

Title: School level fundraising : exploring equity and governance in Tanzanian secondary schools

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Abstract:

Due to a lack of government sources for funding education, self-help initiatives have been practiced by schools and are being promoted internationally and within the policies of national governments as a viable means for funding schools. They are also regarded as valuable for enabling school-led quality improvements. Currently, there is rapid secondary education expansion in Tanzania, achieved through building community schools. These are constructed through cooperation between the government and local communities. Self-help activities have also been practiced in schools in order to supplement government resources. Although scholarship dealing with community financing exists, there is little research in Tanzania on school self-help activities. This study analyses the process of school level fundraising in Tanzania within the context of the rapid expansion of secondary education and considers the implications for social equity and school governance. The study draws upon critical theory to analyse social-power relations, social inequality and their effects on school governance and communities. Robertson, Bonal and Dale's governance framework and Bourdieu's social-capital theory are employed to explore the relationship between education governance and social and cultural reproduction. This is an exploratory study using mixed-methods with the qualitative component being more dominant. Although schools in Tanzania are supposed to report on the self-help activities they conduct, there is no clear overview and no records available from education offices. This necessitated a mapping exercise to find out what activities are being implemented on the ground through a questionnaire, to which 42 schools responded. This was followed by in-depth case studies conducted at two government-funded schools in Kilimanjaro region, a community school and a long-established school, on the role of different stakeholders and how they actually work. Informants included teachers, educational officials, members of the community and school board, who are key actors in the mobilisation of resources at school level. Although the public expansion of secondary education is aimed at reducing inequality, the findings suggest that there is class-based social reproduction as the flow of private finance increases the resource gap between schools and students. Community schools, which receive lower capitation grants from government, tend to serve a greater number of socio-economically disadvantaged students and hence are less likely to be able to raise funds. The findings also raise concerns about the possible low impact of self-help initiatives on improving quality. Uncertain social-power relations among stakeholders at different levels participating in the activities, lack of accountability and lack of effective support for schools at all levels, all have effects on school governance. The findings have implications for a policy of rapid secondary education expansion that expects significant community support for new schools. Despite the drawbacks, secondary expansion is still a step forward for equity as it has given access to secondary education, albeit of a lower quality, to many young people who otherwise would have had none. This study suggests policy priorities that are necessary to go along with the approach in order to ensure a positive impact. These consist of making sure that schools have certain essential resources; building capacities for education governance in communities and establishing a functioning education governance system which supports schools with more emphasis on improving quality and reducing inequalities.