Free Primary Education in Tanzania?
- A case study on costs and accessibility of primary education in Babati town

By: Jonatan Davén
Supervisor: Adolphine Kateka
Abstract

In 2002 Tanzania initiated the implementation of the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP), in which a substantial capacity expansion and quality improvement of primary education was outlined. The most important measure in the plan was to make primary school free and accessible to all, irrespective of financial capabilities. This thesis is a qualitative policy study, which aims at finding out whether or not primary education is free and equally accessible to all in Tanzania. Besides establishing if it is in fact free and accessible, the thesis identifies the main costs and restraints to access and also brings forward the children’s perceptions on these restraints. The answers to these questions were sought in a case study, conducted in Babati District in Northern Tanzania. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with households, school staff and primary school children and their responses has been compared to the national policy on primary education. The main conclusions of the study are that: Primary education is not free in Tanzania, as there are significant costs involved to send a child to primary school, such as school uniform, school material and various contributions to the running costs of the school. Neither is primary education equally accessible to all, as children from households, which cannot pay these costs, are sent home from school on a regular basis. Lastly, being sent home has a damaging effect on the children’s school performances and self-esteem.

Keywords: primary education, developing countries, Babati, Tanzania, case study, Universal Primary Education, Primary Education Development Plan
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education For All</td>
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<td>ESDP</td>
<td>Education Sector Development Programme</td>
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<td>GER</td>
<td>Gross Enrolment Rate</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<td>GoT</td>
<td>Government of Tanzania</td>
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<td>HIPC</td>
<td>Heavily Indebted Poor Country</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>PEDP</td>
<td>Primary Education Development Plan</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>RRA</td>
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<td>STD 1-7</td>
<td>Standard 1-7 (levels of primary school education) mistake</td>
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<td>SSA</td>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<td>Tsh</td>
<td>Tanzanian shillings</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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1 Introduction

1.1 History of education policy in Tanzania

The educational history of Tanzania differs somewhat from the general pattern of the countries in the developing world. Throughout the history of the country, education has been given a relatively high priority, compared to other countries. However, prior to national independence the educational system was very much a subject to the interests of the colonial power (Knutsson 2005:10).

The first major step in the educational development in Tanzania occurred following the First World War, when the British took over the colony from the Germans. In 1925 they introduced the policy “Education for adaptation”, which meant an expansion of the provision of education to the local people. This education, which was mainly provided by missionaries in simple facilities in rural areas, focused mainly on agriculture and did not bring promises of further education. After the Second World War, there was a slight shift of focus towards “education for modernization”, which developed post-primary and higher education. However, this was only available to a few privileged groups, while the vast majority remained in the “adaptation-system” (Colclough et al. 2003:121).

Though the British only provided education of very unequal accessibility and quality, they did, in a sense, “plant the seed of their own fall”. It was the educated African elites who later formed independence movements that would eventually bring an end to colonial rule. The independence in 1961 became a watershed in Tanzania’s educational policy. The socialist Ujamaa policy, introduced by President Nyerere, put great emphasis on education based on the philosophy called “Education for Self-Reliance” (Nyerere 1967). The following 15 years the government more than doubled the proportion of GDP allocated to the education sector. Furthermore, local governments and civil society raised funds to improve quality and accessibility of education. The old segregated schooling system was replaced by a homogeneous system with (at least formally) equal access for all (Colclough et al. 2003:124). The goal of the new policy was to make primary education available, compulsory and free of cost to all and the most important measures in the new policy were a huge

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1 Lecture held by Elia Iyo in Babati on 2008/2/28
increase in the number of schools and teachers, and the 1973 elimination of primary school fees (Knutsson 2005:11).

The post-independence educational policy was formed in time when the international community put in large effort to improve access to education in the developing world. In the early 1960s the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) arranged a series of conferences on education, where ambitious targets were set. The African conference was held in Addis Ababa in 1961 and set the target of achieving Universal Primary Education\(^2\) (UPE) by 1980.

Unlike many other developing countries, Tanzania was very close to reaching UPE in the beginning of the 1980s. In 1981 the country had a Gross Enrolment Rate\(^3\) (GER) of 97 per cent and the adult illiteracy rate had been sharply reduced (Colclough et al. 2003:124). This happened partly at the expense of the quality of education, which was not very high. The progress of the 1960s and 70s, was however hard to sustain financially during the 80s, which was a decade of immense deterioration of education quality. The financial problems were due to three main reasons. First, the country experienced a difficult economic period of low growth and tax return. Second, much of the international aid only provided capital for expanding the educational system, and did not cover the running costs of upholding it. Finally, there was a large increase in demand for education, due to an annual population growth of 3 %. The deterioration in quality made the incentives for parents to send their children to school smaller, by 1993 the GER was down at 82 per cent (Alonso I Terme 2002:1).

The educational deterioration of the 1980s, combined with pressure from international financial institutions led to an increase in “cost-sharing” of education. Household contributions gradually increased and in 1995 an enrolment fee was reintroduced. This fee was never large enough to make up a substantial part of the overall education cost of households, but it stirred up widespread discontent among parents, much because it was treated as a tax and its revenues were not necessarily used within the education sector.

\(^2\) Universal Primary Education is said to be achieved when the Gross Enrolment Ratio (see below) is 100% or higher.

\(^3\) Gross Enrolment Ratio is the total number of enrolled pupils – regardless of age – at a given level of education as a percentage of the population, which is of the age to attend at that level.
Though most household could afford the enrolment fees, to the poor (who besides having limited resources often have more children), it was a constraining factor. Officially, they could not be excluded from school for not paying the fees, but in reality they were (ibid:2).

The abolition of the enrolment fees was the result of what can be described as “the coming together of many streams to form a river” (Ibid:2). A mutually reinforcing process of (1) the huge unpopularity of the fees, (2) civil society mobilization, (3) the government’s increasing awareness of the need for reform and (4) a shift in the global discourse from cost-sharing towards free schooling, led to the development of the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP). The primary school fees were abolished in 2002 and enrolment became compulsory (ibid:3-6). The plan for primary education in specific is summarized in a document called Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) and this document is reviewed later on in this thesis. Since the implementation of the PEDP access to primary education has increased significantly. UPE was achieved in 2003 and in 2007 the GER had reached 114.4% (GoT 2007:15).

However, studies have pointed at different flaws in the new policy. Knutsson (2005) has, based on a case study in Geita district, shown that the massive expansion of enrolment has had a deteriorating effect on the quality of the education provided. Another study conducted by Mkombozi, an NGO based in Kilimanjaro region, explores causal mechanisms concerning school exclusion, dropping out of school among children in general and street children in particular. The study identifies a number of reasons for exclusion, one of them being lack of school uniform and other costs. The main conclusion is that there seem to be a confusion regarding the role of and rules for schooling as well as a lack of knowledge about problems facing poor children (McAlpine 2005). Furthermore, Burke and Beagle (2004) has argued that policies have failed to take into consideration the importance of child labour within the household, which has lead to high absenteeism.

1.2 Problem formulation and objective

Though primary education is supposedly free in Tanzania, earlier studies have shown that there still are significant hindrances for accessing it. Thus, there seem to be a discrepancy between what national policy states and what reality in (or out of) the classrooms looks like. This thesis is a policy research with the objective of identifying constraints to free primary education in Tanzania using a case study approach.
1.3 Research questions
Basic education is regarded as a human right and the national education policy in Tanzania clearly states that education should be free and accessible to all. How free is free education in Tanzania? What are the constraints for children to access primary education? How are these constraints perceived by the children themselves? What are the impacts on students? These are the main issues that this thesis attempts to shed light on.

1.4 Delimitations
The most obvious limitation of this study is that, being a single-case study, it cannot claim to be representative for Tanzania as a whole. However, I do claim that it has implications for national policy that are of worth, and this will be discussed further in Chapters 2 and 7. Another limitation worth mentioning is that it only deals with primary education, and not secondary or tertiary education, since they are not even officially regarded as free. Finally, it focuses on the financial restraints, rather than social aspects, such as early pregnancies, or opportunity costs, such as loss of household labour when sending a child to school. These issues are brought up but play a rather peripheral part in the study.

1.5 Study Area
Babati Town is the capital of Babati District as well as Manyara region, which was formed in 2003, in Northern Tanzania. Prior to that Manyara was part of Arusha region to the north. The district covers 6069 km² and has a rapid population growth (2.7 % annually). According to the 2002 census the population was 303 013 inhabitants, which can be compared to app. 180 000 in 1988. Parts of the area have very fertile soil, which has lead to immigration from other parts of Tanzania. The area therefore, has an ethnically diverse population and the largest ethnic groups are Iraqw, Gorowa and Mbugwe. Though most people are agro-pastoralists of different kinds, there is an ongoing shift towards pure agriculture. The area has experienced a rapid urbanization during the last decade, which has established rural-urban linkages important to household sustenance. The urbanization has also caused problems such as lack of town planning, sanitation and infrastructure.

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4 Lecture held by Kalyst Kavishe in Babati on 2008/2/28.
5 Lecture held by Vesa-Matti Loiske in Huddinge on 2008/2/8
1.6 Disposition
Chapter 1 has put the study in a historical context, presented the questions that this thesis aims to answer and given some information of the study area. Chapter 2 presents the method of the data collection and the method of how the data gathered in the field has been analyzed. Chapter 3 is based on the PEDP document and brings forward the aspects of the national policy on primary education that are of relevance to this study. Chapter 4 presents the data gathered during the field study in Babati. Chapter 5 analyzes the data presented in Chapter 4 and compares it to the national policy. Chapter 6 puts the findings in a historical context, discusses the validity of the study and discusses what implications the study might have on education policy formation. Finally, in Chapter 7 the conclusions that can be drawn from the study are summarized.

2 Methodology
This thesis is the result of a policy research, based on a case study, where empirical data collected during a field study has been put into the contextualization of the Tanzanian national policy on primary education. The study is qualitative as it was carried out through a series of semi-structured interviews.

The case study was conducted during nine days in March 2008, in a town called Babati in Manyara region, Tanzania. The field trip was arranged by Södertörn University College, which has been arranging field trips to Babati annually for a number of years. Thus, there was already a well-established contact network in the area and most practical matters were settled in advance. This was no doubt necessary to be able to conduct the field study in such a limited period of time.

2.1 Case study research
The definition of a case study has been – and still is – debated among social scientist. However, one useful definition is: “an intensive study of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), for the purpose of understanding a larger class of similar units (the population of cases) (Gerring 2007:37). Thus, for a case study to be of relevance, it should generate knowledge applicable to other cases than its own. Like all other methods, the case study method has strengths as well as weaknesses. I will review a few of these in the following section and argue why, in this study, the strengths are greater than the weaknesses.
First, a case study is suitable for hypothesis generating rather than hypothesis testing studies. The reason for this is that case studies are exploratory by nature and because the sample is small, findings are unreliable compared to a large, quantitative cross-case study. However, case studies can in some cases confirm or disconfirm hypotheses. Though this study doesn’t depart from a hypothesis it does depart from an assumption made in policy documents that primary education, is to be free and accessible to all and the study seeks to confirm or disconfirm that assumption. Further, it seeks to generate knowledge about what costs and other constraints that limit children’s access to primary education in Tanzania today. I argue that though the sample is small, it is enough to shed light on whether or not primary education in Tanzania is free and accessible to all. Furthermore, it is more appropriate than a cross-case analysis in identifying the restraints to access. Second, which can be regarded as the greatest weakness of the case study approach, is that it generates internal rather than external validity. Since it includes only one or a small number of cases, it suffers problems of representation. On the other hand, its internal validity is greater, due to the depth of the study. Third, case studies are suitable for studying causal mechanisms rather than causal effects. Had the objective of this study been the latter, namely to estimate the magnitude of education exclusion, there is no doubt that a quantitative study would best serve that purpose. However, it is not. The objective is rather to find out if there is a problem of exclusion and if so, what the mechanisms behind it are. Finally, practical circumstances can be mentioned (such as limitation in time, space and availability of quantitative data), as a reason why the case study approach was a more realizable venture than a quantitative one.

The conclusion of the discussion above is that, though the case study approach clearly has limitations, the strengths of using it in the study significantly outweigh the weaknesses of doing so. The discussion of the method of collecting data and method of analyzing the data remains. The methods used for collecting data in this study are taken from the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) approach and are described in the following section.

2.2 Field Work methods

Rapid Rural Appraisal is a semi-structured, multi-disciplinary approach to field based research. There are two central themes in the philosophy of RRA. The first is what is called “optimal ignorance”. The basic principle of this is that you only need to collect data detailed enough to formulate a useful hypothesis. It is a holistic approach, which puts emphasis on acquiring knowledge of all the key processes relevant to the research objective, instead of getting entangled in irrelevant details. The second theme is the triangulation of data. This
means using a variety of methods and sources, in order to verify the data collected from different angles (McCracken et al. 1988:12).

McCracken further points out five key features of a good RRA:

- **Iterative**: The researcher is not bound to a fixed research plan. Instead the objectives as well as the methods can be changed as the researcher realizes what is relevant.
- **Innovative**: Methods are not standardized and can be adjusted or even invented for the specific study.
- **Interactive**: Different disciplines should be combined in order to get a holistic view.
- **Informal**: Focus lies on semi-structured methods and informal discussions.
- **In the community**: The local community should be involved in the research process and in defining the research problem (ibid 1988:13)

However, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) has developed out of RRA in order to compliment methodologies associated with the ones that have been used in the socioeconomic analysis of rural communities. RRA methods were considered to be passive in nature and researcher-based with local people being treated as subjects to glean data from rather than as partners in the research process (Chambers 1992). Therefore, while applying RRA to my study, I bear in mind its shortcomings as a participatory method.

### 2.2.1 Interviews

The most important technique of RRA is probably the semi-structured interviewing. These usually take the form of informal conversations rather than sequential questions and answers. The respondents can be regular households as well as key informants and the interviews can be done individually as well as in groups. The researcher has only a few prepared questions to depart from, and new questions arise in the duration of the interview. In household interviews it is important that not only the adult male family members are addressed. As men often are the “outward” head of the households, it can appear that women have little say in important matters. This, however is not true as women often have important roles in decision-making and are very much involved in the household’s economy. Before the interview starts it is important to explain the purpose of it to the respondents. Otherwise they might either fear that sensitive information is spread to neighbours or officials, or see the researcher as a potential donor and therefore just tell him/her of their needs. Group interviews can take a variety of forms and respondents groups can be of many different constellations. They can be randomly sampled by, for example, just meeting people on the
street, or can be strategically selected, with people of a specific profession, age or other attribute (ibid:20-23).

In this case study, 17 interviews were conducted. 12 of them were household interviews, three were group interviews with primary school children, one was a group interview with parents of primary school children and one was with a key informant (a primary school head teacher). To my help I had field assistants, who were provided by the College. These assistants were secondary school graduates from the Babati area. Since most of the informants spoke poor or no English, the most important purpose of the field assistants was to act as interpreters during the interviews. They were also of great help in identifying and contacting suitable informants. Conducting interviews with interpreters obviously brings some challenges. There is always the risk of misunderstandings and biases, and sometimes the assistants even tended to answer the questions themselves instead of interpreting. However, as the field work went on and I (and they) became more familiar with the interview situation and each other, these misunderstandings became less common and easier to recognize.

2.2.2 Sampling process

As mentioned above, the sampling process was done with much help from the field assistants. The target group for the interviews was households where the children for one or the other reason had trouble accessing primary education. Since I had a specific target group, which was relatively easy to identify (through some “asking around”) the sampling did not take a very long time. The first two group interviews with children were done at a primary school, and it was one of the teachers, who chose which children who would participate in the interviews. It is possible that the teacher consciously chose “straight-A-students”, who he thought would represent the school in a good manner and this will have to be taken into consideration when reviewing their answers.

2.2.3 Household interviews

The purpose of these interviews was to get a picture of what the primary restraints were, for children to go to school and to find out what and approximately how high the costs are for putting a child in primary school. Are there economical restraints, such as costs of school uniforms, school material or financial contributions to the school? The financial restraints were the most central in the interviews, but other issues were addressed as well. Are there perception-based restraints? This could be e.g. not thinking school is important or that school

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quality is to low to be worth the effort. Are there social restraints, such as child pregnancies or corporal punishment in schools? I also wanted to know if there is any help to get from government or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO). The interviews towards the end were primarily used for triangulation of the data I received from the previous interviews.

2.2.4 Group interviews

The group interview with parents was mostly a mean of further triangulating the data from the household interviews. There were six participants, of whom five had children who were sent home from school by the teachers on a regular basis. The interviews with children provided the perspective(s) of the most important people in this issue. Three group interviews were made. The first two were with children from a primary school, who did not have problems accessing primary school. One of them was with four children aged 8-10 years old, attending the lower half of primary. The other was with five children aged 10-16 years old, attending the upper half of primary school. The third group of children interviewed was comprised of six children of mixed age who were sent home from school on a regular basis and therefore partially excluded from education. By using these three categories I was able to compare the answers of the different groups, and their perception of education in general and of the “sending home” in specific.

2.3 Method of analysis

After collecting data from the field, this data has been analyzed in the context of the national policy on primary education, or if you will, the other way around, since the responses provide an evaluation of the policy. Do the findings correlate to what is written in the policy paper and vice-versa? The analysis is limited to what the policy says on the household costs and accessibility of primary education. The analysis is divided into three sub-topics. First, the data on the costs of primary education provides an answer to the question if primary education is really free in Tanzania. Second, the data on what happens if a household fails to afford these costs provides an answer to the question if primary education is accessible to all. Finally, the responses of the children are not directly connected to the policy. However, these are still vital to the study because the children are after all the most important people in the situation and their responses add depth and validity to the study. The structure of presentation of results and analysis are summarized in Table 2.3:
Field data | Analysis
---|---
Costs of primary education | Is primary education cost free in Tanzania?
Consequences of failure to pay | Is primary education accessible to all in Tanzania?
Perceptions of the children | How is accessibility perceived by the children themselves?

*Table 2.3 Structure of the results and analysis*

3. Current education policy

All children [should] have equitable access to a good quality primary education. No child should be denied the opportunity to participate in education because of poverty, gender, disability, or because of lack of school uniform, fees or other parental contributions, or because of lack of school facilities, material or teachers. *Primary Education Development Plan* (GoT 2001:v)

3.1 Policy context

As mentioned above, the development of the PEDP was a result of several interacting processes. It can therefore be of interest to look at the policy context – internationally and nationally – in which it emerged. Tanzania was party of a number of international conferences on education. The most notable are the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien and the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar. At the former, international targets were set for the provision of education, and the latter was a review of the progress made since Jomtien (ibid:2). On the national level Tanzanian policy formation is guided by a document called “The Tanzania Development Vision 2025”, which contains the country’s economic and social development visions. “A well educated and learning society” is one of the cornerstones in this document, both as a goal in itself and as a means to provide well-being in other areas (GoT undated). Another important policy document is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which is part of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative for debt relief. It articulates the government’s development strategy, and provides a mechanism for channelling international support. The PRSP prioritises the education sector as a way to raise people’s capacities and earning potential in the effort to alleviate poverty (GoT 2001: 3-4).

3.2 Policy content

The policy document focuses on four main areas: (1) increasing enrolment; (2) improving quality; (3) building capacity; and (4) improving efficiency of institutional management. The first component is given the highest priority of the four and is also the most important one
for this thesis, since it touches on costs and accessibility. This point, in turn, is divided into four sub-components. First, enrolment of all groups of children should increase. The target was that all children between 7 and 12 years should be enrolled in primary school by 2005. The most important strategy to achieve this was to abolish school fees in January 2002. Furthermore, a national education fund would be established to pay for the education of children from disadvantaged groups and to launch an Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaign to inform people about PEDP and the importance of education. Second, existing human and material resources should more efficiently, through introducing double-shift for teachers and classrooms. For example, the pupils can be divided into a morning stream and an afternoon stream. This would, however, only be a temporary measure until capacity is raised. Third, more teachers must be recruited and new classrooms built. Publicity campaigns emphasising good career prospects would be launched in order to make it a more attractive profession. The recruitment would also aim to ensure a gender-balanced distribution of trained teachers. The government initiated a classroom construction programme to cope with the expected increases of enrolment. Finally, complementary education programmes, such as non-formal education centres, for out-of-school children and youth, including AIDS-orphans would be expanded (ibid:4-8).

4 Results

The following section presents the responses given by the informants on the issues brought up in the interviews. The results are presented in a thematic order. First, the costs of sending a child to primary schools school are presented. Then follow the consequences of not being able to deal with those costs. Third, comes a presentation of the children’s perception and opinions on these issues. Finally, the respondents’ views on other possible restraints are presented.

4.1 Costs of primary education

It is difficult to pay the contributions, especially before harvest, when food supplies are low.

* A mother of two primary school children

Though the primary school enrolment fee was abolished in 2002, there are several costs to sending a child to school. The main costs are buying school uniform, buying school material and payment of various contributions to the school. The most important objective of the
study is to establish that there are considerable costs rather than establishing the exact amount of these. However, here follows a brief approximation of the most important costs of the households. The reported levels of these costs varied somewhat between the respondents, especially between the households and the head teacher, who reported significantly lower levels of contributions.

The prices of school uniforms vary somewhat depending on the age of the child and type of clothes purchased. It ranges from approximately Tsh. 17,000 to 26,000 according to the respondents. These amounts converge with the findings of the study carried out by the local NGO Mkombozi (McAlpine 2005:31). The households’ annual costs for these also depend on how often they buy new uniforms and if younger siblings can take over uniforms from the older ones. The respondent from the group interview agreed that on average they must buy a new uniform every second year. School material costs are primarily made up of exercise books and other writing material such as pencils. They usually add up to between 7,000 and 15,000 depending on which school level the child attends.

There are two types of contributions that households must supply to the school and these vary between different schools. First, there are financial contributions. These are primarily to pay wages for security personnel and the school cook. According to most household respondents, these usually add up approximately Tsh. 10,000 annually. Some schools also have a “desk-fee” of about 8,000, which is paid at registration only. Besides the financial contributions, the households are expected to contribute with food, such as maize, beans, cooking oil and salt. They can also choose to pay the value of these goods in money. If they cannot pay all the contribution at once they can set up a payment plan together with the head teacher. The head teacher reported completely different amounts. According to him the security and cook contributions are only Tsh. 3,000 together and the only additional fee is a registration fee of Tsh. 1,000. Because of the confusion that arose, further triangulation was made just to find out which amounts were correct. Asking another three households, they all confirmed that the security fee and cook fee was annually around Tsh. 10,000.

4.2 Consequences of failure to pay

If you have an agreement with the school they can’t send them home at all. If you don’t they can be sent home even the whole week. It is very difficult for the children to follow in school.
A mother of two primary school children

Many of the households interviewed in the study had problems covering these expenses. According to one of the respondents it is the financial contributions that are the most difficult to cope with and another stated that it is the most difficult to pay prior to harvest, when the household economy is the most pressured. Regarding the consequences of not being able to pay, once again the story of the head teacher and the story of the households diverge.

According to the head teacher, if a child has not paid contributions, the teachers tell the children at the end of the school day that they must fetch their parents so they can have a meeting and set up a payment plan. If the parents at the meeting claim that they are unable to pay, the teacher writes their name on a list, which is passed on to the Village Government. The Village government, in turn, decides if the household will get support for the contribution payments.

The interviews with the households give a different story. According to them it is common that the children get sent home in the morning, before school starts. If the parent is not at home, or for some other reason is unable to go to school, the child is not allowed to go back to class. How often this occurs seems to vary. If the parents have a payment plan and keep it the children don’t get sent home at all. However, if they at any point fail to pay it on time the children can be sent home relatively often. One informant estimated that it happens twice a week on an average. Another said that sometimes they can be sent home the whole week. This story is confirmed by the group interviews with children. One of the groups consisted of children that were sent home on a regular basis. In the other two groups none of the children had ever been sent home by the teacher, but they confirmed that other children were and some relatively often. One of the parents and one of the children said that children from standard 6 and 7 are sent home more often than others. According to another parent, things had become better recently. The week before the interview there was a village meeting, where a Member of Parliament had been visiting. He said that it is not allowed to send children home from school and since then there hadn’t been a problem.

Some respondents had tried to get help from the government, neighbours and the Church of God (a major Christian denomination, which help people with contributions and hand out school material), but said that too many people need help and the resources scarce. First
come, first served basis seem to apply. However, many of the interviewed households had not even heard that it was possible to get help from the government to pay for contributions.

4.3 Children’s perceptions on the issue

Once I was told to go back and bring money for the watchman, but I didn’t find my parents at home. I became very sad and angry. If I could, I would have fought with the teacher.

*Young boy attending Std. 1*

Both the children, who do get sent home and the ones who don’t agree that the “sending home” is a problem. Only one child replied that it is good that some children are sent home “because everyone has to contribute”. However all agreed that it is wrong to send the child home if the family is poor and unable to pay. The children in school said that it is bad because the children who are sent home miss a lot of subjects and have a hard time passing the exams. They also get discouraged to continue to make an effort in school.

This is confirmed by the group of children who often get sent home. They think it is difficult to follow in school when you miss subjects and become very disappointed when they are sent home. One young boy in STD 1 told about when he was sent home recently to bring money for security. When he came home he didn’t find his parents so he could not go back to class. He became very sad and angry and said that if he could he would have fought with the teacher. Other children told of their experiences and their disappointment of being sent home. Two of the children said that sometimes they even sneaked back into the classroom after being told to go home. One of the children said that she was beginning to lose motivation to go to school, because she was constantly sent home.

Another interesting result worth mentioning is that all the children of the groups from school said that school was very easy and said that they passed exams without difficulties. The children, who were repeatedly sent home, expressed that they had difficulties with some of the subjects in school, especially Math and English. Since the sample was relatively small, these groups are not necessarily representative, but it is at least an indication that the exclusion is of a degree enough to have a negative impact on school performance.
4.4 Other restraints

According to the respondents it is the financial restraints presented above that are the most important. All respondents regarded education as highly important and the loss of labour power that sending a child to school mean, is small compared to that importance. Education is regarded as an investment that will pay off later on as it will help the child to get a well paid job. When asked about early pregnancies leading to drop-outs in primary school, the respondents said that they heard that it is a problem in some places, but they didn’t think it was a problem in Babati and none of them knew of any household where that was the case. One woman said that her daughter became pregnant at an early age, but managed to finish primary school anyway and was now attending secondary school. Finally, a lack of school uniform does not seem to exclude children from school, but one respondent said that the children who don’t come to school in uniform get beaten by the teacher more often than the others.

5 Analysis

First of all, since the collected data has occasionally been somewhat contradictory between different respondents it can be appropriate with a discussion on the reliability of the data. For example, the head teacher reported significantly lower contribution levels than most households. By triangulating these amounts among different households I found that the amounts reported by the households are more likely to be true. There is also the possibility of misinterpretation or some other kind of misunderstanding, though I find this relatively unlikely. However, as noted above it is not the exact amounts that are relevant in this thesis, but the fact that there are costs involved that are large enough to be difficult for poor households to pay and that they do limit children’s access to primary education.

5.1 Is primary education free in Tanzania?

The results of the field work clearly show that there is no such thing as universally free primary education in Tanzania. Though the school fees have been eliminated, there are still significant expenses for households to send a child to primary school. The major costs are the school uniforms and school contributions. Even when there were school fees, these made up only a minor part of education costs for household.

5.2 Is primary education accessible in Tanzania?

The PEDP aims to ensure that “ALL children have equal access” to education and that no child should be excluded from school “because of a lack of school uniform, fees or other
contributions”. However, though officially that is the case (which was confirmed by the village meeting with the Member of Parliament), children are de facto partially excluded from primary education. There does not seem to be any clear rules or conditions that apply regarding sending children home. Some said that if you make a payment plan and stick with it the child doesn’t get sent home. Others, gave a more unpredictable and arbitrary picture of the situation. The head teacher said that children are only told after school to fetch their parents, but according to all the households asked and the children themselves, they are sent home in the morning or during the school day, thus missing parts of their education. Even if no child is completely expelled from school, missing too many classes obviously makes it more difficult for them to complete primary school.

5.3 How do children perceive accessibility to education?

Being sent home repeatedly has dual effect on the children development. The first, which is the most obvious, is the inequitable access to education, which can have a negative outcome in terms of academic performance and the results seem to indicate that this is the case. Other explanations for the differences in performance are possible though. For example are parents in poor households likely to be less educated and can therefore not help their children as well as other parents. The other effect is the diminished self-esteem that the feeling of exclusion can result in. The children who were sent home told about the sadness, frustration and decreasing motivation they felt when they were told to leave the school. As the quotation in paragraph 4.3 showed, it can also harm the relationship between the pupil and the teacher.

6 Discussion

Though this thesis has focused on rather negative aspects of the educational situation in Tanzania, it shall nevertheless be mentioned that the country has made immense progress in increasing access to primary education. Since 2000 primary enrolment has increased by 72% and the GER has gone up from 77.6 % to 117.7% (2006 figures). This has primarily been done through the elimination of the registration fee, legislating compulsory enrolment and the building of 54 000 new classrooms (Woods 2007:5-7). As have been stated above, the registration fee made up only a small part of education costs, so it is questionable whether the removal of these is actually the key reason for this huge increase of enrolment. It might rather be the fact that children by law have to be enrolled that has been pushing this development forward. This could be an interesting topic for further study.
This study has not focused on enrolment, however, since enrolment does not necessarily guarantee access. In theory child can be enrolled without spending another day in school after registration. As this study has shown the household costs of education that still remain, though they don’t hinder children from being enrolled, do limit children’s access to primary education.

The external validity of case studies in general was briefly discussed in Chapter 2, but could be further discussed in relation to this particular study. Are the findings in this study at all applicable to the rest of the country? They are after all only based on one single case in a medium-size town in Northern Tanzania. It is true that the validity of this study is primarily internal. This, however does not make the findings irrelevant, as education is just as important to the children in this case than anywhere else. Nor, does it mean that it has no external validity. The Mkombozi study (McAlpine 2005:31) came up with similar findings that households’ lack of financial resources can lead to children’s exclusion from school. More research is needed to establish whether the findings of these two cases are isolated incidents or if they are part of a wider pattern. For this purpose, quantitative research would be necessary.

6.1 Policy implications

So what can be done to further reduce the household costs for primary education and how can access to it be improved? After all, security personnel are needed to protect the school facilities and the children must eat lunch to be able to learn in a good way. The government resources are far from abundant and might not be enough to pay for these costs. These costs are hence difficult to remove. The other cost that make up a major part of household education expenses. Though there are surely advantages of having school uniform, which will not be discussed here, fact is that they are not necessary for learning and they do create a significant cost for poor households. So there are clearly arguments abolishing use of school uniforms in primary school.

Regarding the other costs, it might be reasonable that they fall on the households, given that the government doesn’t have enough resources to provide them. The problem is that there seems to be a lack of clarity on the conditions that apply when a household doesn’t pay on time. Clearer guidelines for how schools should handle these kinds of situations are apparently needed as well as better communication between school and parents. Furthermore, one thing needs to be strongly emphasized in the guidelines. No matter whose
fault it is or what misunderstanding this situation is rooted in, it is not the children who have caused it and they should not be held responsible for parents’ inability (or even unwillingness) to afford school costs. Yet, they are currently the ones who are suffering the consequences of it.

7 Conclusions

The objective of this study was to identify constraints to free primary education in Tanzania, and this has been accomplished. The research questions concerned three main aspects: costs, accessibility and the effects of limitations in access on students. The main findings of the study are summarized accordingly below:

1. Primary education is not free in Tanzania, as there are significant costs involved to send a child to primary school, such as school uniform, school material and various contributions to the running costs of the school. Many poor households have difficulties affording these costs.

2. Primary education is not equally accessible to all, as children from households, which cannot afford these costs, are sent home from school on a regular basis.

3. Being sent home has a damaging effect on the children’s school performances and self-esteem.

In conclusion, the study has disconfirmed the assumption that primary education is free in Tanzania. Instead, it has shown that there are major costs involved for households to send a child to primary school. Though national policy states that inability to pay school uniforms, material and monetary or food contributions should not exclude children from school, it \textit{de facto} does.
8 References


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6 All Internet sources were available at their respective URL:s as on: 2008/5/23