

Assessment of the Factors Contributing to Differences in Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study to assess the factors contributing to differences in academic performance in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. A sample of 59 respondents were used from selected 6 secondary schools were used. Purposive sampling techniques were used in selection of secondary schools in selected area. Questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and documentary reviews were used in data collections. Findings of the study showed that, factors contributing to differences in academic performance in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality are environmental factors, learning facilities, entry qualifications of students, parental income, availability of teachers, and discipline. Basing on study findings, the study recommended that the government should employ qualified teachers with at least first degree, Government, parents and stakeholders need to cooperate to build school hostels, Government should also provide satisfactory salaries to teachers, and school management should seek to construct fences at schools in order to avoid truancy among students and also to establish lunch program at school so that students may stop practice truancy.*

Keyword: Academic Performance and Secondary Schools

1. Introduction

Secondary education occupies a pivotal role in the development of the economy and the education system itself. Experience shows that, the majority of the people in both the private and public sectors are expected to be secondary education leavers. The primary education system relies on teachers who are the product of secondary education system. Candidates of higher and tertiary education training are the products of the secondary education system. This is the essence of being pivotal or the lynch pin.

Globally, investment in education is done at three levels namely primary, secondary and tertiary. Mbelle and Katabalo (2003) clarify that secondary education mainly aims at meeting global challenges in science and technology as well as organizations of production processes and markets. Schultz (2002) states that investing in education leads to faster growth for developed and newly industrialized countries. That is the reason to why; developing countries especially in Sub - Saharan Africa are now paying attention to invest in education from primary, secondary and tertiary levels by increasing enrolment and improving education quality. Studies by Miller - Grandvaur and Yoder (2002) on secondary school's education found out that Secondary schools are an important part of the educational interventions in sub Saharan Africa.

Tanzania being one among the East African countries, immediately after gaining political independence in 1961, proclaimed ignorance, diseases; and poverty as her scourges of development. The country has experienced high expansion of public and private secondary education since early 1990's through Structural Adjustment Program (SAPs).

Since independence, the Tanzanian government has undergone different strategies to restructure and improve the access of secondary education including the Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP). The purpose of this plan was to make sure that all children from different family background have access to secondary education regardless of their gender, geographical location and disability.

For instance, while most students could not access education in 2005 and the previous years, yet from 2006 things changed, the government of the fourth regime decided to work on the numbers through ensuring that youngest people go to schools (Mukyanuzi, 2003).

The government, as one of the main education stakeholders in the country introduced ward secondary schools, whereas, every ward was supposed to establish a secondary school. This led to increasing the number of students enrolled from primary to secondary school education in Tanzania.

The drive was important, in that increment of numbers of student was noted, since about 3000 schools were built attracting students in the entire county. The schools built are noted to have been on top record of any regime in Tanzania and has gone beyond the construction of any African country. In addition, the construction of these schools was done within the national budget with half of the funding originating from the people. It was a crucial move to revamp education in Tanzania. For obvious reasons the numbers that increased could be left idle with some small portion positively being used for productive purposes such as agriculture, fishery, and vocational training (Mukyanuzi, 2003).

The contribution of these schools increased student's enrolment in secondary schools. For example, in 2012 a total

of 1, 602, 752 students were enrolled in secondary schools (Sephania, 2017). A large number of students became a challenge for the school heads of that time to accommodate them and maintain student's academic performances.

In the Morogoro Municipality, there was only one Secondary School before 1980's that was owned by a religious organization. The second secondary school was opened in 1984 and was owned by the community under NGO, called SUDET. During 1990's Seven Secondary Schools were built and opened. In 2000's mushrooming of secondary school occurred. They were constructed in the name of ward secondary schools. At the end of 2011, the number of secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality was about thirty four including thirty public secondary (ward) schools built by local communities. These are built by the efforts of local communities with both cash and in-kind contributions but are operated and managed by government and four private secondary schools. The total enrolment of students up to the end of the year 2010 was 11 128 students of which 7004 were boys, and 4124 were girls.

The URT (2018) reports that academic performance of students has been deteriorating. At national level, the trend of pass rate for Division I to III was as follows: 36.6% in 2007, 31% in 2008, 17.91% in 2009, 11.59% in 2010 and 10.05% in 2011. In the 2011 National Form Four Examinations results URT (2012) reports that the best five regions were: Kilimanjaro (16.64%), Dar es Salaam (11.97%), Mbeya (12.04%), Coast (11.92%), and Arusha (11.90%) respectively. The bottom five regions from the last were Lindi (4.41%), Mtwara (4.99%), Tanga (5.45%), Singida (6.31%), and Rukwa (6.95%). In the Rukwa region URT (2012) shows that the pass rate of the 2011 Form Four National examination results was 9.22%, 4.52% and 4.47%, for Sumbawanga Municipality, Nkasi and Sumbawanga districts respectively. The results are below the national target which as reported earlier as 70%.

Although the government is working hard to improve the performance of both private and government secondary schools, a lot of challenges interfere with these strategies. The performance of some students is still poor and this is because of different challenges including administrative challenges like dropouts, pregnancy, indiscipline and repeaters. For instance, in 2020, the number of repeaters in private schools was 1954 which is equal to 6.1% of all students in Tanzania (BEST, 2020).

Further, a study done by Gakure, et al. (2013) found that low performance in secondary schools was associated by poor teaching environment, lack of teaching and learning facilities and frequent changes of curriculum. Yet, the study conducted by UwezoTanzania (2011) confirmed that public secondary school pupils were unable to perform well in their final examinations due to inadequate learning materials, distance to and from as well as little parent's participation in learning of their children.

The Government has been taking initiatives to improve student performance in public secondary schools. These include In-Service Training (INSET) program designed in

2010, online teacher training courses initiated in 2012 and renovation of public secondary schools (URT, 2018).

The academic performance of students in secondary schools in Morogoro municipal has been deteriorating yearly. This can clearly be seen with evidence to the as revealed by the national performance trend for five consecutive years from 2017 to 2021 as follows. In 2017 out of 4, 223 students who sat for exams, 37% scored division I-III, 63% scored division IV and Zero. In 2018 out of 2, 872 students who sat for exams, 23% scored division I - III, 77% scored division IV and Zero. In 2019 out of 3, 203 students who sat for exams, 23% scored division I - III, 77% scored division IV and Zero. In 2020 out of 3, 470 students who sat for exams, 26% scored division I - III while 74% scored division IV and Zero. In 2021 out of 3841 students who sat for exams, 28% scored division I - III, 72% scored division IV - Zero. The percentages of average passes for division I to III are low compared to average passes for division IV and Zero.

The high failure rate has resulted into small number of students continuing to advanced level secondary education studies and colleges. Despite the efforts made by the government of Tanzania, and community in expanding secondary schools which extended to ward level, lowering education expenses to improve the education systems, the academic performance is still poor. The ratio of performance in secondary education has not yielded the desired objectives of 70% of secondary education candidates scoring division I to III by 2009 (URT, 2018).

The magnitude of the academic failure of students in Tanzania is gigantic as various statistics reveal (URT, 2018), and when the national examination results are released, the causes for such mass failure or under-performance are given and no attempt is made to get to the crux of the problem. In this perspective, this study intends to assess factors contributing to differences in academic performance in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality.

2. Research Methodology

This section presents the methodology that guided the study. The study used mixed research approach and a case study research design. A sample of 59 respondents were used from selected 6 secondary schools. Convenience sampling techniques were used in selection of secondary schools in selected area. Interviews were used to Ward Education Officers (WEO) and head of schools, Questionnaires were administered towards teachers, focus group discussions were held with some of groups of students and parents, and documentary reviews were used in data collections. Quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics while qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis.

3. Research Finding and Discussion

The general objective of this study is to assess the factors contributing to differences in academic performance in secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. This study was guided by two specific objectives namely to assess factors contributing to poor academic performance in poor

performing secondary schools and to assess factors contributing to high academic performance in good performing secondary schools. In order to get the right information the researcher had to consult WEO, head of schools, teachers, focus group discussions, students and parents.

3.1 Factors Contributing to Poor Academic Performance in Poor Performing Secondary Schools

Table 3.1: Factors Contributing to Poor Academic Performance in Poor Performing Secondary Schools

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Environmental factors	6	10.2
Learning facilities	11	18.6
Boarding facilities	4	6.8
Entry qualifications of students	2	3.4
Parental income	5	8.5
Availability of teachers	9	15.3
Discipline	7	11.9
Big number of students in one class	15	25.4
Total	59	100

Source: FieldData (2022)

3.1.1 Environmental Factor

Environmental factor is one of the factor that has been contributing to poor academic performance in poor performing secondary schools as identified by 10.2% of respondents. These results indicate that, school environment is an important contributing factor to poor academic performance. This entails issues like school culture that promotes hard work, school funding to enable hiring of qualified teachers, putting up school infrastructure. Poor infrastructure and congested classrooms are negative factors to academic progress. Schools that cannot afford to buy the required equipment and facilities end up offering less than the desired quality of education. These findings are in line with study by National Institute of Mental Health (2009), the incidence of the environment on academic performance can be linked to stress which students pass through when they are just newly admitted into the secondary phase of the school where these teens find it difficult to adjust to live in the classroom and the environment which they come from.

3.1.2 Learning Facilities

Learning facilities is one of the factors that has been contributing to poor academic performance in poor performing secondary schools as identified by 18.6% of respondents. These results indicate that poor performing secondary schools have a shortage of learning facilities such as workshops, laboratories, classrooms, teaching learning materials as a result they post poor results. This happen because absence or inadequacy of learning facilities makes teachers handle subjects in an abstract manner, portraying it a dry and non - exciting. These findings support results by Mbelle and Katabalo (2003) who pointed that educational outcomes in schools are closely linked to utilization and adequacy of teaching and learning resources in different ways; poor utilization, underutilization, unqualified educators brings forth low educational achievement.

3.1.3 Boarding Facilities

Boarding facilities is one of the factors that has been contributing to poor academic performance in poor

performing secondary schools as identified by 6.8% of respondents. These results indicate that, lack of boarding facilities in poor performing secondary schools cause students to participate in domestic chores like hawking wares, clearing the house and doing other menial jobs around the house before going to school and after school hours. Domestic chores like these no doubt help to train the children and make them realize that they can and should contribute their own quota to the general upkeep of the family. However when parents and guardians burden their children with work excessively, leaving little or no room for study time of their children, their school work is bound to suffer.

3.1.4 Parental Income

Parental income of students is one of the factors that has been contributing to poor academic performance in poor performing secondary schools as identified by 8.5% of respondents. Children perform differently in school depending on their family background. The influence of family background is often studied in terms of the parents' ethnic origin, educational attainments, class position, and income. But research has usually paid less attention to the role played by parental wealth. The role of parental financial assets for children's academic performance has mainly been addressed by focusing on parental income. The results support the notion that parents use income and wealth to compensate for low academic performance since the associations between parental financial resources are stronger for low - performing children than high performing children. The study findings also support the claim that parents not only influence children's decision - making in education, which was the focus of most previous research (Bernardi & Radl, 2014).

Students from low economic background who attend poorly funded schools do not perform as well as pupils from higher economic classes (Eamon, 2005). This trend is posing huge problems to parents, government, political parties and stakeholders in education.

3.1.5 Availability of Teachers

Boarding facilities is one of the factors that has been contributing to poor academic performance in poor performing secondary schools as identified by 8.5% of respondents. In poor performing secondary schools, shortage of teachers exist. A shortage of teachers harms students, teachers, and public education system as a whole. Lack of sufficient and qualified teachers threated students' ability to learn and reduce teachers' effectiveness. Teachers' shortage make it more difficult to build a solid reputation for teaching and to professionalize it which tend to affect students' academic performances.

3.1.6 Discipline

Discipline is one of the factors that has been contributing to poor academic performance in poor performing secondary schools as identified by 11.9% of respondents. In selected secondary schools, indiscipline cases have been observed and as a results affect students' performances. Despite rules endorsed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Training but they are not followed by many of the students and their teachers who misbehave wherever they are in or outside

school environment. This tend to destroy the teaching - learning environment.

3.1.7 Big Number of Students in One Class

Big number of students in one class is one of the factors that has been contributing to poor academic performance in poor performing secondary schools as identified by 8.5% of respondents. In visited poor performing secondary schools it is estimated that, the student teacher ratio is more than 60 students to one teacher. This tend to have negative impact on student academic performances since student teacher engagement tends to diminish as the number of children increases therefore affecting student achievement. Furthermore, overcrowded classrooms or huge class size slow down student adjustment to school and productive engagement in class. The student teacher engagement tends to diminish as the number of children increases therefore affecting student achievement.

3.2 Factors Contributing to High Academic Performance in Good Performing Secondary Schools

Table 3.2: Factors Contributing to High Academic Performance in Good Performing Secondary Schools

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Environmental factors	6	10.2
Learning facilities	9	15.3
Boarding facilities	9	15.3
Entry qualifications of students	3	5.1
Parental income	5	8.5
Availability of teachers	17	28.8
Discipline	7	11.9
Big number of students in one class	3	5.1
Total	59	100

Source: FieldData (2022)

3.2.1 Environmental Factors

Environmental factors is one of the factors that has been contributing to high academic performance in good performing secondary schools as identified by 10.2% of respondents. In good performing secondary schools, the environment is favourable for teaching and learning. Schools with adequate physical facilities such as classrooms, desks, chairs, and the available classrooms are well constructed with adequate spacing. Such compromising environmental situations play important roles in students' academic performance since students learn in a comfortable environment.

3.2.2 Learning Facilities

Learning facilities is one of the factors that has been contributing to high academic performance in good performing secondary schools as identified by 15.3% of respondents. Learning is a complex activity that involves interplay of students' motivation, physical facilities, teaching resources, and skills of teaching and curriculum demands. Availability of learning facilities in good performing secondary schools therefore enhances the effectiveness of schools as they are the basic resources that bring about good academic performance in the students. The findings are in line with study by Likoko, Mutsotso and Nasongo (2013) which indicate that teaching and learning resources were higher in higher performing schools than in low performing schools and that there is a significant

difference in resource availability in the higher performing schools and low performing schools.

3.2.3 Boarding Facilities

Boarding facilities is one of the factors that has been contributing to high academic performance in good performing secondary schools as identified by 15.3% of respondents. These results indicate that, residential environment of boarding facilities provides a particular ecological context in the socialization process different to those of day students which allows boarding students to engage in a different set of activities and interactions with peers and staff, thus providing differing opportunities for growth and development. Additionally, boarding school life involves an elaborate system of regulation and tight scheduling of students' daily routines, dictating when they have to wake or sleep, eat meals, participate in recreational activities, prescribing how, when, and where they need to complete their homework, the standards for keeping their accommodation neat and tidy. This tends to have a great positive impacts on students' academic performances. These findings are in line with study by Gakure, et al. (2013) who pointed that, boarding school may put some children further away from important relational assets such as the home, for others the boarding environment may provide a more stable environment than their own home or community, providing safety, security and less 'toxic' home environments and neighborhoods.

3.2.4 Entry Qualifications of Students

Entry qualifications of students is one of the factors that has been contributing to high academic performance in good performing secondary schools as identified by 5.1% of respondents. In selected good performing secondary schools, there are entry qualifications for new students. For students to qualify, they have to do examinations which act as entry qualification for student who are seeking admission into secondary schools and the best performers are administered. This play important roles on their high academic performance. In this perspective, entry qualifications are very important for secondary schools in ensuring quality students are produced.

3.2.5 Parental Income

Parental income is one of the factors that has been contributing to high academic performance in good performing secondary schools as identified by 8.5% of respondents. Since secondary schools that have high academic performances are private schools, this indicate that parents of students at such schools have enough income of affording payment of fees. Furthermore, parents involvement in children school activities matter most than the parent's financial status in uplifting the children academic performance in school. Since parents use a lot of money for their children, they take adequate care and active participation in the child's educational activities like monitoring of homework, participation in extracurricular activities, parent - teacher association, and other school related activities, the child is more likely to be courageous and as such do well at school. This tends to improve students' academic performances.

3.2.6 Availability of Teachers

Availability of teachers is one of the factors that has been contributing to high academic performance in good performing secondary schools as identified by 28.8% of respondents. In visited secondary schools, the number of teachers is good. Through this, teachers influence, ideas and expectations of his or her students' capabilities have an effect on student academic performance and achievements.

3.2.7 Discipline

Discipline is one of the factors that has been contributing to high academic performance in good performing secondary schools as identified by 11.9% of respondents. In a good performing secondary schools effective discipline is well implemented. Such schools have written rules pinned in the office of the head teacher or discipline master as to actually be implemented. Written rules facilitate administrative work since focus on creation of a good atmosphere for teaching and learning. Furthermore, good discipline creates a good image of the school and prepares learners for the future. The implementation of effective discipline at school is a key for the learner on his academic performances. These findings are in line with study by Omari (2015) revealed that, school discipline as one among aspects that influence performance in schools.

3.2.8 Big Number of Students in One Class

Big number of students in one class is one of the factors that has been contributing to high academic performance in good performing secondary schools as identified by 5.1% of respondents. In visited good performing secondary schools, class size is low which tend to have positive impact on students' academic performances. This happen since students get special attention as the enough time is allocated to a period of class. This also results in unmotivated Teachers and students due to poor results. On the other hand smaller class size enable students to actively interact in a more sustainable way with the teacher. These findings support study by Craig, et al. (1996) who indicated that while strong conventional wisdom indicates that class size affects students' learning.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Basing on findings, the study conclude that differences in academic performance between poor performing secondary schools and good performing secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality are attributed by several factors. Such factors are environmental factors, learning facilities, entry qualifications of students, parental income, availability of teachers, and discipline.

The study recommends that, the Government make sure that school must have conducive environment for the learning to take place, the Government should seek donors and other stakeholders to build scientific laboratories in secondary schools, the Government should provide a satisfactory salary to the teachers to make sure that they are able to work without learning and finding new green pastures, secondary schools should have guidance and counselling services for students.

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