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Educational Accountability Relationships and Students' Learning Outcomes in Tanzania's Public Schools

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Abstract

Drawing on the literature on educational accountability and the practices of public educational service provision in Tanzania, this study explores ex ante students' learning outcomes associated with the existing accountability relationships in public preprimary, primary, and secondary schools. The article responds to three questions: (a) What accountability relationships exist and how do they explain learning outcomes in public schools? (b) What accountability arrangements exist and how do they stimulate a focus on the desired learning outcomes? (c) What are the approaches to accountability in education and how do they explain students' learning outcomes? The study adapted the accountability framework developed by the 2004 World Development Report. The research approach used is qualitative and informed by historical case study design. Data were collected using documents and analyzed using content analysis. The study findings indicate that the term *accountability* is well-documented in Tanzanian educational policies and programs; however, there is lack of clear accountability relationships, arrangements and structures to support accountability at various levels, which is among the possible factors that contribute to students' poor learning outcomes. This study's findings also affirm that the four approaches to accountability—financial, regulatory, professional, and participatory accountability—are ineffective in enhancing positive students' learning outcomes. The study recommends (a) establishing clear and effective accountability policies and relationships to enhance students' learning outcomes, (b) promulgating guidelines to engage families in their children's education, and (c) developing an eclectic model for managing public education whereby every level of the system is answerable to the Ministry of Education.

Keywords

educational accountability, accountability relationships, students' learning outcomes, public schools, Tanzania

Decentralization in decision-making is one method of enhancing efficiency in school organizations. In this regard, several developing countries, including Tanzania, have adopted decentralization in school management. However, the literature shows that decentralization alone is insufficient to ensure better service provision in the absence of a well-stipulated accountability framework (Gropello, 2004). Notably, a decentralized framework of service delivery will work only if school leaders are made accountable for their actions both to the central actors and to the end-users of their services, who are the ultimate beneficiaries (Gropello, 2004). Therefore, it is argued that on one hand, the effectiveness of the decentralization process depends on the accountability framework in force, and on the other hand, a successful decentralization strategy promotes accountability (Galabawa, 1997).

The literature (see, for example, The World Bank, 2004) identifies several factors that enhance accountability in educational organizations. These factors include the availability of end-users of education services, who make powerful demands for a high-quality education. Being powerful here also implies having parents who can choose where to school their children. For example, parents who are dissatisfied with a school's educational quality may decide to remove their children and send them to another school. Engaging the end-users in the provision of education is another factor that enhances educational accountability. Nevertheless, the literature maintains that many service delivery arrangements neglect the role of the end-users, especially ones who are poor, in making services work better (The World Bank, 2004). In this regard, service providers are reminded to note that end-users are crucial in tailoring the service to their needs and are effective monitors of providers because they are at the point of service delivery (The World Bank, 2004). In most cases, however, the practice is to treat the end-users

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as an empty vessel with nothing to contribute to enhancing service quality.

The literature further maintains that accountability exists when there is a relationship in which the provider, his or her task performance, and his or her functions are in accordance with the consumers' expectations. In this regard, the service provider avails himself or herself of information about consumers' rights and entitlements, both of which can serve as the basis for sanctions or rewards (The World Bank, 2015). Indeed, community members' awareness of their rights and entitlements to education services serves as a catalyst to action. In practice, community members from poor households normally tend to be ill-informed about their rights and entitlements, decreasing the extent to which they can hold the provider of the service accountable. In some cases, community members' ignorance of crucial information is used by those in power as an advantage in oppressing them. Inevitably, a lack of community awareness of rights, entitlements, and other information has been cited as a social factor that undermines accountability in education (The World Bank, 2015). To ensure that community members participate fully in monitoring and enforcing accountability in education, there is a need to provide adequate information about their educational rights and entitlements.

Recognizing the importance of decentralization, the Tanzania government, through the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP), has adopted "Decentralisation by Devolution" (D by D) in various sectors, including education, to strengthen local governments by granting them autonomy, enhancing community participation, increasing accountability, and providing services to match demand (Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government, 1998). The LGRP has several goals, the most important of which is to improve financial and political accountability (Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government, 1998). In line with the LGRP, several educational policies and programs (see, for example, primary and secondary education development programs, such as The United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2001, 2010) have frequently mentioned the need to improve educational quality and students' learning outcomes by increasing accountability. In other words, the Tanzanian government understands that ensuring accountability is the key to successfully implementing public sector reforms. This commitment to accountability in policy documents requires a well-stipulated accountability framework, arrangements, and relationships. Ideally, a well-stipulated accountability framework in education is crucial in ensuring positive outcomes in a decentralized education system. Nevertheless, educational accountability relationships and arrangements in Tanzania remain blurred. Hence, this study explored Tanzania's existing education accountability relationships and arrangements to determine how they enhance or hinder public school students' positive learning outcomes.

It should be clearly noted that several factors explain students' learning outcomes, including funding, students' readiness to learn, teacher quality, teacher motivation, teaching, and the overall learning environment. This study addressed only one possible contributing factor, namely the lack of an adequate accountability framework. The article establishes that improved learning outcomes will be achieved in the presence of clear accountability relationships, a stance that is coherent across its four elements of delegation, financing, information, and motivation (Pritchett, 2015). In the context of this study, students' learning outcomes refer to examination performance and the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills by the end of primary school.

Educational Accountability and Learning Outcomes: Perceptions From the Literature

The concept of accountability is defined in various ways. A few of those definitions that are especially pertinent to this study are cited. Accountability is described as a relationship between two parties that meets four conditions: One party expects the other to perform a service or accomplish a goal, the party performing the activity accepts the legitimacy of the other's expectation, the party performing the activity derives some benefits from the relationship, and the party for whom the activity is performed has some capacity to affect the other's benefits (Hill & Bonan, 1991, p. 35). Perceiving accountability in this manner implies that educational accountability in Tanzania requires a reciprocal relationship between the higher and lower level educational officials, for example, the ministry responsible for education and educational officials at the regional, district, and ward levels expect school staff to run their schools effectively. Conversely, a school's staff members depend on financial, technical, and logistical support from ward, district, regional, and ministerial officials. The support rendered could involve the reliable flow of funds, staff, and other teaching and learning facilities. At the school level, parents and community members depend on teachers to educate their children according to government guidelines. However, teachers depend on parents sending their children to school, encouraging them to attend school regularly, supporting their children's education, supervising homework, and promoting learning at home. This relationship depends on the school meeting public expectations and the public supporting the school's efforts to improve its performance (Hill & Bonan, 1991, p. 35). Consequently, a fine balance is struck.

Accountability is further defined as the relationship between a service provider and the agent who has the power to reward, punish, or replace that provider (Newmann, King, & Rigdon, 1997, cited in Ahearn, 2000, p. 3). Public education accountability refers to the relationship between the government (provider) and the consumers (families), whereby the consumers have the power to reward, punish, or replace the provider of education services (Ahearn, 2000, p. 3). In the Tanzanian education context, the end-users can

reward the provider of public education by supporting the implementation of government educational policies. Examples include supporting various school activities such as attending school meetings (parents), sending the children to school (parents), or attending school (children). In the same manner, end-users who are unsatisfied with public education outcomes may opt not to invest in their children's education (parents) or irregularly attend school, drop out, or not be enrolled in the first place (children). However, if educational outcomes in the public education system fail to encourage economically able parents, they might replace the provider by sending their children to private schools. This development can lead to inequality as children from economically capable households obtain the quality education they crave while children from economically disadvantaged households remain and consume the education available in the public education system because they have no other alternative. Generally, families from poor households have low purchasing power; hence, their only available option is either to quit school or to continue consuming the public school system's educational services, regardless of their quality.

In the context of Tanzania's system of private education, the concept of accountability entails consumers or buyers of education enrolling in private schools, where they can question and demand that the owners provide a high-quality education. It is further expected that if buyers are satisfied or unsatisfied, they can either reward or punish the private provider of education. However, for this reaction to become a reality, the end-users of education services need to be informed about school performance and need to understand the standards for judging school success (Ahearn, 2000). Under the ceteris paribus condition, the general assumption is that both private and public school organizations wish to be rewarded rather than be punished by the end-users of their services. They are expected to be held accountable, that is, to be responsible, answerable, and ready to assess responsibility and judge or evaluate their performance against certain established standards (Ahearn, 2000). Hence, schools are expected to enhance their performance to the parents' satisfaction. In this regard, school accountability refers to the process of evaluating school performance based on student performance measures. The concept of accountability is further defined as a social relation that allows an actor (provider of services) to feel compelled to explain and justify his or her conduct to consumers (Bovens, 2005). Therefore, the concept implies having a system that makes the service provider answerable to the service users.

Accountability has been cited as one of the factors associated with positive outcomes in public services. In education, accountability is associated with improved school performance (Levitt, Janta, & Wegrich, 2008). However, for this improvement to materialize, there must be a well-established accountability framework, relationships, and arrangements. The literature argues that the outcomes of accountability are not always positive and if they are not well-planned, accountability dysfunction may occur. Accountability dysfunction primarily results from a lack of supportive structures within the education system and accountability overload, that is, having too many overlapping evaluation criteria and/or too many stakeholders and supervisors, each with his or her own requirements for reporting purposes with which the actor is expected to comply (Levitt et al., 2008). Do accountability relationships and arrangements in Tanzania enhance or hinder positive students' learning outcomes?

Conceptual Framework

The study is informed by the World Bank's, 2004 accountability framework, which explains the relationships between policy makers, consumers, and service providers. This framework emphasizes the need to ensure the education provider's direct accountability to the consumer (WB, 2004). It is emphasized that when the government assumes the responsibility of providing education, there must be a well-established accountability relationship between the citizens (consumers), the providers (teachers), and the policy makers. Arguably, when this relationship breaks down, service delivery fails (The World Bank, 2004). The framework classifies accountability routes into two types, namely the long and the short accountability routes. In the long route of accountability, citizens are expected to influence policy makers by, for example, demanding that the government improve the overall quality of education and students' learning outcomes. In contrast, policy makers are required to monitor and motivate teachers to work toward the desired outcome. The short accountability route refers to the client–provider relationship (The World Bank, 2004). In the context of this study, clients are expected to play two major roles in strengthening the delivery of education services: Demanding improved educational quality and monitoring providers' performance to achieve the desired learning outcomes. However, citizens can play these roles only when they are better informed about the quality of education that is necessary. The WB framework assisted in examining both the long and the short routes to accountability in Tanzania and in determining how these routes explain students' learning outcomes.

This framework was thought to be relevant for examining Tanzania's decentralized educational system. As noted above, policy documents created by the government of Tanzania reiterate the need to strengthen accountability in education service provision. For example, in 2016, the government declared that it would provide fee-free basic education from the preprimary level to the ordinary secondary level (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MOEST], 2016). Therefore, at these levels of education, the government is the major source of financing, whereby schools are provided with both capitation and development grants. In line with funding provisions, the government clearly announced the role to be played by stakeholders ranging from students, families, community members, and village leaders to the national level.

Each of these stakeholders is expected to be accountable and ensure that the goal of fee-free basic education is realized. For example, among other responsibilities, parents are expected to oversee the day-to-day affairs of the school, closely monitor their children's attendance and progress, and report cases in which schools violate the fee-free policy (MOEST, 2016). Therefore, the government expects each party to play its role in facilitating the provision of fee-free basic education. However, teachers are expected to perform roles involving the provision of high-quality education (MOEST, 2016). Therefore, this framework was useful in examining accountability relationships between consumers, policy makers, and service providers.

The Problem

Educational accountability has been frequently mentioned in Tanzania's educational policies and programs. However, despite the government's recognition of the need to enhance accountability in the implementation of its educational policies and programs, little emphasis has been placed on establishing accountability structures, mechanisms, and arrangements at all levels to facilitate the effective provision of educational services. The literature frequently cites poor learning outcomes, as reflected by poor pass rates in the national primary and lower secondary examination, the poor literacy and numeracy skills of children graduating from primary schools, and poor livelihood and lifelong learning skills among graduates at various educational levels as the major challenges to Tanzania's education sector (MOEST, 2017). Therefore, this study examines educational accountability relationships, arrangements, and procedures to determine how they either hinder or facilitate positive students' learning outcomes.

Method

The study used a qualitative research methodology using historical case study design, whereby the focus was to systematically examine students' learning outcomes between 2010 and 2017, and link them to existing accountability relationships. Because this is a case study, the cases/units of analysis were accountability relationships and students' learning outcomes. One of the basic requirements for using a case study design is to triangulate data-collection tools as a method of converging information (Yin, 2008). This helps establish the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. However, this study relies solely on documents as the only source of data, a practice that is encouraged in historical research (Merriam, 1998). As a historical study, documents facilitated the collection of information that could not have been obtained through interviews or other data-collection tools (Merriam, 1998). This was very important, because it was not possible to interview the policy makers who participated in writing the various policy documents that were examined. Similarly, our exploration of past students' learning outcomes limited our use of observation as a data-collection tool, and the extent to which informants could recall or be available for interview (Merriam, 1998). The use of documents lends contextual richness and helps ground the investigation in the context of the problem being studied (May, 1997; Merriam, 1998). Through documents, it was possible to gauge data on students' learning outcome for the past 7 years and link those data to the following accountability arrangements: (a) as stated in various educational policies and (b) as practiced with respect to the management and overall provision of public education services.

The literature was systematically searched to establish literature review questions, which allowed the researcher to establish review protocol and literature inclusion criteria (Aromataris & Riitano, 2014). The criteria for selecting the literature include the following: (a) all key educational policy documents and circulars that direct the provision of basic education and (b) empirical studies conducted in Tanzania between 2010 and 2017 that focus on students' learning outcomes. In this way, it was possible to minimize bias and increase rigor in identifying and synthesizing the best available evidence related to students' learning outcomes and accountability relationships (Aromataris & Riitano, 2014). Essentially, a multifaceted approach was used to identify relevant literature for this study. The traditional search strategy—namely, hand searching—was deployed to obtain references published in Tanzania and elsewhere including books and journal articles. This task involves screening the reference lists of studies that were selected for inclusion in the review. Through hand searching, it was possible to obtain journal articles and books to include in the study. In addition, an Internet search enabled the retrieval of materials from governmental and nongovernmental websites such as those of the MOEST; the Ministry of State in the President's Office–Regional Administration, Local Government, Civil Services and Good Governance (PO-RALG); Uwezo/Twaweza; and HakiElimu. Similarly, government policy documents such as the LGRP and first- and second-phase primary and secondary education development programs were also reviewed.

The qualitative data from the documents were subjected to content analysis, which involves choosing what is relevant for analysis with respect to the study's questions before putting them together to establish tendencies, sequences, patterns, and orders (May, 1997). Ultimately, based on the various literatures surveyed, we extracted relevant data in relation to the research aspects studied (data reduction) and then compressed, organized, and assembled those data accordingly (data display) before drawing conclusions about the study phenomenon (conclusion drawing and verification). While displaying the data, it was possible to clearly identify the emerging themes that were derived both deductively and inductively.

Findings and Discussion

Existing Accountability Relationships and Students' Learning Outcomes in Public Schools

Existing accountability relationships were examined using the WB (The World Bank, 2004) accountability framework. Consistent with the framework, the findings reveal four types of accountability relationships: voice, compact, client power, and management relationship. Each of these relationships is clearly discussed below.

Voice relationship. A voice relationship is defined as a complex accountability relationship that connects families and government officials in education, for example, policy makers and politicians (The World Bank, 2004). This relationship is further defined as the "long route" of accountability through which citizens provide mandates and/or their preferences to policy makers (the state) and politicians to design services that respond to their needs (Gropello, 2004). In Tanzania, both councillors and Members of Parliament (MPs) are expected to hear their constituents' opinions on public education. Thus, politicians are expected to serve as a vehicle for conveying citizens' views to the government. These views are presented to politicians through citizens' voices: Citizens either speak directly to politicians in meetings or by visiting their offices or, as in most cases, the councillors and MPs, as representatives of their respective constituencies, are expected to be well-informed about educational problems. Hence, they should be better placed to communicate education-related issues to the government without waiting for those issues to be reported by their constituents.

In many cases, however, the opinions that are largely reported by citizens involve issues related to a lack of teaching and learning facilities, including shortages of teachers, classrooms, desks, toilet facilities, and teacher accommodations (Galabawa & Agu, 2001). This implies that citizens and politicians are very concerned about observable school facilities, but less concerned about what is going on in the classroom.

Further findings show that in practice, opinions about students' learning outcomes are primarily expressed by nongovernmental organizations, such as Uwezo/Twaweza and HakiElimu. For example, Uwezo/Twaweza expressed concern about whether schoolchildren were learning. Uwezo/Twaweza's reports reveal that although many children were enrolled in school, some of them graduated without acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. Indeed, empirical evidence collected by Uwezo/Twaweza consistently demonstrates that children's competence in literacy and numeracy is well below expectations (Uwezo, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014). In 2013, for example, only 45% of children could read a Standard II-level story in Kiswahili, only one in five (19%) children could read a Standard II-level story in English, and only three out of 10 (31%) children could do a Standard II-level multiplication problem (Uwezo, 2014). Uwezo/Twaweza catalyzed the adoption of several government initiatives in a bid to improve the early development of literacy and numeracy skills. Those initiatives include designing a new curriculum for early grades and in-service teacher training to equip teachers with the skills to teach literacy and numeracy. With respect to the voice accountability relationship, it can thus be argued that the relationship between end-users of the services, such as parents and families, on one hand, and policy makers and politicians, on the other hand, remains rather weak. It is the availability of strong nongovernmental organizations such as Uwezo/Twaweza and HakiElimu, both of which help curb this weakness and raise important issues, that requires the utmost attention and improvement to help enhance students' learning outcomes.

Compact relationship. A compact relationship is broadly defined as a long-term relationship of accountability that connects politicians and policy makers to organizational providers (The World Bank, 2004). When applied to the Tanzania context, the policy maker is the MOEST, or the parent ministry, which is charged with the following functions: formulating, monitoring, and evaluating educational policies; overseeing teacher training; registering schools; providing quality assurance; ensuring quality education service delivery in the country by conducting research to assist in making informed decisions; formulating and implementing mechanisms to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that education is provided in accordance with set standards; and monitoring and evaluating Tanzania's education policies, legislation, guidelines, and curricula (URT, 2010).

At the top level, there is a Ministry of PO-RALG, which is responsible for supervising the day-to-day provision of educational services. With regard to education, the functions of this ministry include the following: monitoring the employment of teachers and nonteaching staff in regions and local governments, initiating and monitoring the transfers of teachers and nonteaching staff from one region to another, monitoring the appointment of secondary school heads, monitoring the appointment of school board members and their training in school management, monitoring in-service training for teachers and capacity building for nonteaching staff, coordinating the provision of government scholarships for children from poor families, participating in the coordination of Form 1 and 5 selection in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, and implementing policies, coordinating, and monitoring (URT, 2010).

The implication of this relationship is that the providers of education services (the heads of school and teachers) in public schools are also accountable to both the MOEST and the Ministry of PO-RALG. In the latter ministry, teachers are accountable through ward educational officers, district educational officers, and regional educational officers. This relationship is confusing and has resulted in the heads of schools

and teachers having several immediate supervisors, including both politicians at the village ward, district, and regional levels and educational officials at the ward, district, and regional levels. It should be noted that as these educational officers are also regulated by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Vocational Training, they are answerable to that parent ministry. This tendency violates a management principle known as unity of command, which requires that each subordinate have only one superior; for example, an employee must not have many bosses or superiors (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Notably, if an employee or subordinate works under the influence of many bosses or superiors, he or she is subjected to a state of confusion, dilemma, anarchy, and disorder (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). This situation also affects the organization's overall efficiency, productivity, and profit. In this regard, the literature highlights several benefits of ensuring the unity of command in organizations, including fostering a better relationship among superiors and subordinates; providing clear and well-organized authority, responsibility, and accountability; reducing and/or avoiding duplication of work; providing prompt or quick decision-making; and enhancing coordination and teamwork, boosting workers' morale and positive attitude, and ultimately leading to higher productivity (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). The existing accountability relationship in Tanzania between the government, policy makers, and service providers is complicated and confusing, which may explain pupils' poor learning outcomes. The study findings in this regard reveal a lack of appropriate reporting mechanisms to monitor and adequately evaluate school performance processes.

Benchmarking the current arrangements of education provision in Tanzania with the World Bank (2004) accountability framework suggests that Ministry of PO-RALG constitutes a group of politicians that includes school committees, councillors, ward education development committees, and Members of Parliament. This represents an intricate accountability model known as *governance*, which requires politicians' participation in school governance.

Client power relationship. The third type of accountability is the "client power" relationship, which is defined as a relationship that connects families to school organizations (The World Bank, 2004). It is regarded as the "short route" of accountability, which denotes forms of direct client feedback, comanagement, and/or client choice related to services provided (Gropello, 2004; The World Bank, 2004). Under this type of accountability, the end-users of education, for example, families and their children, are expected to hold service providers (schools) accountable for student performance. In Tanzania, families are primarily connected to the schools through school committee boards. The evidence indicates that almost every school in the country has a school board committee. These school committees are responsible for the management and overall development of the school. Inter alia, their roles are to involve all pupils, parents, and school staff in maximizing the benefits of primary school; to oversee the school's day-to-day affairs; to plan the budget and ensure the proper use of school funds; and to effectively communicate educational information to all parents, pupils, and other stakeholders (URT, 2001). In practice, the school committees are mainly concerned with issues related to school construction activities, school facilities, and the management of funds (Galabawa & Agu, 2001). Several school committee bodies are less concerned about what is going on in the classrooms. Accordingly, it can be argued that school committee boards are relatively weak in holding schools accountable for the students' learning output.

Families are also free to visit the school and enquire about their children's learning outcomes. However, the empirical evidence suggests that there is a gap between Tanzanian schools and families and that families' participation is limited to matters related to the construction of school buildings; it seldom extends to education quality (Komba, 2013). The reasons for the schools' limited efforts in involving parents in academic-related matters is the unwarranted belief among educational authorities that parents and members of the community are ignorant, for example, that they have never attended school themselves (Komba, 2013). Essentially, the findings indicate that the client power accountability relationship is weak and cannot be expected to yield much in terms of holding the school accountable for poor school outcomes. Under this scenario, the only remaining option is to apply voice accountability to politicians and policy makers. Moreover, politician/policy makers must use compact accountability to hold the schools accountable. As already noted, however, the compact accountability relationship is confusing and unclear; therefore, it is less helpful in holding the schools as accountable as they should be.

Management relationship. A management relationship is defined as the relationship that connects organizational providers and frontline professionals (Gropello, 2004, p. 1). An organizational provider is the government or private entity that provides the service, for example, the schools (The World Bank, 2004). A frontline professional is an employee who is engaged in the actual provision of services, for example, teachers (The World Bank, 2004). Evidence from studies in Tanzania consistently affirm declining teachers motivation, low commitment to teaching, and a poor working environment, causing the majority of teachers to dislike the teaching profession (see, for example, HakiElimu, 2011; Mkumbo, 2012; UNESCO & Ministry of Education and Vocational Training [MoEVT], 2014). The situation is further compounded by poor salaries in the teaching profession, which erode the interest of highly performing graduates to join the teaching profession (UNESCO & MoEVT, 2014). Further evidence suggests that some graduates join the teaching profession simply because it is a profession that guarantees graduates immediate postgraduation employment from the government (UNESCO & MoEVT, 2014). Based on the

factors that encourage graduates to join the teaching profession and the poor working environment in public schools, it can be argued that the majority of Tanzania's teachers are intrinsically demotivated and less committed to teaching, which in turn affects both their level of accountability and students' learning outcomes.

The findings further suggest that a lack of teaching and learning facilities limits the extent to which schools can demand and actuate teachers' accountability. Arguably, demanding accountability from employees requires that employers fulfill their responsibilities by providing employees with the tools necessary to deliver adequate teaching. The literature also highlights the issue of teacher absenteeism in Tanzania's public primary and secondary schools (UNESCO & MoEVT, 2014). Teacher absenteeism contributes to poor student learning outcomes. The factors that the literature cites as contributing to absenteeism include poor teacher management and accountability (UNESCO & MoEVT, 2014). Indeed, the available empirical evidence suggests that the management accountability relationship is rather weak, thus contributing to students' poor learning outcomes.

Using the framework that guided this study, the educational accountability relationship in Tanzania can be summarized as indicated in Figure 1, which was adapted from the World Bank (2004) accountability framework:

As noted earlier, both routes are weak in holding the service providers accountable.

Accountability Arrangements and How They Stimulate a Focus on Desirable Students' Learning Outcomes

The literature maintains that achieving accountability in education requires, among other things, a clear indication of accountability that enhances providers' commitment to providing education that meets consumers' expectations and leaves them satisfied (Levitt et al., 2008). The argument is that when people are made responsible for the effects of their actions, they are more prone to consider their decisions carefully (UNESCO, 2016). Similarly, achieving accountability requires a clear identification of and engagement with service providers, who should be held accountable for their performance (Levitt et al., 2008). Furthermore, accountability requires appropriate reporting mechanisms for adequately monitoring and evaluating relevant performance processes (Levitt et al., 2008).

This suggests that in this case, consumers of education services must be familiar with the service providers. In the Tanzania context, however, the actual service provider in the public education system cannot be easily identified. As noted above, there are two ministries charged with the coordination, provision, and management of Tanzania's public education system. Two different ministries manage education from different angles. This arrangement may create accountability relations problems. The study findings suggest that there are no appropriate reporting mechanisms to adequately monitor and evaluate education performance processes. This problematic arrangement also creates confusion when responding to pertinent questions that determine the key aspects of accountability: *Who is accountable? To whom is the account owed?* (UNESCO, 2016). Examples of these pertinent questions include the following: Which ministry is accountable for good or bad school performance? Should the parents hold MOEST or the Ministry of PO-RALG accountable for poor school performance?

A thorough analysis of the existing arrangements in managing education in Tanzania suggests that two models of accountability—namely governance and organizational or bureaucratic accountability—characterize the management of education. The latter model is commonly exercised by superiors through hierarchical relationships with the school, school committees, and educational leaders at the levels of districts, regions, and the Ministry of Education. In contrast, the governance model follows the same channel but ends at the Ministry of PO-RALG. In some cases, these models have been contradictory in their functions. For example, whereas the bureaucratic model states that education is free and that parents should not contribute anything to school, the governance model demands that parents participate by constructing classrooms and contributing to other school developmental matters. Furthermore, the two ministries account for the highest level of hierarchical relationships in the public educational organization. In this regard, it is confusing to determine which ministry has complete autonomy and a mandate concerning the schools. This confusion dampens the providers' efforts to work toward achieving the desired learning outcomes.

Approaches to Educational Accountability and Students' Learning Outcomes

As UNESCO (2016) noted, there is a need to consider various approaches to accountability while defining the concept in a given educational context (UNESCO, 2016). The literature identifies seven approaches to accountability in education: financial, regulatory, professional, performance-based, market-oriented, participatory, and global and national (UNESCO, 2016). Four of these approaches are considered useful in discussing education accountability in Tanzania: financial, regulatory, professional, and participatory.

Financial accountability. As noted above, the government of Tanzania is currently providing fee-free education whereby pupils are provided with capitation grants (MOEST, 2016). To enhance financial accountability, the government is obliged to provide clear guidelines for distributing those resources. MOEST (2016) Circular Number 3 provides guidance for the provision of fee-free education, highlighting the roles of the government and various stakeholders in implementing the fee-free education policy. For example, the

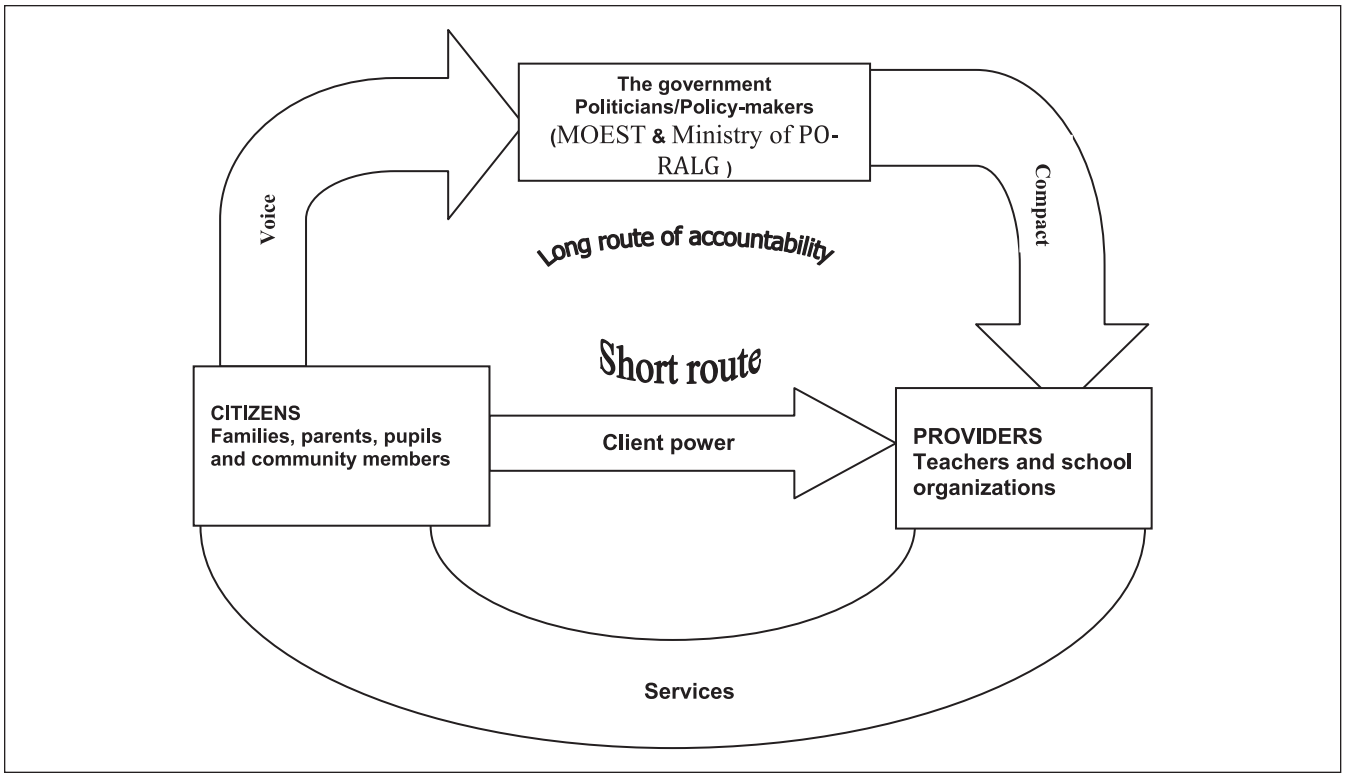


Figure 1. Educational accountability relationships in Tanzania's public primary and secondary schools.
Note. MOEST = Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology; PO-RALG = President's Office–Regional Administration, Local Government, Civil Services, and Good Governance.

circular states that the government is responsible for ensuring that funds are effectively utilized in achieving the desired learning outcomes. In the same manner, school organizations are responsible for ensuring that funds are effectively used in accordance with government directives and that they help bring about the expected improvement in learning outcomes. In contrast, parents as consumers of education services are expected to closely monitor the use of resources and the resulting learning outcomes (MOEST, 2016). However, for schools to ensure the effective use of funds, school heads are required to be knowledgeable and equipped with financial management skills. Evidence from the literature indicates that Tanzanian schools have a critical shortage of nonteaching staff (Komba, 2012). Accordingly, the school Heads typically assume all financial responsibilities. In practice, head teachers have generally been found to have insufficient financial skills in the areas of planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluating (UNESCO, 2011). Is it logical to hold the head teachers accountable when they lack sufficient knowledge, skills, and information to properly manage school funds? Furthermore, it should be noted that the curriculum for training primary and secondary school teachers does not provide teachers with financial management courses. Hence, although the need for in-service training for teachers is unavoidable, because of financial constraints, in-service training is rarely provided.

Another inefficiency surrounding financial accountability is associated with various forms of corruption, including the payment of salaries to ghost teachers and capitation grants for ghost students. The other weakness in financial accountability concerns the provision of flat grants to all students regardless of variations in their physical conditions, learning needs, and school locations. Therefore, the money provided may exaggerate existing inequalities across schools and individual learners. Arguably, the recently introduced fee-free education policy treats children from rich and poor families equally (HakiElimu, 2017). Providing financial assistance to children from rich families could be regarded as wastage of government resources. The question here is as follows: Should national resources be directed to subsidize the education of children from poor families who cannot afford to contribute? In other words, there might be a need to provide funding through a need-based formula. These identified inefficiencies in financial accountability might have contributed to students' poor learning outcomes.

Regulatory accountability. Regulatory accountability focuses on inputs and processes, emphasizing compliance with available laws and regulations (UNESCO, 2016). Schools' teaching and learning processes are largely regulated by the school inspection system, which is expected to hold schools and teachers accountable for achieving not only teaching and

learning goals but also organizational management and leadership goals (UNESCO, 2016). Tanzania has a School Inspectorate Department that is responsible for ensuring adherence to educational policies, laws, regulations, and standards in the delivery of basic and teacher education. The department has four sections: the Primary Education Inspectorate Section, the Secondary Education Inspectorate Section, the Teacher Education Inspectorate Section, and the School Inspectorate Management Support Section. The Inspectorate Department has several responsibilities for inspecting and recommending strategies to enhance the quality of basic education and evaluate the relevance and effective use of the instructional materials used in preprimary, primary, and special education schools, and adult and nonformal education centers (MoEVT, 2010). Evidence from the field on the effectiveness of school inspections suggest that inspections are irregularly conducted, are superficial, and do little to boost the quality of services in schools (Mmbando & Hongoke, 2010), as illustrated by the following statement:

> Inspectors do not spend sufficient time for adequate and meaningful inspection of schools and, consequently, school inspectors do not seem to obtain a true picture of the state of schools and to reflect on the outcomes of inspection. The time spent by inspectors on offering professional support to teachers in schools was usually negligible as inspectors spent most of their time solving administrative problems with head teachers and that teachers were never helped as adequately as they should. (Mmbando & Hongoke, 2010, p. 15)

The reason for irregular school inspection is a lack of financial resources to cover the cost of school inspections. Other shortcomings that have been identified in the Inspectorate Department include the following: (a) incompetence among some school inspectors, some of whom are weak and do not possess the requisite professional qualities to inspect others; (b) poor support and training for inspectors; (c) inspections that focus on school buildings and administrative systems rather than on teaching and learning, with minimal attention paid to the identification and improvement of educational standards; (d) reports that are rarely used to improve educational quality; and (e) the fact that only a few days are allocated for school inspection (Mmbando & Hongoke, 2010). With respect to the time allocated for inspection, the following has been reported:

> Due to paucity of time at the disposal of school inspectors, the school inspections, wherever held, have become superficial and a mere formality. Additionally, because of inadequate time, the inspectors experience the following two major constraints: a) They hardly devote their attention to the follow-up action of the inspection reports with the result that the very purpose of the inspection gets defeated and (b) They find it difficult to keep themselves abreast of the latest development in their subject areas. (Mmbando & Hongoke, 2010, p. 15)

Accordingly, one can argue that inspection in Tanzania largely focuses on visiting schools, pointing out mistakes, writing reports, and submitting the reports to government bodies. This implies that the process is a mere formality. Indeed, these challenges raise doubt about the Inspectorate Department's ability to foster and strengthen accountability, and ultimately to improve students' learning outcomes.

Professional accountability. Professional accountability concerns issues such as the extent to which education enables learners to meet their day-to-day needs and the extent to which educators adhere to professional standards (UNESCO, 2016). The question here resolves around whether consumers of the public education system accept that education is relevant to their day-to-day needs and whether teachers work ethically. There is abundant evidence from the field (see, for example, Komba, 2013, 2017) to indicate that some families from poor economic backgrounds are unwilling to finance or encourage their children's schooling because they are skeptical about whether education contributes to poverty reduction. This concern has contributed to low enrollment, dropout, and poor learning outcomes in rural schools (Komba, 2013, 2017). With respect to teachers' adherence to professional standards, there is evidence of cases in which teachers have behaved unethically, including engaging in illicit sex liaisons with students, stealing school resources, and engaging in examination malpractice (Anangisye & Barrett, 2006; Anangisye, 2015; Mabagala, 2016). Professional accountability is therefore regarded as weak, contributing to poor school outcomes.

Participatory accountability. Participatory accountability is considered an effective strategy for building equitable education systems and providing quality education (UNESCO, 2016, p. 8). This approach to accountability requires families to have a voice and opportunities for dialog with school governing bodies (UNESCO, 2016). This type of accountability is similar to the client power accountability relationship discussed earlier. Hence, as noted above, all of Tanzania's schools are legally required to have school committees. Families are expected to be fully engaged in school management. Parents' participation in school can be at the individual level or through the school committee. However, as noted previously, accountability is not an issue that school committees are expected to raise. Instead, the focus is on the management of funds and teaching and learning resources. However, individual parental involvement has been found to be poorly defined in Tanzania's educational policies (Komba, 2013). It has been noted that there is no clear policy on this matter, and hence very little parental involvement in education. Furthermore, as noted earlier, in many cases, individual parental participation is limited to matters concerning the construction of school buildings and seldom extends to education quality.

The findings suggest that home–school partnership in Tanzania, which could enhance participatory accountability, is characterized by so-called *over-professionalism* (in which parents' contribution to academic matters is underestimated and largely unrecognized) and a *compensatory model* in which the school operates pursuant to a deficit model that assumes that parents are illiterate, and hence ineffective in supporting their children's education (Komba, 2013; Ravn, 2005; Whalley, 2001). In the latter model, the school compensates for inadequate parenting skills. In Tanzania, this partnership has been operating without a thorough assessment of parents and the community's needs and experience, suggesting a lack of accountability in regard to investigating changing needs and experiences, both of which are crucial in establishing a responsive and flexible parent involvement model. In sum, there is very little partnership and so-called "bounded or conditioned" involvement based on the argument that the parents are poor, ignorant, and illiterate (Komba, 2013; Ravn, 2005; Whalley, 2001).

The findings suggest weak participatory accountability whereby the school largely assumes responsibility for education. This scenario contributes to an increase in the number of children graduating from Class 7 who are unable to read and write.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that despite the Tanzanian government's commitment to enhancing accountability as a means of improving educational service provision, few efforts have been made to establish a strong foundation in educational accountability relationships, arrangements, and approaches. Therefore, it is concluded that Tanzania lacks effective accountability policies and mechanisms, contributing to students' poor learning outcomes.

The study has revealed that the four educational accountability relationships are all weak and contend with various challenges. The result is poor students' learning outcomes in basic education. However, it has been established that research results from nongovernmental organizations signaled the government about poor learning outcomes, prompting the government to take the steps necessary to rectify the situation. Accountability arrangements have been found to be confusing, making it difficult for the end-users of education services to clearly identify the authority responsible for the good or bad performance. Furthermore, the findings indicate that public education in Tanzania is currently managed under two models, which occasionally contradict each other in their functions. Although the bureaucratic model is working toward ensuring compliance with rules and standards (e.g., fee-free education), the governance model is working toward ensuring local community participation, emphasizing contribution. Furthermore, the two models imply several reporting systems, affecting providers' efforts to work toward achieving the desired learning outcomes.

The findings also indicate that financial accountability is affected by head teachers' lack of financial management skills, bribery, and the provision of flat grants to all students. Furthermore, capitation grants are not provided based on students' actual learning needs. In a situation of lack of sufficient funds, it would be better to provide more support to pupils from poor households and encourage those from rich families to contribute. With respect to regulatory accountability, the findings suggest that there is a lack of an effective quality assurance framework to ensure education improvement and effective school performance. A good quality assurance framework should, inter alia, assign the responsibility of ensuring quality to the main actors in the school, for example, the teachers. The system also needs to ensure that teachers are supported in improving the quality of services to help teachers create a sense of accountability for the school's day-to-day activities. These features are currently missing in the Inspectorate Department, contributing to that department's lack of full autonomy to hold schools accountable, and hence contributing to students' poor learning outcomes. The findings also show that inefficiency in professional and participatory accountability is the factor that contributes to students' poor learning outcomes.

Based on the study findings, the following six key recommendations are made:

First, the MOEST should establish effective accountability policies and mechanisms in the provision of public educational services. It is anticipated that clear accountability arrangements will help address various bottlenecks that interfere with the ministries' efforts to improve students' learning outcomes. Hence, a clear accountability framework will involve assigning responsibilities to major actors while ensuring that there are well-established mechanisms to ensure the provision of adequate financing, teacher support, training, and motivation, along with all the necessary tools and resources needed to achieve the intended outcomes.

Second, schools should empower families, parents, and community members so that they can act as key monitors of school learning outcomes; this means strengthening the short route of accountability. This could also mean strengthening participatory accountability, which could be achieved by designing sustainable strategies to support parents, families, and community members' involvement in schools. Core strategies include improving home–school communication and encouraging volunteering in various school activities. More importantly, the MOEST should establish national guidelines for parents and community members' engagement in their children's education.

Third, the government should develop an eclectic model that will combine elements from the bureaucratic and governance models. This implies the need to have one model govern the public education system. The system used in the administration of Finnish education is highly recommended: There, the public basic education administration is organized into two levels. Education policy and other activities,

including quality assurance, should be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, which should then have a national agency, for example, the Tanzania National Board of Education, which is responsible for the implementation of policy goals. The board should work closely with the ministry and should be answerable to the Ministry of Education. The schools' local administration would be the responsibility of local authorities, for example, municipalities, which are also answerable to the parent Ministry of Education. In other words, the argument here is to decentralize education services provision within the same ministry, that is, the MOEST.

Fourth, the MOEST should strengthen financial accountability through various measures, including conducting a unit cost analysis to determine the actual cost of providing public preprimary, primary, and secondary education. In the same vein, the agencies responsible for curriculum development at the secondary and university levels should consider including financial management among the core courses to student teachers taking their diplomas and degrees.

Fifth, the MOEST should strengthen regulatory accountability by establishing a quality assurance framework that will serve as a guide to evaluate schools and hold teachers accountable.

Finally, the MOEST should strengthen professional accountability by introducing a teacher professional board that will help manage teachers' ethics.

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