

Understanding and Improving Quality in Tanzanian Primary Schooling

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Abstract

Tanzania has, ever since gaining independence, in 1961, been committed to Universal Primary Education (UPE). However, by the late 1990s, the primary education system was in crisis, with fewer than half of Tanzania's school-age children attending primary school, whilst many of those who were attending were receiving a poor quality of education.

In response to this situation, in recent years, Tanzania, like many other developing countries, has committed itself to providing high quality UPE. As outlined within this thesis, partly with reference to the insights gained from in-depth research, conducted within a selection of Tanzanian primary schools and their communities, and partly from the wider literature available, there are serious doubts about whether, despite the rhetoric to be found within recent government documents, the quality of the education being provided has been a genuine policy priority. Furthermore, the analysis contained within this thesis challenges whether the increases in key quantitative inputs in the education process, most notably classroom construction and teacher recruitment, have been sufficient to compensate for the rapid expansion in access to primary education in Tanzania.

In doing this, the thesis not only adds to the current body of knowledge about the progress that is being made towards Tanzania's drive towards achieving high quality UPE, but also makes a contribution to several wider debates, including the following: the use of the term 'quality of education'; the roles that local, national and international stakeholders can play within the areas of policy formulation and implementation; and the recent global debate about the link between the quantity and quality of education provision.

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