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How Should Quality of Education be Re-Defined For Education Achievements in Tanzania? What Are Stakeholders' Opinions?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the definition of quality of education as viewed by education stakeholders. The study examines the aspects or dimensions of quality in terms of the school and learning access, inputs, process and outcomes that are seen as priorities by different educational stakeholders. In this regard, areas investigated include enrollment, curriculum and instruction, assessment, and the broader purpose of quality education, such as education for democracy, human rights and citizenship within Tanzanian context.

Keywords: *Quality of education, Tanzania education system.*

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Tanzania Education Policy and Structure

To address the quality of education and overall educational challenges in Tanzania, it is important first to look at the country's education profile and history both in terms of access and quality. Since the country's independence in 1961 through the 1970's there was a tremendous expansion in the education sector with regard to children's access and attendance in primary schools, reaching its highest level of 98% in late 1970s (Davidson, 2004). Regrettably, due to local and global political and economic factors, the situation drastically deteriorated into a deep crisis as from the early 1980's to 2000s when net enrollment dropped to 46% (Davidson, 2004). By 2000, less than half of all Tanzanians managed to complete primary education (Davidson, 2004). This meant that about three million Tanzanian children were out of school. This situation was even worse when examined at the level of secondary school and tertiary levels with only 6% of children in primary school able to join and complete four years of secondary education and less than 1% making it to the university level (HakiElimu, 2002).

These statistics would be even more disturbing if figures given by the Ministry of Education included what was taking place inside classrooms. For example, according to HakiElimu (2002), the actual attendance levels were far lower than those reflected in the official statistics. HakiElimu's (2002) report revealed that children officially enrolled in schools were often only names recorded on a register. Many students missed school because of school closings, teacher absence, long walking distances to and from schools, hunger – as schools did not provide lunch- and boredom experienced by both teachers and students.

This situation forced the government to initiate a massive educational reform in the country under two new and very ambitious education programs, the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) in 2002, and the Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) in 2004 (URT, 2002). To increase enrollment, the plan involved the recruitment of more teachers, building more classrooms, and most importantly, the elimination of school fees (URT, 2002). Since its inception, both anecdotal evidence and official statistics suggest that PEDP has been very successful in terms of enrollment expansion and classroom constructions (Sumra, 2005).

Consequently, enrollment in primary school education increased from about 5 million students in 2001 to about 7 million in 2006 (Sitta, 2007). As expected, teacher recruitment failed to catch up with the pace of student enrollment. For example, from 2001 to 2004, the number of teachers employed increased by 13% only while the number of pupils enrolled increased by 44% (Davidson, 2004). As a result, quality of education severely deteriorated as teaching methodology increasingly failed to allow active participatory learning whereby teachers could interact with individual students in their classrooms and support them to become creative and critical thinkers (Rajani, 2006).

The Education Structure

Tanzanian education structure follows the British system as Tanzania was once a British colony. Primary education in Tanzania is basically seven years, and it extends from standard one to standard seven (MoEVT, 2008). According to the Primary School (Compulsory and Attendance) Rule of 2002 children's enrollment in primary schools is mandatory from age seven. This rule, according to Mbelle (2008), makes it a criminal offence for parents or guardians who fail to enroll seven years olds into standard (grade) one or to allow a pupil to drop out before completion of the full primary cycle. The prescribed sentence is a fine of up to 100 USD or a jail sentence of up to 9 months or both. Many, including Mbelle (2008) wonder if this rule alone can address the challenges faced by the education system in Tanzania regarding enrollment and retention in primary schools.

After successful completion of primary school, a pupil is expected to attend secondary education for six years; i.e. ordinary level secondary education for four years, and then secondary school advance level for two years, provided a student passes the ordinary level national examinations. Upon successful completion of advance level secondary school education, a pupil is qualified to join certain colleges for certificate, diploma or degree courses depending on whether he/she passes the advanced level (Form Six) national examination (MoEVT, 2008).

In 2002, when the massive education reform was introduced, Tanzania implemented a major improvement in educational access both at primary and secondary levels. This achievement manifested itself also in the number of teachers employed and the number of classrooms and new schools constructed. In terms of quality, the most important aspect of improvement was actually not in the classroom but in the enhancement of the sense of confidence and excitement among parents, teachers and students who had reached the peak of desperation (Rajani, 2007).

Theoretical Perspectives

Preamble

Within the context of this study, qualitative aspect of education is defined by two main categories of meaning: First, what is taking place inside the classroom or internal to the learning process. Under this category special emphasis is placed on teachers' preparation and professional development, teacher pedagogical practices and class size. The second category reflects the outcome or the promise of education and its expectation. Apparently, education is expected to produce graduates who are capable of thriving in the rapidly changing world, and who can meet challenges and solve problems, be entrepreneurial and create jobs, and be critical and active citizens (Sumra, 2004). Thus, outcome of education is centered on how education transforms a child beyond the school compound. In other words, it focuses on the promise or expectation of education. For example, cognitive gain from basic education is one of the most important factors in protecting teenagers from HIV/ AIDS infection (UNESCO, 2005) and abject poverty.

Quality: A Complex Concept

Quality of education is a complex concept. UNESCO (2005), for example, contends that while all over the world there is a growing agreement about the need to provide access to education of good quality, there is much less agreement about what the term quality actually means in practice. The term “quality education” varies dramatically from country to country depending on cultural and economic priorities. This variability can make it challenging especially for developing nations when trying to set educational policies that provide necessary specificity and guidance for curricular and educational development. Despite the near universal agreement as to what cognitive skills comprise, they are not entirely culturally neutral (UNESCO, 2005).

Honig (2009) suggests that those interested in improving the quality of education policy implementation should focus not simply on what's implementable and what works but rather investigate under what conditions, if any, various education policies get implemented and work. UNESCO (2005) established that, while most if not all experts judge rote learning to be indicative of poor-quality education, there is debate between those in favor of structured instruction and advocates of more child centered approaches. More in relation to the actual debate will help to better understand the issue. Consequently, it can be argued that, the question of educational purpose might be seen as too difficult to resolve or even as fundamentally irresolvable (Biesta, 2008). As a result, the concept and implementation of quality of education can rightly be considered as one of the contemporary challenges facing education policy makers across nations.

Teachers as Agents for Change

Basically, when the quality of education, within the classroom context or learning process is discussed, special attention should be paid to the importance of human agency. Teachers are the most essential agents for the implementation and ensuring quality of education is attained within and outside classrooms. Placing teachers and learning at the center of education is an important step in advancing dialogues and securing policy attention (Sayed, 2010). Research shows that quality professional development can change teachers' practices and positively affect student learning and thus improve quality of education (Darling-Hammond, 2005). How teachers are prepared for teaching is one of the most important critical indicators of education quality. Preparing teachers for the challenges of a changing world means equipping them with effective teaching practices and the ability to work collaboratively with other teachers, students, members of the community and parents (UNESCO, 2005).

Two important attributes of quality teachers according to Hanushek (1998), are teachers' education and teachers' experience. When the two attributes are combined with teachers per pupil ratio, then these variables describe variations in the instructional resources across classrooms (Hanushek, 1998). What goes on in the classroom, and the impact of the teacher and teaching is a crucial variable for improving learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2005). Indeed, teacher effectiveness is the primary influence on student achievement. Given this reality, state efforts to improve student achievement should focus on policies and practices that invest in teachers and that, in turn, should improve student outcomes (Grossman, 2009). If we want all students to learn in today's complex society demands, we will need to

develop teaching that goes far beyond dispensing information, giving a test, and giving a grade (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

The Economic Promise of Education

Beyond the classroom level, according to the OECD (2009) report, quality attainment is positively associated with such social outcomes as better health, political interest and interpersonal trust. In fact, quality education is one of the key factors that ranked countries globally in regard to their socio-economic growth and development status (OECD, 2009). Thus quality education is one of the decisive answers to such questions as why some countries grow economically faster than others. The majority opinion is that a nation's stock of human capital is an important component of differential growth rates (Hanushek, 1998). At micro level, looking across workers, researchers have found that average earnings tend to be higher for those with more years of quality schooling (Krueger, 1998).

Methodology

This study aimed at finding out the perspectives of key education stakeholders on how they view and define quality of education in Tanzania. People from all walks of life who have special ties with education policy and practice in Tanzania were interviewed. And in order to streamline these groups of people into clear and distinct categories, the researcher classified them into four main groups of education stakeholders, namely, policymakers, teachers, parents and activists. Each participant was placed into one of these four categories of education stakeholders.

For the sake of clarity, I will discuss each of these key categories of stakeholder groups in turn. The first group, as indicated above, is comprised of education policymakers. For the purpose of this study this group was divided into two main sub-categories: the central government policymakers (where development of national education policy is centralized) and the district level policy makers (where education policy is interpreted, appropriated and implemented). The second category is of activists. These include scholars from institutions of higher education and advocates from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Historically, activists have been instrumental to the policy process in Tanzania. The study therefore examined the extent and kind of education policy advocacy in which this group engages. NGOs in Tanzania are increasingly engaging in advocacy works in order to influence change in the way education policies are created and implemented and to ensure the government is accountable to the promises of the education targets it sets.

The third group of stakeholders is teachers. These include all primary and secondary school teachers in Tanzania. Teachers are the key stakeholders in interpreting, appropriating and implementing educational policy especially in regards to school administration and classroom activities. The final group included in the study is the parents of the school children. All four groups represent key players of education policy process in the country. Thus, their perceptions and experience offer important contributions to this study.

The study, which employed qualitative method, was conducted in Tanzania between November 2010 and March 2011. Twenty seven education stakeholders

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in five districts across the country were interviewed throughout this time. The demographic information of the participants is summarized in the following table:

Table. Demographic information of the participants by gender and occupation

	Policymakers	Teachers	Parents	Activists	Total
Female	1	9	2	1	13
Male	4	3	3	4	14

The language of interview was in both Swahili and English. However, the majority of the participants opted to use both Swahili and English interchangeably. The data was then de-identified and coded with numbers assigned to interviewees so that their identities remained completely confidential.

Below is the sample of the interview form given to each member of the four groups of education stakeholders in Tanzania:

Section I

1. Name:
2. Gender:
3. Education level:
4. Occupation:

Section II

1. In your opinion what do you think are the major 3 challenges facing education sector and therefore education achievement in Tanzania today?
2. How do you measure the achievement of education sector in Tanzania?
3. Some people believe that enrollment and attendance rates are the best measures of educational achievement; while others are convinced that students' performance in school are the correct measures. What is your opinion?
4. Where do you think the government should put its first priority between the two competing educational concepts – enrollment or performance? Explain
5. With the limited resources Tanzania is facing, do you think it can afford to improve quality of education while at the same time ensure all of its children are enrolled and attend to school? (*Do you think students' enrollment and attendance on one hand and quality of education on the other can both be improved without adversely affecting each other?*)
6. Some people think that quality of education includes exclusively teaching and learning; while others argue that enrollment and attendance is also part of quality. What is your opinion?

Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Verbal and written consent forms were provided to all participants who were involved in the interview prior

to their participation. The researcher read and explained the consent form to each individual before the consent was obtained.

Findings

From the review of the literature, quality of education was described as a complex concept, which could not be explained in a simple definition. During the interview, it became obvious that the definition of quality of education within the Tanzania context resonates with the findings in the literature, i.e. quality of education is a complex concept and can be defined both in terms of qualitative and quantitative aspects. Each group of education stakeholders views quality within its own perspectives. For example, policymakers would attribute the availability of learning and teaching materials as key component of quality of education and hence education achievements.

Policymakers argued that, they strive to improve quality by ensuring that teaching and learning materials are available to all schools. *“Recently we received funds to improve quality. We bought a lot of text books. We purchased and distributed these text books, and especially for science subjects, to schools. This is an on-going effort.* Apart from materials or inputs policymakers understand also that teachers are crucial in the achievement of quality. They insisted that teachers’ availability and teachers’ training are important components of quality of education.

In terms of the process of education or what is taking place inside the classroom, policymakers asserted that education reforms in terms of teaching methodology and curriculum are not only urgent but very important issues. At the time of the interview, they were working on a new teaching methodology that would shift the focus from content-based to competence-based curriculum. This method, they asserted, would prepare a child to understand the course content rather than memorizing or studying for the tests as was the case up until then. They insisted *“we are critically looking into this shift of focus from content-based to competence-based because we suspect this could contribute enormously to checking the falling of examination performance in this year even though there was not enough preparation for this exercise. In fact, teachers were not prepared enough for this shift due to lack of enough funding.”*

On the other hand, another group of education stakeholders – teachers - had a different view regarding quality of education concept. Teachers’ main concern was their own welfare and that of the students. Teachers broadened the definition of quality of education to include situation of both students and teachers at home. They asserted that the definition of quality of education should include physical and mental wellbeing such as quality nutrition, quality sleep, social environment at the family level in general for both teachers and students. They argued that *“quality starts with the environment where this child comes from. In our school, children home environment is very tough. A normal family around here normally spends less than 500 Tanzanian shillings (less than half a dollar) a day. The family cannot afford a simple breakfast for these children. In the situation like this, when a child comes to school with empty stomach, what do you expect from them? Will they be able to perform well; or do you expect our efforts in the classroom to change anything? I don’t think so.”*

Thus, the above opinions from teachers extend our definition of quality of education to include social economic status (SES) at the family levels. All the

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teachers that were interviewed believe that the best performance by private schools is not only contributed by the availability of facilities, good teachers and administration, but most importantly by the economic background of the students who attend those schools.

Apart from students' wellbeing, teachers believe that quality of education should be intertwined with teachers' welfare. They asserted that *"pay us what we deserve and pay us on time then you will see how the quality of education could improve."* Teachers are strongly convinced that the answer to quality of education is largely laid within their jurisdiction. The government and other stakeholders can put forward all theories to improve education *"but that will just be another merry-go-round, because we (teachers) and our students are the only group of stakeholders who have the genuine answer."*

The third group of stakeholders is parents. They intimately understand the need and importance of their children to go to school. However their major concern is what these children receive in terms of education when they get to school. Parents insist that access is part and parcel of quality of education and it should be included in the definition of quality of education. They asserted that *"achievement should cover both aspects of education, namely quantitative and qualitative aspects. Indeed, quantitative aspect is very important here. The more children that are exposed to that opportunity to access education, the major the achievement of education sector. In fact in order to realize quality of education children must first go to school."*

During the interview, all the stakeholders identified themselves as parents insisted that every child must go to school and learn properly. In their opinions, attendance should be part of quality, however the other aspects, namely, educational inputs such as school facilities, furniture, buildings and infrastructure should also be considered as part of quality of education. They argued *"Process of learning is taking place somewhere. Indeed a conducive environment such as decent school buildings, decent classrooms, libraries, laboratories and facilities such as books and other classroom essentials are necessary to ensure a student graduates with necessary skills. A child sitting in a ramshackle classroom will never be able to concentrate, feel comfortable and ultimately be able to achieve what you expect of them."*

Similarly, parents showed significant concern of what their children are actually doing inside the classrooms when they go to school. This is one of the areas where parents and teachers shared a lot of concern. Parents extensively discussed the availability of teaching and learning materials, discontinuing frequent curriculum changes and the importance of teachers' on-job training and wellbeing as crucial components of quality of education.

Like other group of stakeholders, activists also agreed that input is one of the most important components of education achievement and should be considered as crucial part of quality of education. They asserted that quantity is crucial for achieving quality. They argued further that access to education is a social justice issue and should not be taken for granted. They further asserted that *"quantity without quality will disappear and quality for just a few is not a luxury we can afford. So what we need is the education for all of a basic minimum decent quality."*

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For activists, funding education is the single determinant factor of how education policy is formulated and implemented. It means that how money is allocated and spent is a good indicator of a policy priority. Based on the experience of previous national budget allocations therefore, activists believe that the priorities that policy makers set do not necessarily focus on things that matter most in education. Indeed, if the priority is right and money is allocated well, then all the three components that contribute to quality of education; i.e. inputs, process and outcome should simultaneously improve.

The problem is that the priority is wrong, the money allocated to education budget does not reach the school level and the little that reaches does not promote things that matter. They further argued that *“the resources for education in Tanzania have been increasing significantly. The budget of education now is three times as much as it is used to be 10 years ago. The problem, however, is that the extra money that goes to education does not promote things that matter and second it does not reach the school level. It means therefore that while the budget of education is going up, the money reaching the school level is going down”*.

The Activists added new knowledge to this study by establishing a clear link between access to education and quality of education. Access to education, according to activists, should be expanded to include access to knowledge. Within this context, access is linked to the learning process. This means that access to education does not end up on having children attending schools. What matters here is the access to knowledge that is imparted to the student while in school. Access therefore has two dimensions; access to school and access to knowledge. For example, a child with disabilities would require more inputs than his/her cohorts in order to access both school and knowledge. Furthermore, according to activists, *“if there is a child who is blind and we want him to be able to read, write, think and be analytical; of course the inputs for that child would be different than the other children because he is blind.”*

For activists therefore quantity or access to education is part of quality of education. First because access is closely related to social justice, as one activist stated: *“what is good in the education system for a country to educate one child?”* Second, quantity does not end up in having children attending to school but also accessing the knowledge while in school.

In order to achieve this with minimum resources, according to activists, quantity and quality should not be treated as competing concepts, indeed they are intertwined. It is therefore a false comparison to compare quantity and quality, both can be achieved simultaneously. As one activist argued, *“We are not talking about superb schools that cost twenty thousand dollars per year per child that we cannot afford. We are talking of education for all of a basic minimum decent quality.”*

The activists' views on the process of education are centered on both policymakers' and teachers' roles, commitment and accountability to improving learning and teaching. They are convinced that accountability and the right incentives to teachers are critical to education achievement. And to ensure the process of education is in the right direction, teachers and policymakers should be seen as crucial determinant factors. In the Tanzanian case, the teaching force is not enough and the available teachers do not perform their duties effectively. In short,

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they don't perform because they are not paid well and on time. They are simply frustrated and therefore perform poorly. Worse still, the government cannot hold them accountable. This situation is reflected in this activist's frustrated comments, *"I think we all are confused, we don't know! That's the honest answer. I know that teachers are paid in full while devoted only 40% of their time. Now the question is why they work only 40% of their time? I think the allocated budget fund is not spent efficiently. A lot of money is wasted. In a way teachers should therefore be paid only 40% of their salaries, and if they committed themselves to teach the remaining 60% then they should get a pay raise for the same amount of time. So the issue here is not about money it is about teachers' commitments and results."*

In short, teachers' situation, according to Activists, is in a vicious cycle: Because they are not paid well, they are frustrated; and because of frustration they perform dismally; and because of poor performance they are not paid well.... And the cycle continues. Here are some key suggestions from activists on how to break this vicious cycle: *"Right now the teachers are not teaching. You are paying people who are not doing their job. And even if you are not paying them well, but paying somebody poorly who is not doing their job is even worse. Now what should be done is to having a social contract with the teachers. You tell them ok, we will treat you reasonably; we are going to pay you a decent salary, we guarantee you that you will be paid on time, no delay salaries. And in exchange, you'd better be teaching, and we will be monitoring you."* This social contract should be the basis for improving quality in the classroom.

On the other level quality should reflect on output or outcome of education. Indeed, the major emphasis on the meaning of quality of education by the activists is the outcome or output of education. They believe that the ultimate goal of education is the output, but all indicators are designed to measure inputs such as classrooms, books, teachers, etc. What matters is the learning outcome, what a child is capable of doing. In fact, what matters most are the measures of outputs; measures that focus on working properly versus working hard; working to deliver results rather than working to accomplishing daily routines.

In fact, both inputs and process of education, according to activists, are only seen as tools that help to achieve the outcome of education but not the ultimate goals of education by themselves. In pursuit of education achievement therefore, these components of education should not be the center of focus but the tools to support the successful attainment of the outcome of education and should be treated so. This could be explained well using the following interesting analogy by one activist: *"When I go to a restaurant I order meal and I want the meal to be tasteful. The process that used to cook that meal is the responsibility of the system; the teachers, the principals, the trainers, the counselors, and so on. Their focus should be - is that food taste? But for me as a customer, the process should not be my focus; it should be left to teachers themselves and the people around the teaching system. So for me I don't care what is in the process as long as the process does not go against human rights. So whether your style is stricter or is more relaxed, laissez-faire; for example the children sit in a circle and talk, as long as they get results, that's fine. For me I don't like to go into the kitchen. The kitchen's job is for the cook, not mine."*

According to activists, it is also important to distinguish between two concepts which throughout my study I use them interchangeably. These are outcome and

output of education. By defining them it might help refocusing our attention and put them in a clearer perspective. Outputs are primarily things like how many kids are trained, how many test are conducted, how many children are trained in physics, and so on. Outcome is the actual capability. If your aim is to make a child read, the child should be able to read, if your aim is to make a child be able to analyze then the child should analyze.

Discussion and Conclusion

In sum, the definition of quality of education, according to education stakeholders in Tanzania, is broad and inclusive. It includes both quantitative and qualitative aspects of education achievement. Indeed, several aspects of quality of education have been established and will shortly be discussed here. Additionally, each group of stakeholders put their emphases on different aspects of quality of education. Policymakers put their emphasis on the quantitative aspects such as access and inputs of education, namely, expanding enrollment, availability of teaching materials, and recruitment of teachers. Teachers on their side focus more on the qualitative aspects, mostly on the process of education, especially on human resources. They are convinced that as a group teachers are the single most important factor that can significantly impact the whole education practice and outcome in the country. They are confident that if teachers are treated well and trained well, as a group, they are capable of changing the whole education equation for the better.

Parents and activists understand and acknowledge the importance of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of education; nevertheless, they put more emphasis on the outcome of education. They consider inputs and process of education as important tools that enable the attainment of outcome of education. They further contend that access should not only be confined to enrollment alone but it should be broadened to include access to schools (enrollment) and access to knowledge (actively participating in the learning process).

The research findings, in essence, indicate that the views of Tanzania education stakeholders, to a large extent, resonate with the findings in the literature review. Through literature review, the study found out that definition of quality of education is broader than what was initially foreseen. The quality of education was defined as a concept that incorporates inputs, process and outcome of education. The research findings agreed with this definition and in addition came up with a new aspect that broadened the definition even further. Thus, quality was broken down into four components, namely, access, inputs, process and outcome. Access also was broken down into two sub-components, namely, access to schools and access to knowledge.

Indeed, teachers as a group put more emphasis on the three aspects of quality of education (access, inputs, process) and less emphasis on the last aspect (outcome of education). They contend that children's wellbeing, such as access to better healthcare, nutrition, good shelter and other social amenities, should be part of access aspects. Issues such as infrastructure, school facilities and learning materials are the second aspect of quality and can be collectively categorized as education inputs. In fact, teachers' emphases could be on three main aspects, namely, improved students wellbeing (as important aspect of enrollment),

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improved school infrastructure (as part of inputs) and improved teachers' wellbeing (as crucial part of process of education).

Policy makers' views on quality of education are focused mainly on inputs, although they acknowledge the importance of other aspects as well. They consider inputs as an important component of education achievement. They argued that, if aspects such as infrastructure, teaching facilities, learning materials, library and laboratories are improved, then education output will inevitably be improved simultaneously.

Parents' views were highly influenced by the performance of students as reflected in the 2010 pathetic national examination results. Early expansion of enrollments raised parents' sense of hope and aspirations. However their aspirations were later thwarted by the students' poor performance in the final examination. Justifiably, their main focus was shifted from quantitative aspects, namely, access and inputs towards process and outcome of education. They complained that all achievements recorded in the past several years were only numerical. Now they wanted schools to seriously focus on learning improvement and not anymore on school expansion. By the same token, Activists' views are strongly focused on the outcome as the most important indicator of education achievement. They consider education as the key answer to the country socio-economic woes and the solution to that does not lie in the inputs or process but on the outcome.

In a nutshell therefore, the quality of education is made up of the following aspects or components of education achievement: access as the first components of quality and it should be addressed right from the bottom level to include family social and economic background. Access also has two sub-components, i.e. access to school and access to knowledge. While access to school is quantitative aspect, access to knowledge is the process of education, which is part of qualitative aspect. The second quantitative aspect of education is the inputs of education, which consists of items such as teaching facilities, books, infrastructure, etc. The third component is the process of education or what is taking place inside the classrooms. The last component is the outcome or output of education. Note also that, the last two components are qualitative in nature while the first two are quantitative. They all overlap and complement with each other.

The implication

The applied analysis is relevant to most of the countries that aim to significant changes in their educational policy. The measurements of access, inputs, process and outcome are necessary for education reforms; however unless they are addressed collectively at the policy level and are focused on overall performance of students while in schools and after graduating from schools, education in Tanzania would continue to struggle and move in a wrong direction. All four groups of stakeholders indicated in their views that education sector decision making at the policy level is significantly crucial since what happens in the classrooms is the reflection of what happens in the policy process.

Poor performance in schools is largely the outcome of poor performance at the policy level. Thus, education policy process, according to the stakeholders, should be considered as an agreement among all key stakeholders on how schools should be ran and eventually how students should learn. Essentially, the consensus should

be reached around key issues of education achievement such as key components of quality of education, and which aspects should be given first priority during the policy and budget allocation. Based on this assertion, all stakeholders should therefore effectively participate in this policy agreement, i.e. in the policy process.

While interpreting the results of this study, its major limitations should be considered. First, students as a major and key group of education stakeholders were not involved in the study. Their ideas and opinion could be compared to the perspectives of other stakeholders and thus be used as an impetus for provoking a deep and thoughtful debate on how quality of education should be defined within their perspectives. This limitation should be considered as a potential ground for further studies regarding this important topic.

The other shortcoming is the limited number of people that took part in this study. More people especially those who represent the marginalized groups such as poor people, people with disabilities, women in rural areas and people who have limited access to formal education should also have been involved in the study. Their inclusion would also make it easier for this study to generalize its findings to the Tanzanian population. This limitation should as well be considered as potential ground for further studies on language policy in education.

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