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Contribution of community participation in education development projects: A case of community secondary schools in Butiama District council

Solomon Simon Mhango [1*], Beatrust Elia Swai [2]

[1, 2] Tengeru Institute of Community Development (TICD), Arusha. Tanzania

* Corresponding Author: **Solomon Simon Mhango**

Article Info

Abstract

Community participation in education development projects is very vital. However, studies left the area of community participation in education development projects unstudied. This study was conducted in Butiama District Council to explore the contribution of community participation in education development projects. Specifically, the study assessed the contribution of community participation in school projects. The study used a case study research design with a sample of 123 respondents which involved households. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were employed to obtain respondents. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study indicated that community participation in school projects had a great contribution to schools in the construction of more classes/school facilities, recruitment of more teachers, and purchase of stationery; in terms of students it reduced students' dropout cases, increased completion rate and school attendance; and in terms of households it contributed on provision of employment opportunities to households and money contribution to the schools. It was recommended that facilitators need to deliberately create an enabling environment for the community to participate effectively in their development projects, the awareness creation of the need for all community members to effectively contribute to their development plans, irrespective of gender, social economic, and educational prominence. This study recommends that school management should collaborate with Community Development officers, Ward Executive Directors, and community members to discuss school-based matters to counteract challenges facing school projects.

Introduction

Due to its bottom-up approach, community participation has been recognized as an essential component in the development process of the society since it increases the likelihood that the project will be conducted in a culturally appropriate context making the resulting program easily sustainable and reproducible (Israel *et al*., 2017) [7]. Community participation is a process through which community member's influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them (Ekong, 2013) [6].

Globally, the importance of involving communities in addressing barriers to education has come to the forefront as governments worldwide strive to reach their commitments to education for all countries to reach Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the other hand, community secondary schools are currently an important part of education systems in sub-Saharan Africa, with education being a key frontier by the continent in its development aspirations. Besides, community participation has been recognized as a critical factor in the development process of society reflects a grassroots approach to problem-solving, and is a key ingredient of an empowered community. This is because community participation increases the likelihood that the project

will be conducted in a traditionally fitting style and that the result will be improved to fit the cultural setting of the community, making it sustainable (Israel *et al.*, 2017) [7].

The rural areas in most parts of African society generally exhibit high poverty, poor health conditions, and ignorance as a result of varying degrees of geographical, social, and political isolation therefore unless the poor are allowed to participate in the development of initiatives designed to improve their livelihood including education, they will continue to miss the benefits of any intervention (Ekong, 2013) [6]. Tanzania is not an exception. In the Butiama district council, the majority of the people live in rural areas, depending mainly on subsistence farming and livestock rearing (Kansandiku, 2014). The principle of community participation is to guarantee the success of any project if the effort of the local people is accompanied by the direction of government authorities. For example, in Kenya, Chepkwony (2019) [4] speculates that at independence in 1963, social services especially education and health were inadequate and thus inaccessible to most citizens, to remedy the situation, the leadership resorted to a traditional approach of resource mobilization, a concept of pulling together resources both physical and human, to build the new nation.

The study was guided by the People-Centered Development (PCD) Theory as propounded by Chambers (1992). The people-centered Development (PCD) approach stresses the participation of the majority, especially the previously excluded components such as women, youth, and the illiterate in the process of development (Chambers, 1992). Different studies in the Education Sector in Tanzania have often focused on the effects, successes, and failures of community participation in various areas of school financing in the primary area (Lweja, 2016; Luyagila, 2013; Koma, 2003; Lwiza, 2014; Mulengeki, 2014; Dachi, 2017; Mosha, 2014) [10, 9, 17, 5] who did their studies on devolution of educational management powers to local government while (Lyimo, 2001; Matekere, 2003; Mlaki, 2005 and Millanzi, 2015) [11, 15] studied academic performances in community secondary schools.

However, the above-mentioned studies left the area of community participation in education development projects unstudied. This has led to a situation where there is a paucity of information on how communities are involved in managing community secondary education in the aspects of planning, organizing, controlling, and communication. In addition, little is known about the contribution of community participation in education development projects particularly in Butiama District. This study intended to investigate the contribution of community participation in education development projects in community secondary school.

Methodology
This study was conducted in the Butiama District Council specifically in two wards namely the Butiama and Nyankanga ward where Butiama and Kemoramba Secondary Schools are found respectively. The area was chosen because, over the years, the population growth rate of the district has been increasing whose effects on the area's development are manifested by increased unemployment, high dependency ratio, high demand for agricultural land, and over-crowding in educational facilities (URT, 2012). The study population involved 2218 households, and only a sample size of 123 households was estimated using Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967), systematic random sampling technique was used to obtain households, and a purposive sampling technique was used to obtain one District Education Officer (DEO), two ward executive officer (WEO), and one community development officer (CDO). Primary data were collected using questionnaire surveys and key informant interviews while secondary data were collected through documentary review.

Data analysis involved editing, cleaning, transformation, and tabulation of the data collected. There was coding of open-ended questions where responses were sorted as per emerging themes. The themes (thematic areas) were coded and entered into a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) ready for analysis. Data analysis used descriptive statistics such as charts and tables of various variables such as the household head's level of education and, the household's ways of participating in school activities, among other

Result and Discussions
Introduction
The contribution of community participation in education development projects was assessed by asking household heads whether their participation had a contribution to them (households), students, and schools. Findings indicate that all respondents (100 percent) interviewed felt that there was a contribution to households' involvement in education activities.

The Contribution of Community Participation in Schools
It was of great importance to understand if there was any contribution to schools on households' participation in education development projects as this could determine their participation or not in these projects. Figure 1 summarizes the findings of the contribution of community participation in schools.
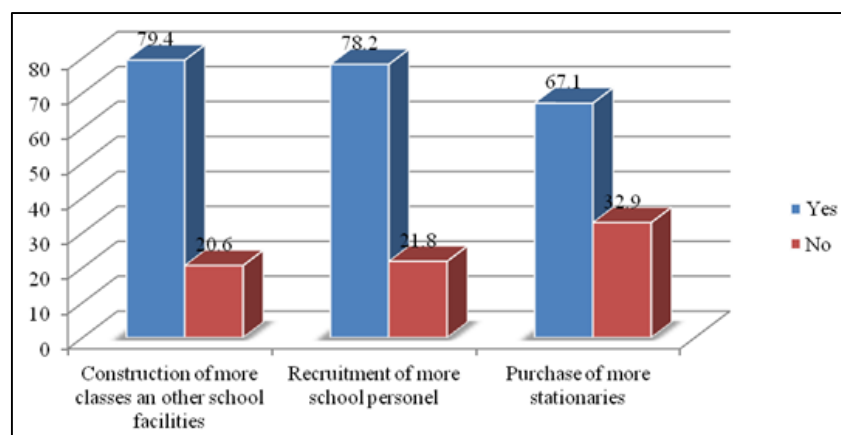
Source: Field Survey, 2020

Fig 1: Contribution of community participation in schools

Increased classes and other school facilities

Regarding the contribution of community participation in schools in the construction of more classes/school facilities, findings indicate that 79.4% of interviewed respondents reported that there was a contribution of community participation on education projects while 20.6% said there was no contribution regarding the construction of more school facilities. Most key informants interviewed reported that there were new school infrastructures sponsored by some key organizations or individuals. The main infrastructures were classrooms, desks/lockers, new staffrooms, latrines, libraries, and geography lesson stations. This was also confirmed by the researcher through observation and certainly, there were good and quality infrastructures in most of the schools visited. There was an expectation that the priority of those teachers to be offered employment opportunities was from that community.

The findings agree with (Gertler *et al*., 2008) who found that community participation is a powerful tool for empowering communities to engage in various facets of education support including donation of resources for the development of education and school

Tenancy to the recruitment of more teachers

Findings indicated that community participation had a contribution to schools by recruiting more teachers at 78.2%. This was affirmed by the words of one District Education Officer (DEO) who said:

"*....when most of our children finish their college studies, they do not remain idle nowadays because they are given teaching jobs in our public secondary schools and therefore this amounts to improving our community....this is also community participation.*" **(DEO interview, September, 2020)**

However, DEO added that:

"*…..In this school, we now have three community-sponsored teachers (parents-teachers association, P.T.A) and we are planning to add more because we have a shortage of teachers....*" **(DEO, September, 2020)**

Findings indicate that 21.8% of households sampled reported that there was no contribution regarding the recruitment of more teachers (community-sponsored). One of the head teachers confirmed that some parents were not in a position

to pay the teachers the community employs and in effect there are constant wrangles between teachers and parents thus a poor relationship among them.

This finding agree with URT, (1998) Local Government Authorities have the right and power to participate and involve people in the planning and implementation of development programs within their respective areas and generally throughout the country. This imply that community members should participate in school development to incorporate the effort of Government example to employ temporary teachers to fill the gap needed so as to fasten the learning process.

Increased stationeries

Further, the study sought to know if there was a contribution to schools regarding the purchase of more stationery which included books, pens, and chalk. Findings indicate that 67.1% reported that there was a purchase of such stationery and therefore had a contribution to the sampled schools. This can be strengthened by the words of one respondent who said that he has been a member of the committee for several years in Butiama secondary school that he used to visit and he reported that he had witnessed the move from about twenty students to one textbook to currently one book being shared by about three students. He continued by saying that this improvement gives him more reasons to get involved in school development projects. However, findings indicated that 32.9% of the respondents felt that there was no contribution regarding the purchase of more stationery in community secondary schools. The finding of this study is in line with Augustine, 2016), who revealed that contribution of the community for education development takes a large number of monetary and non-monetary forms, monetary support includes fees, levies, and fundraising activities.

Contribution to dropout cases, students' attendance, and students' completion rate

The study sought to know if there was a contribution of community participation in education projects on students. Respondents were asked to state whether there were reduced student dropout cases, increased frequency of school attendance, and student completion rate. Figure 2 presents the findings of the contribution to students.
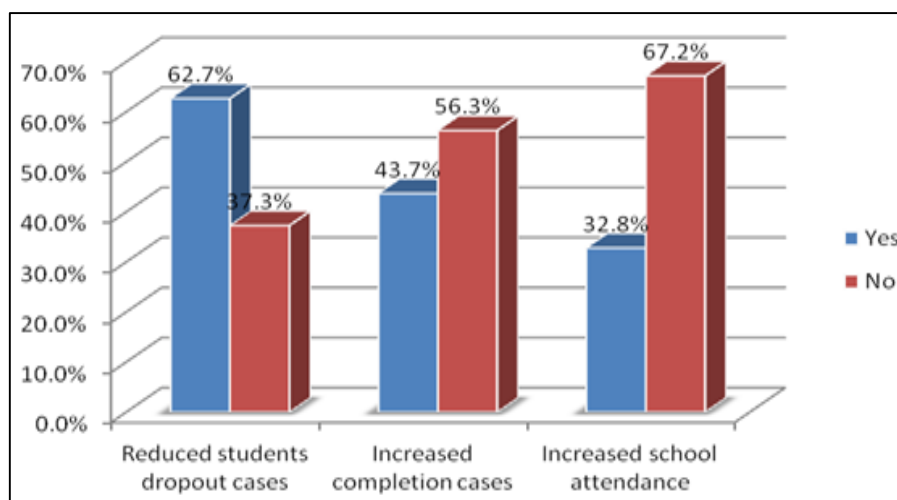
Source: Field data, 2020

Fig 2: Contribution of community participation on students

Community participation reduced student's dropout cases
Results indicate that most of the households sampled (62.7%) felt that there were reduced student dropout cases. This could be attributed to the lunch program in schools which motivates students. A respondent from one household confirmed that due to the lunch program introduced in schools, three of her children had not dropped out of school. This is in agreement with the finding by Onsomu *et al*. (2004) [19] who observed that community participation reduces dropout rates and many students remain in schools until the end of Form VI, the last year in ordinary education.

Some of the schools offer lunch to students, which helps to keep them in school. Few respondents (37.3%) still felt that students' dropout cases had not reduced. One respondent argued that due to rampant poverty in her household, her children were forced to drop out of school for them to work as casual laborers within the community to get food.

These findings show that despite the introduction of free education, poverty was still the main reason for students dropping out of school. Most of the key informants felt that most of the parents lacked interest in their children's education due to illiteracy and therefore students could drop out of school easily. One of them revealed that the cultural practices such as male and female circumcision believed to be a rite of passage in this community, contribute to a lack of interest in school which in effect leads to school drop-out cases. After circumcision, one key informant reported, boys and girls are assumed to be ready for marriage hence dropping out of school.

This statement is consistent with Ondiek's (2010) findings in Kuria District in Kenya that after circumcision, boys and girls dropped out of school because they believed they were mature enough to marry and start a family. Most key informants and some respondents however felt that regular absenteeism, alcoholism, child abuse, and single parenthood were other reasons associated with students dropping out of school in the area and that they need to be addressed soonest possible. One of the essential conditions for a learning process is regular school attendance as a means of completing school with a good education.

Community Participation Increased School Attendance
Regarding the frequency of school attendance, households were asked if their participation had contributed to students' increased frequency of school attendance. Findings indicated that few respondents (32.8%) reported that there was an increased frequency of school attendance while a majority of households sampled (67.2%) stated that there was no contribution. These findings suggest that most students from these households do not attend school regularly. To expound on this, Ward Executive Officer from the first Ward (WEO) stated that;
"…*Children are burdened with responsibilities and therefore cannot attend school as frequently as expected. He further estimated the number of days a pupil can attend school per*

week as three days and miss two days'' **(WEO 1, September, 2020)**. This imply that some parent (community member) are not participating in insuring that students are attending to school

Another WEO *stated that;*
''...due to the climatic conditions of the area and the terrain, during the rainy season, children cannot attend school as often as required. More still, the majority of the key informants felt that poverty in most households, ignorance about education issues (value for property than education), and early pregnancies were other reasons for students' irregular school attendance'' **(WEO 2, September, 2020)**.
Local Government Authorities have the right and power to participate and involve people in the planning and implementation of development programs within their respective areas and generally throughout the country (URT, 1998).

**Community participation increased students' completion rates**
This study further sought to establish how the contribution of community participation on students' completion rate in the area. Findings indicated that 43.7% of respondents stated that there was a contribution of community participation towards student completion, while over half (56.3%) reported that community participation had no contribution to students' completion rate. Some respondents who stated that there was contribution held that it was because of their frequent participation in school activities that made the children from their households complete Form VI and then achieve their carrier ambition. This also can be supported by the assertion of DEO who said:
"...Some parents, in this area, are so active in school activities and their wish is for their children to complete Form 4....We as a school try to encourage the completion of students even if they are weak" **(DEO, September, 2020)**
This findings are in line with Oyugi, M., & Gogo, J. O. (2019) [20]. Parents have responsibility to perform goals of school, design human materials and financial resources for attainment of education goals and put those into effect. This imply that community participation including parent have the responsibility of performing their duty like providing leaning materials, and other necessary contribution and collaborating with teachers in order the students can achieves their goals.

Contribution of Community Participation in School Projects on Households
Households were requested to indicate whether they had any outcome from participating in school projects. They were asked to indicate the contribution of community participation to households regarding the reduced amount of money that households were required to pay for school activities and also the provision of employment opportunities to households. This is summarized in Figure 3.
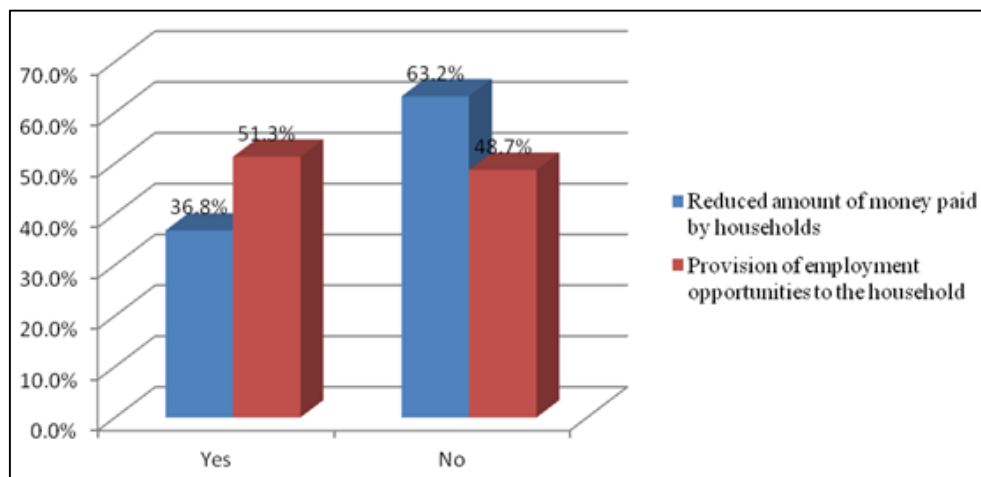
Source: Field Survey, 2020

Fig 3: Contribution of community participation on households

Community participation reduced the amount of money paid by households

The research found that 36.8% of the amount they were required to pay for school activities had been reduced. Some respondents argued that as they would actively participate in school activities such as school construction, they felt that the amount of money that they were required to pay was reduced. About 63.2% said that the amount of money that households are required to pay for school activities had not been reduced. This can be attributed to other school requirements including activity fees, examination fees, paying community teachers, and uniforms which are not catered for by the community schools or even the free education program.

Community participation provided employment opportunities to households

Respondents were required to state if there was any contribution from community participation to households regarding the provision of employment opportunities. Findings indicate that the majority of respondents (51.3%) stated that community participation has led to households' provision of employment opportunities to households. Most households reported that at least thrice per school year they had been given some work to do in community schools for payment.

Some of the respondents said that they had frequently been offered employment and that their households' income had improved. They attribute this to their full commitment to participation in school activities. Some of the activities households mentioned were the construction of classrooms/latrines, grazing school animals, working on school farms, carpentry, organizing school events (fundraising, prize-giving day, prayer day), the school management committee (SMC), and mobilizing certain events within the community.

Less than half of the respondents (48.7%) reported that there was no contribution in their involvement regarding the provision of employment opportunities. Some respondents who fell in this category believed that they did not have time to participate in school projects and therefore it was obvious they would not be given employment opportunities while others stated that they did not have the expertise required for carpentry.

However, one key informant confirmed that most of the school employment opportunities are given to households on merit but some households do not even attend school assembly and therefore it becomes difficult to offer them school jobs. He explained further that some household members would only participate in school activities if they would be given free food to eat after work commonly termed as *food-for-work*, which in his explanation would not warranty one to be given employment. In complement to this information, Community Development Officer (CDO) reported that:

"...Many households in this locality have benefited from the school projects, some have been awarded tenders and therefore their households" living standard have improved.....some households may not have benefited from such because they do not participate in school activities and as such we cannot offer them" **(CDO interview, September 2020).**

Conclusion

From the findings it is conclude community participation in school projects had a great contribution to schools in the construction of more classes/school facilities, recruitment of more teachers, and purchase of stationery. Also, community participation has a great contribution to secondary schools as it reduces students' dropout cases, increases the completion rate, and increases school attendance, and finally the study concludes that community participation had a contribution to household income through provision of employment opportunities to households and school contribution.

Recommendation

This study recommends that, education-related stakeholders need to deliberately create an enabling environment for the community to participate effectively in their development projects. This can be done through school management to collaborate with Community Development officers, Ward Executive Directors, and community members to discuss school-based matters to counteract challenges facing school projects.

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