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Seasonal Shifting Cultivation and Initiation Rites as Local Barriers to Education Access in Rural Tanzania

Abstracts

EN

This article presents local challenges that have persistently impaired children's access to schooling despite the implementation of access-driven education policy of fee free education in Tanzania. Specifically, the article identifies and describes the seasonal shifting cultivation and rites of initiation as the local challenges affecting the provision of the fee free education in two community schools in Southern Tanzania. It argues that while it is important to promote policy and strategies at national level, it is equally important to have a thorough grasp of the diverse nature of socio-economic contexts and unique challenges the communities face. This calls for customised treatment of the same. It suggests that qualitative research should be conducted so as to gain an understanding of such complexities and inform on the approaches that can be adapted in a similar access driven education program in Tanzania.

DE

In diesem Artikel werden die lokalen Herausforderungen vorgestellt, die den Besuch von Schulen in Tansania trotz der Einführung einer zugangsorientierten Bildungspolitik mit gebührenfreiem Unterricht immer wieder beeinträchtigt haben. Insbesondere werden der saisonale Wanderfeldbau und Initiationsriten als lokale Herausforderungen identifiziert und beschrieben, die die Bereitstellung von gebührenfreiem Unterricht in zwei kommunalen Schulen im Süden Tansanias beeinträchtigen. Es wird argumentiert, dass es zwar wichtig ist, die Politik und die Strategien auf nationaler Ebene zu fördern, dass es aber ebenso wichtig ist, die unterschiedlichen sozioökonomischen Kontexte und die besonderen Herausforderungen, mit denen die Gemeinden konfrontiert sind, genau zu kennen. Daher ist eine maßgeschneiderte Behandlung derselben erforderlich. Es wird vorgeschlagen,

dass qualitative Untersuchungen durchgeführt werden sollten, um ein Verständnis für solche komplexen Zusammenhänge zu gewinnen und über die Ansätze zu informieren, die in einem ähnlichen zugangsorientierten Bildungsprogramm in Tansania angewendet werden können.

PT

Este artigo apresenta os desafios locais que têm dificultado de forma persistente o acesso das crianças à escolaridade, apesar da implementação de uma política de educação gratuita orientada para o acesso na Tanzânia. Especificamente, o artigo identifica e descreve o cultivo sazonal itinerante e os ritos de iniciação como os desafios locais que afectam a oferta de ensino gratuito em duas escolas comunais no sul da Tanzânia. O artigo argumenta que, embora seja importante promover políticas e estratégias a nível nacional, é igualmente importante ter um conhecimento profundo da natureza diversa dos contextos socioeconómicos e dos desafios únicos que as comunidades enfrentam. Isto exige um tratamento personalizado das mesmas. Sugere que se efectue investigações qualitativas para compreender essas complexidades e informar sobre as abordagens que podem ser adaptadas num programa semelhante de educação orientada para o acesso na Tanzânia.

JA

本稿では、就学推進をめざす教育政策として教育無償化が実施されたにもかかわらず、子どもたちの学校へのアクセスがいまだ困難でありつづけているタンザニアの課題を紹介する。とくに、タンザニア南部の二つの公立学校を例に、季節ごとの農耕と通過儀礼のため、教育無償化政策には地域ごとに異なる困難があったことを指摘する。本稿では、国政レベルでの政策や戦略の展開が重要であるいっぽうで、共同体がおかれた社会経済的な文脈や、共同体が直面する独自の課題がもつ多様な性格をしっかりと把握することも同様に重要だという点を論じる。そのため、対象にかなった対応が必要になる。これらの複雑さを理解するために、そしてタンザニアにおいてアクセスを高める類似の教育プログラムで応用しうるアプローチについて情報提供するために、質的研究が実践されるべきであるという示唆を述べる。

Local barriers to access in the provision of quality education

It is important to mention the influence of both colonial Germany and British education systems on the Tanzanian education system. When the Tanzanian territory became a German protectorate, missionary schools received support from the German administration and were able to expand across the territory. German educational policy had an emphasis on vocational education and practical work for African students and favored the development of technical schools and vocational training for the wider population, rather than a purely academic education, which was restricted to a limited few (Komba & Temu 1996; Zanolli 1971). The educational system under the British administration was characterized by a policy of racial segregation, leading to inequalities between schools for black Africans and European or Indian schools, particularly in terms of funding. The British administration approached colonial education with the intent to inculcate Western values and especially economic principles in an attempt to make Tanganyika more appropriate for the British economic system and promote economic success. This was done through an adapted version of the British educational system designed to retain so-called traditional values within the indigenous population that were deemed useful by the colonists (Buchert 1994).

Since the independence in 1961, the educational system in Tanzania has passed through different transitions according to the political, economic and social changes that have been happening. Tanzania is one of the countries in East Africa, which have consistently waged efforts to provide access to education. Free education policy comes as one of bold historic steps toward achieving access to education services in the country. The first step came as the post-independence move in 1961-1967 that aimed at democratising education provision by abolishing the colonial system and thereby removing racial segregation and different forms of inequalities. Between 1967 and the 1990s education reforms were geared toward building a socialist state. Nyerere announced Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) as a philosophy to guide educational practices in the country. He regarded ESR as an appropriate and rational educational alternative for Tanzania and also many Third World countries (Nyerere 1967). Education acquired special impetus in preparing socialist thinking and values among school graduates under the hegemony of access-driven Universal Primary Education (UPE), and its success made Tanzania one of the countries with a high literacy rate in Africa (Mushi 2009). The third reforms from the 1990s to 2014 witnessed the transition from socialist to free market-oriented policies that came as the condition of IMF and World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) as part of Economic Recovery

Programs (URT 1995). Liberalisation of education services increased actors in the provision of education services at different levels (URT 2014, 1995). Tanzania Development Vision 2025 intends to equip people with knowledge, skills, and foster attitudes of improving productivity and competitiveness. The vision envisages equipping people with higher and better levels of knowledge, skills and competences who can respond and adjust well to the challenges and opportunities of the world of work. The education policies shifted to focus on the demands of globalisation and the needs of modern society (URT 1999; URT 2000).

The education system in Tanzania is structured along the following pattern: 2-7-4-2-3+ implying 2 years of pre-primary education, 7 years of primary education, 4 years of junior secondary education, 2 years of senior secondary education and at least 3 years of tertiary education. The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) has the legal mandate for policy formulation, coordination, monitoring, setting standards, quality assurance, and quality control of the whole education system. It is also responsible for the supervision of higher education, teacher training, and management of the teaching workforce, curriculum development, examination management, and school inspectorate. The ministry, through its teachers' training colleges, is responsible for training, recruiting, and deploying teachers in public schools across the country. Local government authorities are responsible for the management and delivery of primary and secondary education services within their areas of jurisdiction. They oversee the work of the local authorities which are responsible for the day-to-day operations of primary and secondary schools (URT 1995; Woods 2007).

On the 27th of November 2015, as part of its industrialisation and development goals, the Tanzanian government issued Circular 5, which provides free basic education from primary up to lower secondary school level. Henceforth, Tanzanians would enjoy eleven years of free schooling including 2 years of compulsory pre-primary education. As a growing economy, Tanzania realises that accessible quality of education is one that provides all students with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being (Mashala 2019; Muindi 2011).

The abovementioned access-driven efforts have from time to time been reinvigorated by the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All conducted in Thailand. Whereby universal basic education achievements were named as the top priority by the development community – this was reaffirmed in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (Inter-agency

Commission 1990). The conferences pronounced all participating nations to achieve quality education for all children (Mashala 2019; Mushi 2009).

In Tanzania, the larger proportions of people are rural farmers who engage in small scale domestic and commercial agrarian activities. Prior to the introduction of the fee free education policy, some parents and guardians struggled to send their children to school, causing many children to fail to get basic and secondary education. As the result, many students dropped out of school because parents and guardians were unable to pay costs like examination fees, school contributions and tuition fees (Mashala 2019). Thus, the introduction of fee free education policy in 2015 was considered an effective way to support the Government to achieve its objective of ensuring that all children of school-age have access to and attend school and learn (Mbawala 2017). A study conducted in two rural secondary day schools in 2019 in Southern Tanzania revealed a typical local challenge that has continued to hinder access to schooling despite government's policy and initiatives to provide fee free education.

1 Seasonal shifting cultivation

In these communities, a majority of households traditionally engage in shifting farming practice. During the rainy season, family members leave their homes and shift to the farm sites (far away) to cultivate, plant seeds (maize, rice, beans), weed the crops and return to the community after harvest. The duration of stay in the farms varies from 3 to 4 months, and although some school-age children accompany their parents/guardians, some children of school-age do not move to the farm site and instead remain at home, and are, to a large extent, unsupervised. During parents' absence, children lack parental guidance and monitoring of their progress in school. Head teachers and school board leaders singled out this practice as one of the challenges that affects students' schooling by perpetuating dropout.

"Presence of this secondary school in this community has improved transition of pupils from primary school to secondary school in this ward. However, a majority of the students hardly join and finish their secondary school circle because of parents shifting to farms. Many families shift to farm sites and leave (their children) students without proper care, some do move away with their children during the rainy season. It has been very difficult to get parents to bring their children to camps" (Interview held with a headmaster of a school, 2019).

As a remedy to the challenge, school boards in collaboration with the school management have opted to use available vacant classes to create "students' dormitories" to enable students from such families and others from distant

places to continue to attend school during this season. Parents are to donate 160 kilograms of maize, 60 kilograms of beans and 20,000.00 T.Shillings for milling of maize annually. However, the initiative seems to hit a snag as many parents in the community have consistently failed to facilitate the initiative.

2 Rites of initiation

The community still succumbs to the traditional rite of initiation that exposes many children to early sexual practices that lead to increasing cases of teens' pregnancies and forced marriages. Indeed, girls exhibit larger number of dropouts. Parents and the community at large have indeed been reluctant in supporting the local school strategies to keep children in schools. For example, out of 170 parents quite often less than 50 parents attended school meetings, even after they had been invited well-in-advance.

The provision of fee free education was envisaged to remediate financial barriers that hindered many children from disadvantaged families from accessing basic and secondary education. Yet, the presented cases in the communities appear to halt the efforts to that effect. These findings appear to suggest that the current efforts to address problems of access to basic education leave a lot to be desired in Tanzanian rural settings. Arguably, a clear understanding of social-economic contexts in which schools operate is vital to this end. In the context of the schools, qualitative research is needed to generate knowledge of how the existing cultural practices "social-economic norms" can inform access-driven interventions to bring about their sustainability. This understanding is also important to shed light on how teaching and learning in similar schools can be programmed in favour of the existing economic and production activities.

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