerably according to district and regions.

The findings of this study show that participation of community members in the construction of classrooms in ward based secondary schools is categorized into two parts. One part includes those who participated in construction through cash contribution and the second part includes those who contributed by offering labour power. It was revealed that both cash and labour power contribution was crucial because some building materials like cements, nails, iron roof, etc, require money to be brought. Moreover, the majorities of the villagers were economically poor, but were strong and had different skills through which they could participate in the building of schools.

The interview with wards and village leaders and school masters/mistresses revealed that according to the directive from the government on the construction of ward based secondary schools, community members were required to contribute 80% and the government to top up 20% to support community efforts. Apart from the community members' contribution 80% was not attained whether in cash or materials, although few of them who knew the importance of schools despite their poor economic status contributed through sand collection and fetching water. Further, most of the people were contributing nothing which led to some of the school classrooms to remain unfurnished. They further maintained that since the inception of PEDP in 2004, still our wards have two secondary schools which are also unfinished, while in some other regions one ward has two to three schools. This situation reveals the extent to which community members' in our areas are not ready to join government efforts to achieve the stated vision 2025 of having a well educated society which can competently and competitively solve societal problems to participate fully in the labour market in and out the regions.

Table 2: The Constructed Classrooms, Toilets and Teachers' Houses in the Sampled Wards

Number of wards	Numbers of classroom, toilets & teacher houses	Required	Available		Shortage	
			Total	%	Total	%
Makulu & Nzuguni	Classroom	32	24	66.7	8	33.3
	Teachers house	26	3	11.5	23	88.5
	Toilets	31	16	51.6	15	48.4

Source: Field data, 2013

The table above indicates that all two wards face acute shortage of secondary schools. From these two sampled wards, only 11% of teachers' houses and 88.5% are shortages. Even though there is improvement in number of classroom 80% but still community and government efforts is needed in order to increases the number of ward based secondary schools in these wards.

6.2. Community Participation in Decision Making

Despite the short-comings of ward based secondary schools and their strong impact to the learning process and the future of the younger generation, these schools have strength and contribution at different levels which deserve credit. In Tanzania, the success of ward based secondary schools emanates from the local community role and contribution, like providing land or space to build schools, contributing building materials for schools or new classrooms, paying for school furniture and other equipments. Thus, the government with no enough resources to invest into secondary education, the community participation has led to the increased number of schools and students enrolled every year (Wedgwood, 2005).

Village chairpersons were asked whether villagers were involved in decision making in the ongoing school construction meeting at the village level. They maintained that, the percentage of villagers who attended meeting to discuss issues of classrooms construction was minimal. The reason behind this is that, people's awareness on the importance of education to their children is limited and bad notion among us that attending the village meeting which discuss school development is nothing rather than requesting money contributions. In fact, this notion has caused the majority of people not to attend the meetings called by their leaders.

One interesting comment raised by villagers at Makulu ward was that, *"we are not participating in classroom construction because no development has been made in our village since 52 years of independence, rather than seeing official from the Capital Development Authority (CDA) coming and taking our inherited plots"*. He raised important questions such as: why do people drag their feet when it comes to attend village meetings? Why are people more willing to contribute millions of shillings for the wedding ceremonies that last for few hours than the construction of primary or secondary school classrooms?

In fact, these questions triggered me to find the Makulu Ward Counselor who was a representative counselor of opposition part (CHADEMA) to give detailed information regarding these raised questions. In our free talk, he said, "People are ready to honor support for their developments especially in school classrooms and teachers' houses constructions but the problem is on the side of the government due to lack of transparency, corruption and government embezzlement of resources.

It is true that people are tired with the ruling part (CCM); that is why they lag behind to contribute or participate in any developments which require them to provide the little money they have for the children. He concluded that people will be ready to continually support the development of education if the government will take its part and utilize fully scarce resources available for the benefits of majority and not for few whose their children are studying abroad.

6.3 Factors Hindering Community Participation in Ongoing Construction of Ward Based Secondary Schools

6.3.1. Poverty

A number of issues are limiting active participation of some community members on the ongoing construction of classrooms and teachers' houses. A major obstacle to people's participation in Makulu and Nzuguni wards, according to the views of many respondents was poverty. Most of the community respondents were concerned that their involvement in secondary schools construction interventions entailed some costs in terms of their time, labour and resources. This was due to high levels of poverty among communities. Most of the community members failed to involve themselves in development initiatives especially when such involvement required cash contributions.

As such, it was observed that some construction activities for example, delayed to be accomplished because the mobilization of community resources which were required as part of their contribution in such structures took a long time. In Nzuguni, for example, respondents explained that: "*one of the contributory factors to the low levels of community contribution is poverty*". It was argued that the government should focus on activities that will help households to raise their income. By so doing the community contribution is likely to increase and be given timely.

6.3.2. Presence of Drought

The interview with Ward Executive Officers, Village Chairpersons and villagers revealed that drought had been a major stumbling block towards community involvement in classroom construction in their respective wards. They argued that Dodoma is a semi-desert region of which it receives a rain from December to March and for a long period of time the region was dry. Further, it was maintained that most of the villagers depends on agriculture for survival and got some money after selling their crops. Besides, the presence of drought through out the year, villagers spent most of their time searching for food and others had no food at all. Therefore, this situation had resulted in low participation of the community in the construction of classrooms, toilets and teachers' houses. It appears that hunger in the communities was among the factors affecting community participation in the construction of classrooms, teachers' houses, school toilets, and teachers'

offices. The findings concluded that areas where communities experience frequent drought like Makulu and Nzuguni wards as sampled area, in Dodoma region are likely not to participate fully in community development initiatives.

6.3.3. Lack of Transparency and Accountability

Lack of transparency and accountability among community leaders especially on funds contributed to the lagging behind of development projects. The villagers' respondents pointed out that the government and community contributions provided for school construction were misused by the wards and school committee leaders. They stressed that funds were misused for their personal benefits and claimed that building materials bought for the construction were more expensive than the anticipated costs. The respondents maintained that, lack of transparency and feedback had increased frustration among community members of which they did not see the benefits of continuing wasting their money on the projects which were not helpful for their community.

6.3.4 Political Affiliations

Respondents were asked whether political affiliations had an impact on classroom construction in their wards. Majority of the respondents among villagers agreed that some community members were reluctant to contribute through physical participation on the basis that funds disbursed by the government were enough to facilitate construction of classrooms, teachers' houses and toilets. This notion was imparted to people's mind by opposition parties which were campaigning to the community not to contribute or participate in school construction. This tendency of opposition parties to mobilize people not to participate in the development project, e.g. classroom construction has increased worries to the ministry of education of whether it will achieve the targeted goals of ensuring that each ward has a good number of teachers' houses and classrooms as stated in the ruling part (CCM) manifesto and secondary education development plan phase two of 2009-2015. It is from this worry the Minister of Education and Vocational Training, Honorable Shukuru Kawambwa when addressing the House of Parliament on 26th June, 2013, said "*madam speaker, politics is not about destruction, but politics is about changing and directing society towards developments*". He argued that there were some politicians who wanted to destroy a good will of the government and ruling party of ensuring that all pupils who passed standard seven examinations should have a chance for secondary education in the nearest place by mobilizing people not to continually contribute to the construction of classrooms and teachers' houses. Further, he requested the government and security agencies to take strong measures against any person regardless of his/her status in society who will continue mobilizing people not to participate in development initiatives.

7. Conclusion

The findings discovered that the degree of participation and empowerment of community members in the ongoing construction of ward based secondary schools was minimal. Community mobilization is very important because it creates awareness among stakeholders; people become aware of their material resources, leadership, technical expertise and the kind of help they are likely

to need from outside. Therefore, people should be politically mobilized through education and training on the importance of their projects and to make them feel that the projects belongs to them. In this regard, people will be in a position to make decision on matters concerning their social development. Involvement of people in the ongoing construction of ward based secondary schools gives them power to make decisions pertaining to their social development, where they enjoy awareness of all the processes related to their socio-economic needs and productivity.

8. Recommendations

This study has been concerned with examining the role of community participation in the ongoing classroom construction of Ward based secondary schools well known as Shule za Kata with reference of two wards namely Makulu and Nzuguni wards in to Dodoma municipality, Tanzania.

- The nature and extent of participation in the construction of schools for majority of local communities in both wards is generally limited. Local communities do not play an active role in planning, decision making, monitoring and evaluation processes which implies that efforts to promote participation in the construction of classrooms and teachers' houses have not evolved to higher levels where participation could be seen.
- Participation in planning and decision making processes is mainly representational through the village councils, Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and School committees. This form of participation has shown to offer limited space for local Communities to engage themselves in the development process, and depends on how well representation takes place. As such, some community groups like children, women, people with disabilities and the elderly seem not to be adequately represented and/or have no voice in these decision making structures.
- There are many politicians within communities who can be very useful in uniting people's efforts to bring about secondary education development. This includes members of parliament, respected retired officers and councilors. These people should be used to inspire and mobilize other people to bring about educational changes. They have the ability to create sustainable development of secondary school projects in their localities.
- More sensitisation and awareness to other stakeholders is needed so that in their collaboration the set objectives could be attained on time. Partnership in the political mobilization of both international and national resources and energies for the betterment of the educational system is of great importance. The potential for greater participation and contribution of other actors such as NGOs, Development Partners, Communities and Individuals is vast than hitherto recognized, and tapped.

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