

Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education in Selected Secondary Schools in Tanzania

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Abstract:

This study investigated the extent of parents' involvement in their children's education in various secondary schools from Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera Regions in Tanzania. A sample of 168 respondents was purposively randomly selected including parents, secondary school teachers, and students. A case study design was used to collect data from the respondents using questionnaires and interviews. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to tape respondents' subjective views and simple percentages were calculated from the frequent responses for descriptive purposes. The SPSS version 22.0 was used for data analysis of simple for descriptive statistics and content analysis for qualitative data. The study indicated that there was little parental engagement on their children's education. The study recommends for an establishment of different platforms which would encourage parental engagement in school programs to support the academic activities of their children in secondary schools in Tanzania.

Keywords: Parental involvement, secondary school, student, teacher.

1. Introduction

Engagement of families or parents in the education of their children, at home and at school, is increasingly considered an important means to support better learning outcomes for the children. When schools and families work together, children have higher achievement rate, they tend to have early social competence and stay longer in schools while their dropout rate tends to decline and their referrals to the principal's office are also likely to decrease (Cotton and Wikelund, 1989; Desimone, 1999; Hill and Taylor, 2004, 2009). Parents involvement also increases social capital

or networks which are designed to leverage resources. As social networks increase, students would be able to access additional support or resources, including tutoring, enrichment opportunities, or access to curriculum extensions beyond the school, in order to achieve academic success (Hill and Taylor, 2004).

There is no single agreed definition of the term parental involvement. Epstein (1990) define parental involvement as a reasonable interaction between teachers and parents concerning the educational development of children while the definition by Vandergrift and Greene (1992) and La Bahn (1995) refers to the combination of commitment and active participation. Subsequently, Hill and Taylor (2004) describe parents' involvement in education as parents' interaction with and participation in school and their children to promote academic success. Such transactions tend to extend beyond engagements with the school, to home life expectations and values for education that are communicated directly and indirectly to children.

In application, parental involvement is determined to comprehend various parental behaviours and practices, which covers parental expectation for their children's academic achievement and transfer of such expectation for their children (Bloom 1984). The term parental involvement is often considered as communication between parents and children on the issues that are related to their academic learning (Christenson et al. 1992) and is usually understood as parents' participation in their children's schooling with the determination of stimulating their educational and social achievement (Fishel & Ramirez 2005).

One term which is closely related to parental involvement is parental participation. Even though these terms are used interchangeably, there is a slight difference between them. Smith et al. (2007) describe both terms as: parental involvement refers to participation of parents at both school and home in the background and schooling of their own children while involvement of parents is often divided into two forms, institutionalized and non-institutionalized. The former refers to parents' involvement in an institution such as in the parent council or school governance. The non-institutional involvement entails partaking in which parents help teachers through instructional activities which include escorting children on school trips, cleaning toys or assisting in the school library (Karsten et al., 2006). In short, the term parental involvement includes some level of involvement of parents in their children's education in both school and outside of school, while parental participation is restricted to only their support within the school environment.

The extent of parents' involvement in their children's education has been recognized to have some form of significance and carries implication for the children's academic performance as well as co-curricular activities. Several social cognitive theorists and scholars posit that involvement augments young persons' absorptive capacity of educational messages and mode of socially acknowledged lifestyles (Sabas and Mhonya, 2015; Mafa and Esther, 2013). These studies found that children whose parents are actively engaged in their academic matters tend to have good academic performance compared to children whose parents are not engaging. However, it is important to note that more involvement does not necessarily guarantee superior results, given other influencing variables such as genealogical factors and environmental variability.

The government of Tanzania, through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, has been striving to democratize educational access to the age-going populations in all regions of the country, with the intent to enhance sustainable social and economic development. In this spirit, the project to establish ward public secondary schools was embarked on (SEDP, 2004-2009), with the ultimate goal to ensure all secondary school-age going children get access to secondary education. With this initiative, currently there is a great number of secondary schools in the country, majority being publicly owned.

It has been reported that public secondary schools and some of the private schools in the country, including those in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera, perform poorly in national examinations. Among the reasons cited include lack of discipline, drug use, misbehaviour among students and low parental involvement in their children's schooling with some parents are not supportive of their children's school needs and tend to assume that teachers or the government would take care of everything related to their children's schooling. While it is not clear as to whether these allegations are substantiated, the fact is that poor academic performance from public secondary schools in Tanzania is apparent.

Studies on parental involvement on their children's schooling were mostly concentrated on specific topics such as the contribution of parental involvement to the academic performance of children in schools, factors which hinder involvement of parents in children's education, and impact of parental involvement in children's discipline in schools (Leocardia et al., 2017; Zakiyu & Abdullah, 2015; Nhlabati, 2015; Sabas and Mhonya, 2015; Mafa and Esther, 2013). For example, Zakiyu and Abdullah (2015) examined the relationship between parental involvement

and learning achievement in national religious secondary schools in Malaysia. The study by Nhlabati (2015) focused on the impact of parents' involvement on effective secondary school governance in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa while Leocardia et al. (2017) investigated the influence of parental involvement in school activities on students' academic performance in community secondary schools (CSS) in Kibondo District, Tanzania.

In Tanzania's context, numerous studies have been conducted on education, but little concentration was given to the subject of parental involvement in schooling. This was indeed raised by Leocardia et al. (2017) that research on parental involvement is still inadequate to show its importance in guaranteeing a child's educational accomplishment. One such study by Uwezo (2013) indicated that parental involvement in Tanzania is not active enough which could be due to lack of adequate and proper sensitization from school management and relevant authorities to parents on the importance of their participation. Based on this premise, this study argues that parental involvement should not be focusing on academic performance only, but rather it should take a holistic approach to students' performance which encompasses academic, moral, spiritual, ideological, and disciplinary aspect. Hence this study intends to investigate parental involvement in their children's education in selected secondary schools in Tanzania.

Methods

This study was designed using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Both questionnaires and interviews were used as data collection methods in this study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from teachers and students while interviews were conducted for the parents. The study was conducted in three regions which are Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera, where one district from each region was selected for the study. These districts are Temeke Municipal Council (Dar es Salaam), Morogoro Municipal Council (Morogoro), and Bukoba District Council (Kagera). The study involved nine schools (three schools from each district/municipality) with eight public secondary schools, and one private secondary school.

The three schools from Morogoro municipality which were involved in this study were Jabal Hira, Kilakala and Mgulasi secondary schools. The three schools from Temeke municipality were Mlela, Toangoma, and Changanyikeni while schools from Bukoba municipality are Maruku,

Kabale and Kabugaro secondary schools. After being distributed, the returned questionnaires were inspected to determine their level of acceptability. They were edited, where necessary, classified, and coded to allow easy analysis and interpretation. Descriptive data on background variables were tabulated and analyzed using frequencies and percentages. A statistical package, SPSS version 22, was used to process the data from the two rating scales.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Parental involvement in their Children’s Academic Activities

As noted, parental involvement has essential influence in school-based activities of their children. The data revealed that six students (11.1%) from Morogoro municipality, 14 students (25.9%) from Temeke municipality and eight students (14.8%) from Bukoba Municipality agreed that their parents/guardians made frequent follow-ups on their school academic progress, while nine 90 students (16.7%) from Morogoro municipality, three students (5.6%) from Temeke municipality and six students (11.1%) from Bukoba district disagreed. Those who neither agreed nor disagreed consist of three students (5.6%) from Morogoro municipality, one student (1.9%) from Temeke municipality and four students (7.4%) from Bukoba (Figure 1).

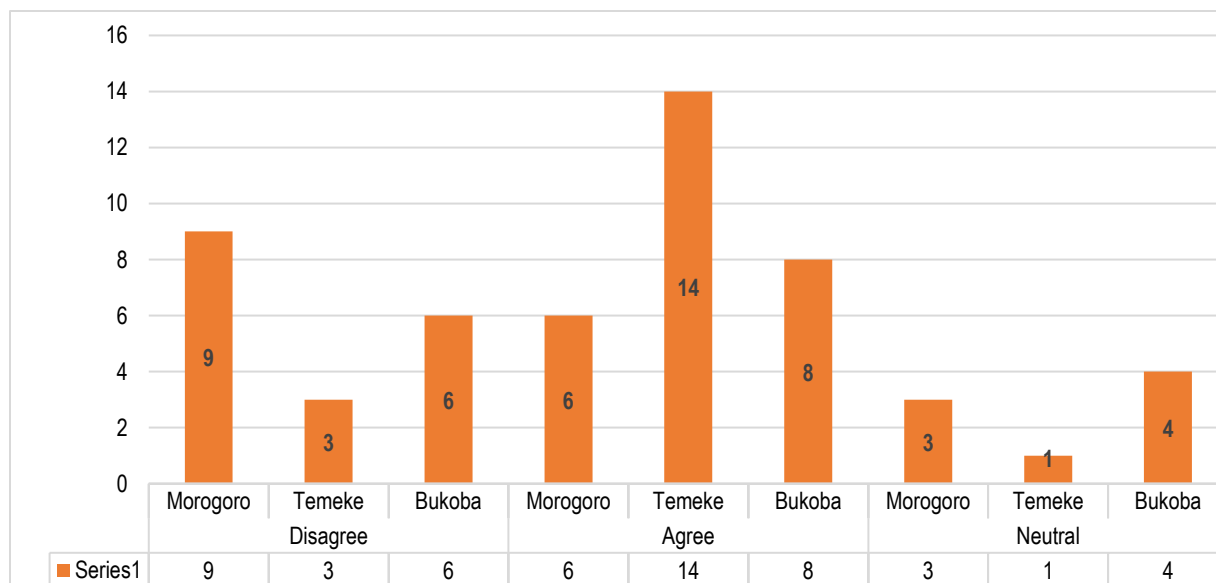


Figure 1: Parents made frequent follow ups on child’s school academic progress

However, 13 students (24.1%) from Morogoro municipality, 14 students (25.9%) from Temeke municipality and 13 students (24.1%) disagreed that their parents provide them essential scholastic materials such as uniforms, note-books, pens and pocket money, while only five students (9.3%) from Morogoro municipality, three students (5.6%) from Temeke municipality and four students (7.4%) from Bukoba municipality agreed (Figure 2).

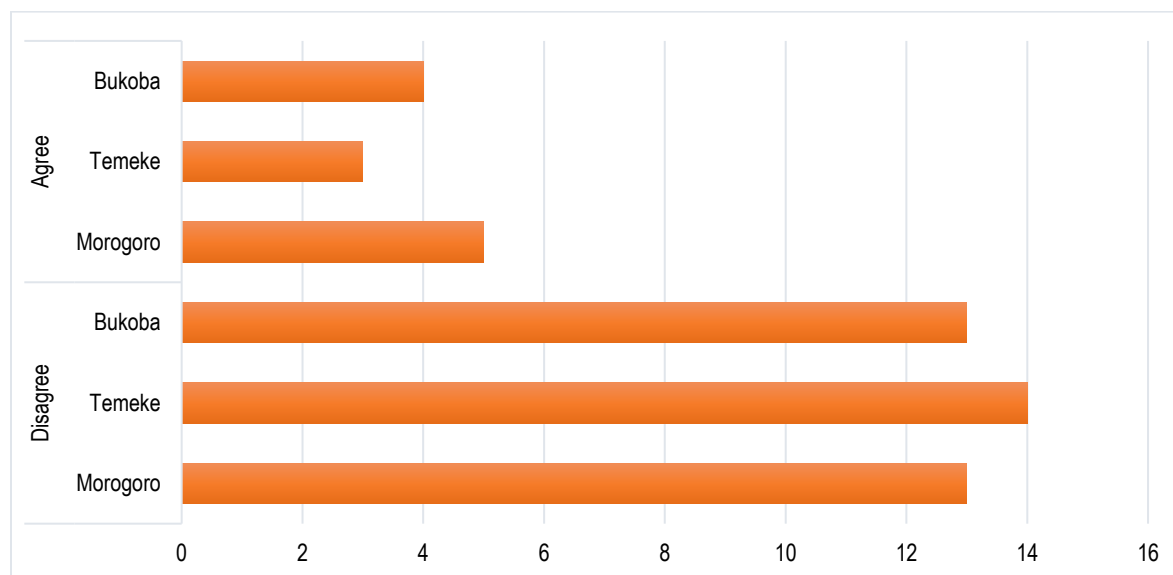


Figure 2: Parents provide them essential scholastic materials

Furthermore, 12 students (22.2%) from Morogoro municipality, 13 students (24.1%) from Temeke municipality and 12 students (22.2%) from Bukoba municipality agreed that their parents/guardians frequently made follow ups on their school attendance, while four students (7.4%) from Morogoro municipality, four students (7.4%) from Temeke municipality and five students (9.2%) from Bukoba municipality disagreed and two students (3.7%) from Morogoro municipality and one student (1.9%) from Temeke municipality neither agreed nor disagreed (Figure 3).

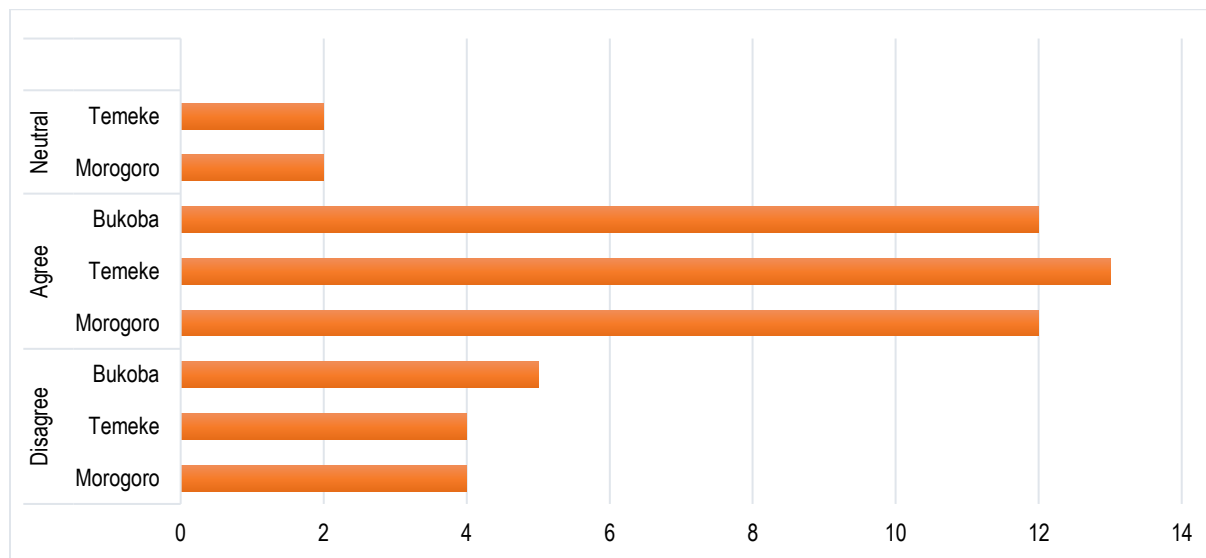


Figure 3: Parents frequently made follow ups on their school attendance

Table 1 summarizes teacher's responses on the extent of parental involvement to children's education. From the data, 13% of the teachers from Morogoro municipality, 18% of teachers from Temeke municipality and 13% of teachers from Bukoba district responded positively that parents send their children to school ready to learn and 3.7% of teachers from Morogoro municipality, 6.6% of teachers from Temeke municipality and 7.4% of teachers from Bukoba municipality indicated that parents know what their children are expected to learn each year.

In addition, 25.9% of teachers from Morogoro municipality, 29.6% of teachers from Temeke municipality and 25.9% of teachers from Bukoba municipality disagreed that parents attend meetings regularly at school while only 11.1% of teachers in all three regions agreed, as shown in Figure 4. This clearly shows that few parents attend meetings at school, signifying low participation in decision making and school management.

Table 1: Teachers' responses on the extent of parent's involvement in secondary schools

S/N	Statement	Responses																					
		Strongly Disagree 1				Disagree 2				Neutral 3				Agree 4				Strongly Agree 5				TOTAL	
		M	T	B	%	M	T	B	%	M	T	B	%	M	T	B	%	M	T	B	%		
1.	Parents send their children to school ready to learn	1	2	1	7.4	7	1	6	26	3	5	4	22.2	7	6	6	35.1	0	4	1	9.3	54	
2.	Parents know what children are expected to learn each year	3	3	1	13	10	11	12	61.1	3	1	1	9.2	2	3	3	14.8	0	0	1	1.9	54	
3.	Parents attend meetings at school when required to do so	2	3	2	12.9	12	13	12	68.5	2	1	0	5.6	2	1	3	11.1	0	0	0	0	54	
4.	Parents encourage students to set academic performance goals at the beginning of each term	4	3	5	22.2	4	5	6	27.8	3	6	2	20.4	4	3	3	18.5	3	1	2	11.1	54	
5.	Parents visit classrooms or school and serve as volunteer	4	5	4	24	6	7	8	38	2	1	2	9.3	4	3	3	18	2	2	2	11	54	
6.	Parents/guardians always provide students with materials necessary at school.	2	3	4	16.7	6	5	5	29.6	4	2	0	11.1	4	5	7	29.6	2	3	2	13	54	

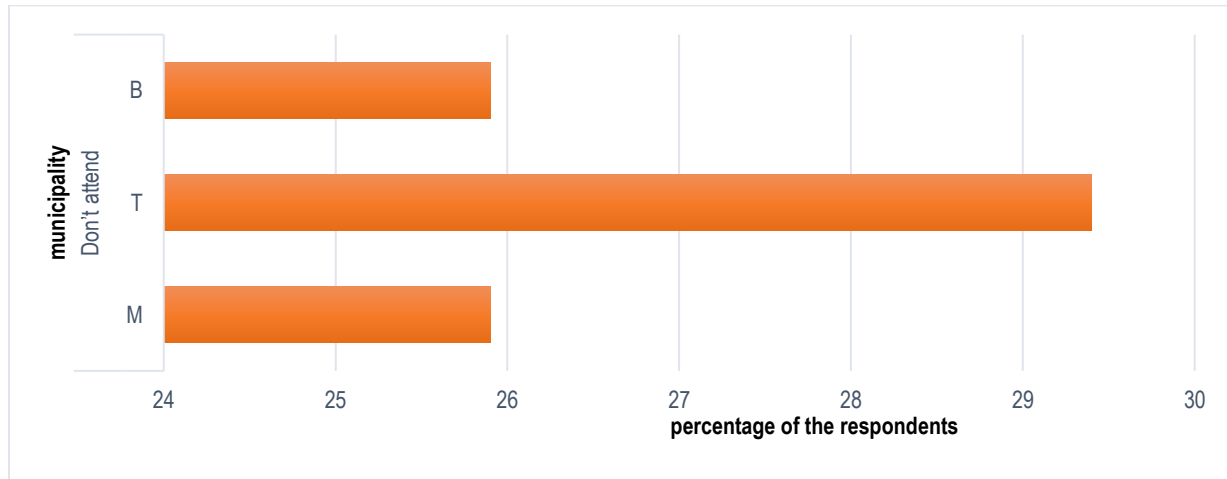


Figure 4: Disagree that parents attend meetings regularly at school

Furthermore, 14.8% of teachers from Morogoro municipality, 14.8% of teachers from Temeke municipality and 20.4% of teachers from Bukoba municipality disagreed that parents of students studying in secondary schools encourage their children to set academic performance goals at the beginning of each term, while only 13% of teachers from Morogoro municipality, 7.4% of teachers from Temeke municipality and 9.2% of teachers from Bukoba municipality agreed. This shows that majority of parents never plan anything for their children during the course and after completing secondary education something which facilitate poor performance in academics for many students in secondary schools.

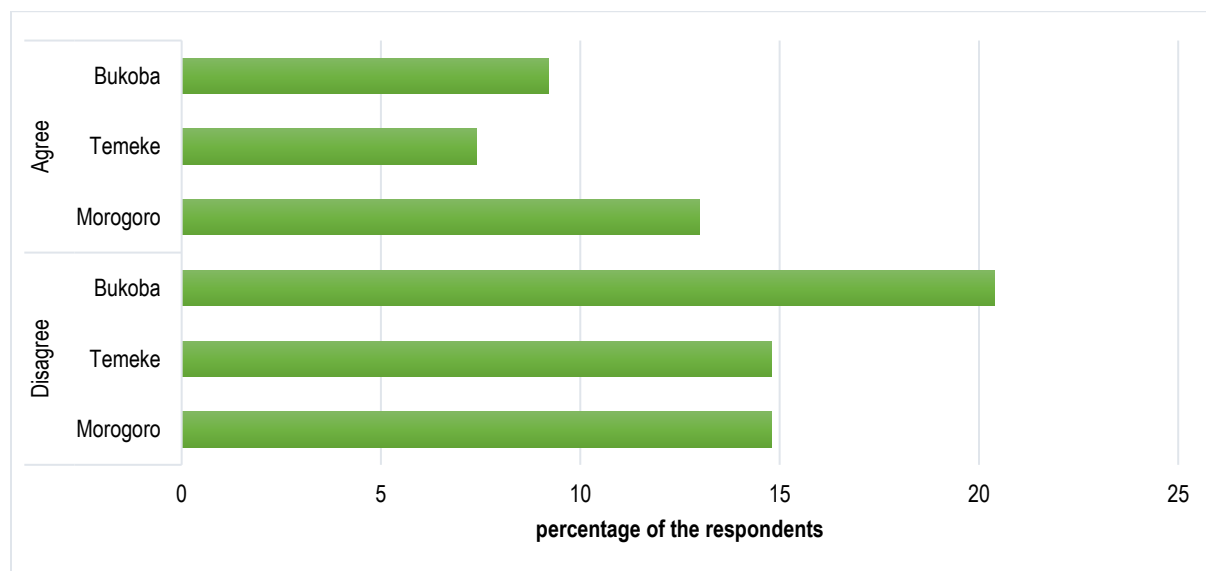


Figure 5: Teachers disagreed that parents of students studying in secondary schools encourage their children to set academic performance goals at the beginning of each term

Apart from that, parents of students registered in the selected secondary schools in all three regions were interviewed. When parents were asked about their involvement in the schooling of their children's, parents seem to differ in their responses as presented in Table 2. 6.6% of parents from Morogoro municipality, 15% of parents from Temeke municipality and 6.6% of parents from Bukoba municipality agreed that they are frequently making follow up on their children's school academic progress while 11.7% of parents from Morogoro municipality, 15% of parents from Temeke municipality and 13.3% of parents from Bukoba municipality disagreed. 10% of parents from Morogoro municipality, 20% of parents from Temeke municipality and 10% of parents from Bukoba municipality agreed that they participate in various school programs meant for parents and pupils while 18.3% of parents from Morogoro municipality, 10% of parents from Temeke municipality and 16.7% of parents from Bukoba municipality disagreed. Also 8.3% of parents from Morogoro municipality, 20% of parents from Temeke municipality and 10% of parents from Bukoba municipality agreed that they participate in parents meetings and other decision making opportunities at school.

Table 2: Parents' responses on their involvement in the schooling of their children

S/N	Statement	Responses																				
		Strongly Disagree 1				Disagree 2				Neutral 3				Agree 4				Strongly Agree 5				TOTAL
		M	T	B	%	M	T	B	%	M	T	B	%	M	T	B	%	M	T	B	%	
1	I frequently make follow up on my child's school academic progress.	3	4	4	18.3	4	5	4	21.7	9	2	8	31.7	3	9	3	25	1	0	1	3.3	60
9	I participate in various school programs meant for parents and pupils.	2	2	3	11.7	9	4	7	33.3	3	2	4	15	4	10	3	28.3	2	2	3	11.7	60
16	I participate in parents meetings and other decision making opportunities at school	2	2	4	13.3	10	4	7	35	3	2	3	13.3	3	11	4	30	2	1	2	8.3	60

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent of parental involvement in their children's education in various secondary schools in Tanzania. It was found that the following factors contribute to the hindrance of parental involvement in the schooling of their children in secondary schools in Tanzania, particularly in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera regions. First and foremost, there is a lack of knowledge about how parents could get involved. It was found that many parents do not have skills on how to get involved in students' academic activities. Parents are not aware that they had some academic roles to play with their children at home as well as while at school. Also there is lack of time and resources such as money among parents; many parents (from Morogoro and Kagera) are working on farms for their daily income, and they are not ready to waste time and money for school. These daily commitments and responsibilities are making it difficult for parents to cope with students' academic activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers would like to thank NICE Tanzania for its valuable material and technical assistance in the accomplishment of this work. This study would have not been possible without their support.

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