

Improving Parents' and Community Participation in School Programs in Da es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera Regions of Tanzania – A proposal for Interventions

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Abstract:

The importance of parental involvement in the successful performance of children in schools is well recognized. A research was conducted by the authors in 2019 which examined parental involvement in their children's education in selected secondary schools in Da es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera Regions of Tanzania. The findings indicated that parental engagement in their children's educational activities was low and suggested that interventions be taken to encourage parents to be more involved in school academic programs. This paper outlines a proposal for follow-up interventions based on the research carried out in 2019.

Keywords: parental involvement, school management, community-school partnerships, parent-school partnerships, student achievement, student behaviour.

Given that parents and guardians are the first and permanent teachers to their children, this project proposal is designed to create awareness for the parents and community members, to enhance their participation in their children's school programs. The proposal is based on the outcome of a research carried out by the authors in 2019 which examined parental involvement in their children's education in selected secondary schools in Da es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera Regions of Tanzania.

Parents' participation in school activities has been shown to have a significant impact in reducing negative behaviours among students which include truancy, disciplinary cases, drug use and occasional fights, use of vulgar language, and other misbehaviour in and outside the school which in turn led to an improvement in their academic performance. Hence, the proposed project will use various platforms to ensure that parents engage in the education of their children with community support to help with the development of schools, creating strong partnerships between parents and teachers, collaborations between parents, teachers and students, as well as partnerships between the community and school, and between school and other stakeholders. The project will involve different stakeholders which include parents, students, teachers, local government authorities, religious leaders, members of the community, educational quality assurance officers, education officers, school administrators, and officers from the social welfare department.

The project will be implemented in three districts, namely, Temeke Municipality in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro Municipality in Morogoro and Bukoba District Council in Kagera. These districts were chosen because there were already other projects being implemented by various organizations such as the Department for International Development (DFID), Voluntary Service Overseas/VSO Tanzania and Room to Read which support education, but since these were without parents' involvement they are not considered important in academic achievements of their children.

Background

Engagement of families or parents in the education of their children both at home and in schools is increasingly considered as an important means to support better learning outcome for children (Emmanuel et al., 2016; Li, 2012). When schools and families work together, children have higher achievement as they tend to have early social competence, they stay longer in schools while their dropout rate tends to decline and their referrals to the principal's office for bad behaviours are also likely to decrease (Cotton and Wikelund, 1989; Desimone, 1999; Grolnick et al., 2009; Hill and Taylor, 2004; Hill and Tyson, 2009; Rogers et al., 2009). Similarly, parents'

involvement increases social capital or networks which are designed to leverage resources (Woolley et al., 2009). As social networks increase, students have access to additional support or resources, such as tutoring, enrichment opportunities, or access to curriculum extensions beyond the school, to achieve academic success (Hill and Taylor, 2004; Woolley et al., 2009).

It has been reported that both public and private secondary schools in Tanzania perform poorly in national examinations. Some of the reasons cited include lack of discipline, drug use and occasional fights, as well as the use of vulgar language on the way to and from the school. Furthermore, poor academic performance and students' misbehaviour is partly attributed to low parents' involvement in their children's schooling. Research has shown that some parents are not supportive enough to cater for their children's school needs, including buying scholastic materials and other related requirements. The majority of parents, once they enrol their children; tend to assume that teachers or the government would take care of everything related to their children's schooling.

According to a study conducted in the Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera regions in Tanzania, the benefits of parents' involvement in their children's education are very clear. This is consistent with other research that successful parent involvement improves not only students' behaviour and attendance but also positively affects students' achievement. Yet many schools continue to struggle with defining and measuring meaningful parental involvement, and equally as many schools were unsuccessful in their efforts. It is indeed challenging for some teachers and school administrators to engage parents in their children's education as parents' participation in meetings to discuss issues related to the education of their children or school development initiatives was very low. This has led to a decline in teachers' motivation which in turn led them to just carry on with their responsibilities in implementing the curriculum regardless of whether the students are getting good academic grades or otherwise.

In some cases, school administrators do not engage parents because they do not think that parents can make a difference. Teachers have a perception that parents do not want to be involved, and families do not know how to be involved while parents are hesitant to become involved in school either because they just do not have time as they are busy with their activities to earn income for the families or they think that, professionally they are not teachers and therefore they have nothing to contribute in supporting the education of their children. Hence, there is little or no communication between teachers and parents in as far as academic matters of their children are concerned. Despite these communication barriers, both schools and parents want the relationship to improve for the benefit of the students. Based on this premise, the proposed project examines the challenges associated with parental involvement in their children's education and offer some possible solutions.

The main focus of the project is to establish sustainable parental involvement practices to promote and strengthen cooperation between teachers, administrators, community members, and other stakeholders to ensure secondary school students are positively supported in their academic journey. In the long term, students will become successful and responsible citizens towards local and national sustainable development. The direct beneficiaries of the project shall be parents, students, teachers and school administrators from selected schools in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera regions. The project shall use its slogan that *'Learning Starts at Home'* to align and prepare the mindset of parents to be ready to support their children academically in both environments, home and school.

Problem Statement

Based on earlier research conducted in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera regions, parental involvement in their children's education is very poor. While numerous studies have raised this concern, there has not been any project designed to come out with solutions to address this challenge. Many projects have been implemented by national and international humanitarian and

development organizations such as the Department for International Development (DFID), Voluntary Service Overseas/ VSO Tanzania and Room to Read; with the focus to support education, by empowering teachers, school administrators, teaching and learning resources, as well as school infrastructure; however, little or no effort was directed at providing parents with knowledge and skills to encourage them to be engaged in their children's education. As a result, schools that are supported by these projects are still not achieving satisfactory academic results in the national examinations as expected.

The objective of the project

The main objective of the project is to strengthen the cooperation between parents and the school community through the active participation of parents in their children's educational activities to support and enhance their learning. Specifically, the project aims to:

- i. Encourage parents and community members from selected secondary schools to participate in the education of their children through capacity building and strengthening home-school partnerships.
- ii. Ensure school management teams understand their roles in enhancing parents' involvement in their children's education by empowering teachers from selected secondary schools to positively facilitate the academic achievements of students.
- iii. Assist students from selected secondary schools to understand their rights and responsibilities at home and school and motivate cooperation with parents, fellow students, teachers and school administration in all academic-related matters, sports and games to achieve their full potential.

Significance of the Project

The project addresses three main beneficiaries namely parents, teachers and school administrators, all aimed at improving students' learning and academic life. Each group will be empowered in one way or another through the following initiatives:

- i. Parents need to be supported with training and workshops to understand their influence and responsibilities to the academic development of their children through their cooperation with teachers and school administrators to ensure their children are safe at school and home. As parents, it is their responsibility to provide a conducive environment, moral and material support for their children to learn from home.
- ii. Teachers and school administrators should be equipped with skills on how they can engage parents in the learning of students in respective schools. They need to be empowered in some curricula aspects to enhance their performance in teaching and leading the school, avoid corporal punishments and use different reinforcement strategies to facilitate the learning.
- iii. Students will be empowered to understand their rights and responsibilities both at home and in school. They will be encouraged to establish subject clubs, involve in sports and games, conduct debates, be open to their parents and teachers, address their challenges such as reproductive health and develop themselves as responsible individuals.

Project Outputs

The project will have four outputs as follows:-

- i. Improved parents' involvement in school activities.
- ii. Improved teachers' classroom interactions and support.
- iii. Empowered school leadership and management.
- iv. Enhanced students' participation in their education and development.

Summary of Project Outputs, Activities, and Participants

S/N	Output	Activities and number of Participants
1	Improved parents' involvement in school activities	<p>1.1. Conduct 3-days training to 1,680 parents on improving communication between school and home, and establishing good relationships.</p> <p>1.2. Conduct two annual meetings with 1,680 parents to enable parents and teachers to discuss children's work, progress, and problems.</p> <p>1.3. Establish 24 parents' committees for purposes of follow-ups on parents' involvement in school programs and students' academic progress.</p> <p>1.4. Conduct 5-days training to 168 parent committee members on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Parenting techniques associated with learning, ii. Parents' responsibilities to their children, iii. How to support students academically (class works, homework), iv. Psychosocial training especially on how to prepare students before, during and after examinations, and v. How to provide a conducive learning environment at home. <p>1.5. Conduct quarterly forums in schools that will involve 1,680 parents, 8,400 students and 384 teachers to discuss the challenges in school and the academic improvement strategies,</p> <p>1.6. Facilitate a one-day field visit to three leaders from local government authorities (Ward Executive Officer, Ward Education Officer, and District Education Officer) semi-annually to attend parents' meetings in schools, talk to parents, students, school management and teachers.</p>

2	Improved teachers' classroom interactions and support	<p>2.1. Conduct one-day training to 48 Mathematics teachers and 48 English teachers on how to teach challenging topics</p> <p>2.2. Facilitate two-day training to teachers' head of department on:</p> <p>(a) Strategies to increase awareness and performance, and encourage students preparation time and use of the library</p> <p>(b) Support other teachers on how to teach and manage inclusive classes</p> <p>2.3. Conduct 1-day training to club teachers on how to promote club activities which could be used to enhance learning</p> <p>2.4. Facilitate 1-day training to 48 champion teachers on how to guide and counsel students</p> <p>2.5. Conduct 4 day-training to 48 Champion teachers on how to design teaching aids using locally available materials/resources, use of ICT in teaching and learning, teach and manage large classes and empower other teachers on using Participatory Teaching Methodologies</p>
3	Empowered school leadership and management	<p>3.1. Conduct 2-day training for 24 school principals and 24 school chairpersons on how;</p> <p>(i) Parents, guardians, family members and the community can be involved in supporting the education of children and school development,</p> <p>(ii) To involve parents in decision-making processes at school,</p> <p>3.2. Conduct a 2-day training workshop for 24 school</p>

		<p>principals and 24 school chairpersons on how to use social media at school to connect with parents,</p> <p>3.3. Conduct 3-day meeting with 24 school principals, 24 Ward Education Officers, 3 District Education Officers, 12 districts Quality Assurance Officers, and 3 Regional Education Officers to discuss and develop strategies for;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Academic improvement in schools (ii) Making and implementation of school improvement plans. <p>3.4. Conduct 1-day training for 24 school principals on conflicts resolution in schools,</p> <p>3.5. Facilitate 2-day workshop for 24 school principals to support other school principals from the new 24 schools on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) How parents can be involved to support school development and empower their children academically, (ii) School leadership and management, (iii) School improvement plans
4	Enhanced students participation in their education and development	<p>4.1. Establish and strengthen five (5) subject clubs, three (3) sports and games clubs in each of the 24 schools</p> <p>4.2. Conduct 2-day training to 72 students, government leaders, and 192 students club leaders to enhance their abilities to handle peer pressure, resolve conflicts assertively, discover and develop their talents and promote greater performance</p> <p>4.3. Facilitate 72 students government leaders to attend stakeholders meetings in the district to present their</p>

		<p>challenges and seek resolutions twice a year</p> <p>4.4. Facilitate 1-day transport to deliver food to 1200 students, and 48 teachers participating in the academic and sports tour at another school within the district</p> <p>4.5. Conduct a 1-day workshop to 72 government leaders, and 192 students club leaders on health education; STDs, psychosocial skills, students’ rights and responsibilities, sexual and reproductive health</p> <p>4.6. Conduct semi-annual training to 192 students club leaders, and 72 students’ government leaders on employability skills, career choice and development, and soft skills.</p>
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Expected Outcomes

- i. By December 2023, 75% of parents from 24 secondary schools in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera Regions will be able to support their children to attend school meetings, supplying scholastic materials to students and participate in academic follow-ups.
- ii. After three years of the project, 86% of teachers and school management team from 24 secondary schools in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and Kagera Regions will be able to cooperate with parents using different platforms, give all students an equal chance of getting a quality education, and ensure students are studying and participating in other outdoor activities which promote their education and future careers
- iii. Students’ attachments to their parents and teachers will be increased to 65% by December 2022; truancy will decrease to 7%, and academic performance will reach 55% by December 2023.

Scope of Work

The project will cover three (3) regions but will involve only one district in each region. In each district, 8 ward public secondary schools will be selected giving a total number of 24 schools. The expected number of participants from each selected school is made up of 15 teachers, 1 school principal, 1 school chairperson, 300 students from each school, and 70 parents who will support other parents involved in advocacy work. Parents will sometimes be represented in all meetings, workshops, and training by 7 appointed school committee members; and teachers will sometimes be represented by appointed Champion Teachers. The project will be managed by the Project Director, supported by a Project Coordinator, a Project Manager, a Human Resource Officer and a Treasurer who will be working in all 3 regions. The three leaders will be supported by the team indicated in the following chart:

Title	Dar es Salaam	Morogoro	Kagera
Project officer	1	1	1
Parents and community engagement officer	1	1	1
Teaching facilitator	1	1	1
Students support officer	1	1	1

Note: The project is planned to be implemented for 3 years in partnership between three (3) key project personnel and the NAMA Foundation. The three (3) personnel will provide technical skills, while the NAMA Foundation will provide financial assistance and materials/resources needed in the implementation of the project activities.

Project Schedule

Phase	Activity	Duration
Phase One	• Identification of schools in each of the three regions	3 months
	• Project implementation	9 months
Phase Two	Project implementation	12 months
Phase Three	Project sustainability and closure	12 months

Budget

	Description of Work	Time frame	Amount
Phase One	First-year of the project	Jan – Dec 2021	TSH 308,155,000/=
Phase Two	Second-year of the project	Jan – Dec 2022	TSH 314,315,000/=
Phase Three	Third-year of the project	Jan – Dec 2023	TSH 316,743,000/=
	Total		TSH 940,038,000

Monitoring and Evaluation

Project key personnel will employ an outcome-based approach for evaluating the impact and challenges of the programme as well as the participants' learning progress. Both formal and informal monitoring and evaluation methods will be employed by the project implementers. An internal official evaluation will be conducted by programme facilitators and the project management team through field observation visits. NAMA Foundation will be allowed to bring or design its monitoring system which will be applied in the accomplishment of project activities.

Program Sustainability

The project will be sustainable because local government authorities will be engaged in the project implementation and will be empowered with skills to continue running the project in the absence of project activities in Tanzania. This project will also establish functional relationships with

communities, Faith-Based Organizations, and other partners. It is hoped that members of the community will support the project activities and even become community volunteers to facilitate the implementation of the project.