

## **Accountability of Education and Secondary School Performance in Tandahimba and Mtwara Districts, Tanzania**

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**Abstract:** This study sought to establish level of accountability of education actors in relation to current status of education delivery and its resultant academic performance of secondary schools in Tandahimba and Mtwara Districts, Tanzania. The study was underpinned by Principal-Agency Theory and Public Choice Theory and it employed the cross-sectional explanatory design through questionnaire as source of data from 229 respondents who were sampled from the population of 563 education administrators. Furthermore, seven district level officers were purposively selected for in-depth interview while 10 teachers and 10 parents were conveniently selected to participate in the focus group discussion. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics whilst qualitative data was analysed using content analysis. The quantitative findings indicate that education actors were accountable in their roles. However, the qualitative findings revealed that heads of schools and school management teams were not accountable for involvement of parents in school management; some heads of schools were burdens to schools since they did not have managerial skills, experience and knowledge. The findings are in line with the theoretical thinking of public choice theory, which proposes that lower accountability of education actors compromises delivery of quality education in secondary schools. Based on the findings, this study recommends that the local government should enhance the accountability of head of schools and school management teams by involving community and parents in the management of schools. Moreover, heads of schools have to be trained after being appointed so as to impart them with managerial knowledge and skills so as to regulate their performance and eventually their accountability.

**Keywords:** Decentralization; accountability; education; performance; education actors.

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### **Introduction**

Decentralization is a set of policy reforms aimed at transferring responsibilities, resource and authority from higher to lower levels of government (Falleti, 2004). It is a transfer of power from Central Government to Local Government Authorities (LGAs). It is a managerial and organizational phenomenon in which decision making is pushed

down to local leaders are closest to the beneficiaries and whose decisions have direct impact to the community (Robbins & Coulter, 2007) and the community which is affected by those decisions (Kessy & Mushi, 2018). Decentralization has been accepted by many countries as a policy, an approach and a tool to improve delivery of public services such as education (Kessy, 2020b; Masue, 2014).

Decentralization policy is part of vigorous initiatives and reforms to support LGAs to improve delivery of social services including education (Aycrigg, 2013; Marijani, 2017).

Nations of the world acknowledge the importance of educational decentralization as it is envisaged to make schools more effective and it makes LGAs more competent in the delivery of education (Kessy, 2020b; Bush, 2016; Mushemeza, 2019; Sow & Razafimahefa, 2015). According to Winkler and Gershberg (2000), in most developed countries, provision of education has been decentralized. In the United States of America (USA), for instance, education is highly decentralized (Edwards & Matthews, 2014) that parents and communities are part and parcel of school management and administration. In England, there has been a significant decentralization at school level in respect of budgets, school choice and governance but curriculum remains centralized (Bush 2016). In Australia, participation of community is high in the process of making decision and implementing school activities where all stakeholders are responsible. In Finland, local providers of education (schools and LGAs) collaborate with other stakeholders to prepare local curriculum, appropriate learning environment and to set standards (Lavonen, 2017).

In Latin America, though studies show a positive impact of decentralization on delivery of education, the decentralization is limited in its implementation (Bray, 2001; Brosio, 2014; Habibi *et al.*, 2001). In African countries, a number of studies on decentralization and public service delivery show lower levels of decentralization in education systems (Galiwango, 2008; Kessy, 2020a; Komba, 2017; Mushemeza, 2019; Winkler & Gershberg, 2003). In Ethiopia the government provides curriculum, standards, issues policies and guidelines, recruits education managers and teachers and supervises the standards and delivery of education (Daba, 2010). In Kenya, the Government had established Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAs) such as the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) with specific mandates to develop curriculum and issue instructional materials while the Education Ministry retains the responsibilities of policy, management and curriculum approval (Heto *et al.*, 2020; Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2017). Unlike the counterpart developed countries, in most less developed countries the central government monopolizes

decision and strategic choices that LGAs and schools can make to better serve the communities. This weakens the implementation effect and performance of decentralization.

Researchers (Kessy, 2008; Smoke, 2003; Sow & Razafimahefa, 2015) argue that best performance of decentralization depends on multi-factors including accountability of education actors in the education delivery process. The central part of decentralization in education system regards the issue of accountability of education actors in management of education as indispensable factor (Anosisye, 2017). Scholars recognize that the accountability of education actors at LGA and school levels in a decentralized education delivery system is very important in the analysis and discussion of decentralization reforms (Anosisye, 2017; Komba, 2017; Lavonen, 2017). Organizations and donors have always linked accountability with the improvement of public service delivery such as education (Lavonen, 2017). Accountability works on improving the quality of relationships between the different stakeholders in service delivery arrangements (Maulid, 2017; Suter & Mallinson, 2015).

Implementation of decentralization in Tanzania has been focused to improve community or stakeholders' or actors' participation and their responsibilities in education administration (Masawe, 2016). Prior to the decentralization, all decision-making powers were concentrated at the central government, which resulted in poor provision of education. Earlier decentralization took a form of deconcentrating in 1972, where some amount of administrative authorities was handed over to regional offices of central government ministries or agencies (Max, 1991). In education sector, deconcentrating involved transfer of decision-making over recruitment, employees' evaluation, promotion, allocation and reallocation of budgets; from the head office of ministry of education to its offices at regional level (Smith & Revell, 2016). Also, Village Act of 1975 is one of the oldest steps of decentralization in Tanzania which envisaged enhancing grassroots participation by establishing village councils (Max, 1991). However, meaningful community participation was not established as leaders had a tendency of making decisions on behalf of their citizens (Picard, 1980).

By 1982, the Local Government (District Authorities) Act No. 7 and Local Government (Urban Authorities)

Act No. 8, which established a wide-ranging system of local government authorities in rural and urban area were enacted. However, the LGAs had less independence in view of the fact that regions kept significant authority (URT, 1983). As a result, the reform did not improve responsiveness of LGAs to local needs (Ngware, 2005). So, the government decided to restructure the intergovernmental system and LGAs with the intention of giving LGAs extra power and make them more effective. The decision laid down the foundation for the Local Government Reform Program (LGRP) in 1996, which lay down a wide-ranging agenda for restructuring the local government through decentralization by devolution. The Constitution Amendment Act No. 6 of 1999 was passed to allow implementation of decentralization by devolution under LGRP, which require LGAs to transfer authority to people, enhance the democratic process within its area of jurisdiction and apply democracy for facilitating the expeditious and faster development of the people, plus to involve people in the planning and implementation of development programs within their respective area.

Moreover, Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) in the first phase (SEDP I) and second phase (SEDP II) were implemented under the framework of the LGRP (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2009; URT, 2010). The overall objective of SEDP I and II were to improve access with equity, quality, management, teaching and learning environment and community participation in secondary education delivery (Masue, 2014; URT, 2009; 2010). However, all these efforts had not resulted into delivery of quality secondary school education since the results of national form two and form four pupils in Mtwara and Tandahimba had remained low (NECTA, 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b; 2018a; 2018b; 2019a; 2019b; 2020a; 2020b; 2021a; 2021b). In the national form two results of 2016, out of the last ten secondary schools with poor performance, nine secondary schools were from Mtwara (NECTA, 2016b). Among these secondary schools, five are located in Tandahimba District and two in Mtwara District. Furthermore, for the past seven years the selected districts have experience low academic performance (Table 1 and 2). The poor academic performance might be resultants of inadequate capacity of schools and LGAs or involvement of communities in school management and project identification and implementations.

Though several studies (Kopweh, 2014; Matete, 2016; Mdee & Thorley, 2016; Mushemeza, 2019) have analysed reasons for poor delivery of education and lower academic performance of secondary school students' years after implementation of decentralization policy, studies to link accountability of education actors and delivery of education are missing in Tanzania. Furthermore, there is shortage of empirical scholarly evidences to substantiate the level and influence of accountability of education actors in Tandahimba and Mtwara Districts and its likely influence on delivery of quality education. Therefore, based on this background it was essential to conduct a study to establish level of accountability of education actors in relation to the current status of education delivery. In this study academic performance of secondary schools in selected councils was used as proxy to measure quality of education delivered in Tandahimba and Mtwara district councils. Therefore, this study evaluated roles or accountability of education actors (district education inspectorates, education officers, school management, school boards, LGA and community) in making sure that the objective of decentralization by evolution on improving education delivery is fulfilled.

## **Theoretical Underpinnings**

### **The Principal-Agency Theory**

The Principal-Agent Theory developed by William Meckling and Michael Jensen and in 1976 is suitable and appropriate for this study. The theory come up from an economic point of view of risk sharing that arise involving principals and agents (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). The theory is concerned with resolving the problems of trust that can occur in relationship between principal and agent. In an analysis made by Eisenhardt (1989), this theory reflects the relationship between Central Government as 'principal' and education actors (LGAs, schools and community) as 'agent' which depends on the level of decentralization of power and decision making to lower levels. Thus, this theory helped to better understand the importance of accountability by shading light on how well education actors are supposed to be informed and empowered to perform their roles for improved education service delivery.

**Table 1: Summary of Percentage Distribution of NECTA Form Four National Examinations Results for Selected secondary Schools in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs**

Years	Name of school												
	Div.	Chingungwe	Salama	Chanikanguo	Ndumbwe	Naputa	Mtiniko	Malocho	Lukokoda	Msimbati	Chaume	Michiga	Ndumbwe
2016	I-III	0.0	13.6	15.0	14.0	25.6	21.7	6.9	0.0	9.3	12.0	12.5	14.0
	IV	16.7	54.6	60.0	30.5	44.2	43.2	48.3	72.7	55.8	40.0	20.8	30.5
	Zero	83.3	31.8	25.0	55.5	30.2	35.1	44.8	27.3	34.9	48.0	66.7	55.5
2017	I-II	5.3	18.5	12.5	17.1	30.0	18.4	7.1	14.3	15.0	23.5	10.0	17.1
	IV	36.8	44.5	46.9	68.6	65.0	59.2	64.3	57.1	80.0	35.3	65.0	68.6
	Zero	57.9	37.0	40.6	14.3	5.0	22.4	28.6	28.6	5.0	41.2	25.0	14.3
2018	I-III	0.0	0.0	4.6	9.7	10.0	11.6	3.7	5.6	0.0	15.2	9.4	9.7
	IV	73.3	81.0	53.0	83.0	77.5	69.2	44.4	61.1	72.7	45.7	56.2	83.0
	Zero	26.7	19.0	42.4	7.3	12.5	19.2	51.8	33.3	27.3	39.1	34.4	7.3
2019	I-III	18.6	21.1	13.2	11.1	14.6	13.9	2.2	28.0	13.6	18.9	6.0	11.1
	IV	44.4	65.8	63.1	70.0	75.3	62.5	80.4	64.0	59.1	62.2	43.4	70.0
	Zero	37.0	13.1	23.7	18.9	10.1	23.6	17.4	8.0	27.3	18.9	50.6	18.9
2020	I-III	25.6	8.9	8.3	18.2	23.1	12.9	2.0	26.1	14.3	10.0	32.7	18.2
	IV	69.2	57.8	64.6	66.7	71.1	74.3	49.0	65.2	67.3	67.5	51.9	66.7
	Zero	5.1	33.3	27.1	15.1	5.8	12.8	49.0	8.7	18.4	22.5	15.4	15.1
2021	I-III	17.0	13.2	19.7	11.9	27.7	18.5	21.6	38.7	24.6	26.5	17.2	11.9
	IV	74.5	66.0	72.1	66.7	70.8	57.6	72.5	54.8	63.1	49.0	58.6	66.7
	Zero	8.5	20.8	8.2	21.4	1.5	23.9	5.9	6.5	12.3	24.5	24.1	21.4

Source: NECTA, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 & 2021

**Table 2: Summary of Percentage Distribution of NECTA Form Two National Examination Results for Selected secondary Schools in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs**

Years	Div.	Name of school												
		Madimba	Michenjele	Mkoreha	Ndumbwe	Naputa	Mtiniko	Dihimba	Libobe	Lukokoda	Chaume	Michiga	Chanikanguo	Chingungwe
2016	I-III	16.5	4.6	6.4	7.0	1.9	4.2	6.5	10.5	0.0	4.1	1.5	5.0	2.3
	IV	55.7	41.5	55.3	56.3	37.0	34.0	63.1	54.3	51.2	44.9	42.6	28.9	34.9
	Rept	27.8	53.8	38.3	36.7	61.1	61.8	30.4	35.2	48.8	51.0	55.9	66.1	62.8
2017	I-II	8.3	7.0	13.1	12.9	8.0	6.6	3.5	14.9	12.3	13.2	8.8	11.1	24.7
	IV	46.2	72.1	45.2	69.0	75.0	44.5	57.5	50.7	40.3	56.0	74.5	59.7	71.2
	Rept	45.5	20.9	41.7	18.1	17.0	48.9	10.9	43.3	47.4	30.8	16.7	29.2	4.1
2018	I-III	12.6	12.1	15.5	34.2	10.4	22.5	7.0	13.4	19.5	12.6	54.4	26.4	24.0
	IV	52.1	44.8	49.3	52.6	64.9	53.2	72.2	43.3	61.1	52.9	40.3	62.3	71.7
	Rept.	35.3	43.1	35.2	13.2	24.7	24.3	20.8	43.3	19.4	34.5	5.3	11.3	4.3
2019	I-III	8.7	26.7	25.6	17.5	22.6	12.3	25.0	25.8	30.0	21.5	26.5	29.5	31.5
	IV	60.0	46.6	62.2	62.5	57.9	65.2	58.3	57.7	60.0	69.2	72.0	62.8	66.7
	Rept.	31.3	26.7	12.2	20.0	19.5	22.5	16.7	16.5	10.0	9.2	1.5	7.7	1.8
2020	I-III	8.0	16.4	26.9	14.5	22.5	21.5	22.6	19.2	37.0	20.0	27.0	16.2	20.7
	IV	76.8	78.2	71.4	67.4	71.3	57.8	74.8	73.1	56.5	76.2	57.9	76.6	75.9
	Rept.	13.2	5.4	1.7	18.1	6.2	20.7	2.6	7.7	6.5	3.8	15.1	7.2	3.4
2021	I-III	14.4	16.9	4.0	11.2	24.2	13.0	7.3	24.2	24.5	14	5.7	28.9	6.5
	IV	74.3	53.0	64.0	66.4	6.7	65.8	63.5	62.1	67.3	54.7	48.9	62.2	89.1
	Rept.	11.3	30.1	32.0	22.4	7.1	21.2	29.2	13.7	8.2	31.3	45.4	9.9	4.3

Source: NECTA, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 & 2020

One of the constraints towards efficiency and effectiveness of decentralization is lack of accountability of central government to the local governments; this situation is likely to affect the relationship between Central and local governments. The greatest weaknesses of agency theory are related to assuming that principals and agents are self-interested and opportunistic ignoring a wider range of human motives. Irrespective of the criticism, principal agency theory is widely used in management of public affairs.

### **Public Choice Theory**

Public choice theory was put forward by James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock in their well-known publication 'The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy' that was published in 1962. Public choice theory attempts to describe how in the democratic set up the results of decision making can clash with the choice of the general public (Blume & Durlauf, 2008). Decisions in the public choice theory are results of dealings involving opposite groups, namely, voters, politicians and bureaucrats who have dissimilar interests. The theoretical underpinning of public choice states that politicians and bureaucrats decides in their favour without much consideration for the public (voters), who end up in pain and starvation in service delivery (Lemieux, 2004). As a result, when each group/camp's prioritise its interest, it will lead to bad governance and low efficiency and effective service delivery. Elected political leaders and education managers in local governments have to involve the community and other education stakeholders in the management of schools for better education delivery. Every participant (education actor) must be responsible and accountable to whatever needed to be done to achieve the goal of education policy. If these groups clash, education provision weakens and mass failure is a resultant. The theory builds on the fact that desired results cannot be achieved if education actors are not accountable for their actions and fulfil their responsibilities.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed cross-sectional explanatory design which was selected because data was gathered at one point in time due to time and resources constraint as suggested by Kothari (2012). Furthermore, this design was used since this study gathered data from different groups of education

actors as elucidated by Denscombe (2010) that cross-sectional design allows researchers to gather information about different groups in a short period of time. In this study, data was collected about District Education Officers, District Education Inspectors, Heads of Schools, Teachers Service Commission and school boards. Moreover, the study applied explanatory design for the purpose of explaining in detail the influence of decentralization on delivery of education (Denscombe, 2010). Basing on the purpose of this study, mixed methods approach was used (Pham, 2018). Thus in the lenses of decentralization, accountability of education actors were assessed by applying scientific principles of quantitative and qualitative research.

### **Population and Sampling**

The population for this study was made of 563 education administrators. These included all secondary schools' teachers, District Education Officers (DEO), Ward Education Officers (WEOs), District Education Inspectors (DEI) and Councillors in Mtwara and Tandahimba Districts. The sample size was 299 respondents. It was calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula. This formula was adopted because it is simple and it provides accurate sample size (Tejada & Punzala, 2012). The formula expressed as:  $n = N / 1 + N(e)^2$ . Where  $n$  = sample size,  $N$  = population size of all stakeholders with certain characteristics,  $e$  = precision factor coefficient (5%). In selecting the sample and key informants as well as FGD participants, the researchers applied both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Purposive sampling technique was applied to choose Mtwara Region, Tandahimba District Council, Mtwara District Council and the key informants (2 DEDs, 2 DEOs, 2 DEIs, and REO). Head of schools, academic teachers and other teachers were selected using a systematic sampling technique. Moreover, councilors and WEOs were purposively selected and were included in the sample for interview. Likewise, the study conveniently selected 10 teachers (5 in Tandahimba DC and 5 in Mtwara DC) and 10 parents who were willing to participate in focus group discussions.

### **Data Collection**

Primary quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire while primary qualitative data was solicited from key informants and focus group discussion members using an interview guide and checklist respectively. Quantitative and qualitative secondary data were summarized from education policy, NECTA results, district

education reports, regional education reports, scholarly books and journal articles.

### Data Analysis

Data collected using the structured questionnaire was summarized, coded and entered in Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) for analysis. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. Qualitative data was analysed using the thematic analysis approach to examine interview and FGDs transcripts so as to

discover patterns of frequent themes and sub-themes that addressed the research objectives of the study.

### Reliability

Reliability was tested for internal consistency using the Cronbach's alpha coefficients. As a rule of thumb, the values above 0.7 represent an acceptable level of internal reliability (Cohen et al., 2007).

**Table 3: Cronbach's Alphas Values and Number of Items for each Construct**

Indicators/items	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Accountability of district education inspectorates	.771	5
Accountability of district education officer	.717	8
Accountability of heads of schools and school management team	.838	10
Accountability of school board	.748	6
Accountability of teachers services commission	.683	3

Table 3 show a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of greater than 0.70 for each variable except for accountability of teachers' service commission which was very close to 0.70, and therefore it was taken as appropriate (Kipkebut, 2010).

### Results and Discussions

Analysis involved primary and secondary information. Primary data was reinforced with information gathered through critical analysis of a variety of reports and documents. In addition, findings from the questionnaire were complimented by in-depth interviews with district and region officials and focus group discussions with teachers. Five-point Likert scale was used to rate the level of accountability of education actors in a decentralized education delivery. The ratings were as follows: Mean  $\leq 1$ =Strongly Disagree, Mean  $>1 \leq 2$ =Disagree, Mean  $>2 \leq 3$ =Neutral, Mean  $>3 \leq 4$ = Agree, Mean  $>4 \leq 5$ =Strongly Agree.

#### Accountability of District Education Inspectorates

Results in Table 4 indicate that the item 'district education inspectorates effectively evaluate teaching practices in classrooms' averaged 4.17 (SD=0.95136) signifying that accountability is high in-terms of effectively evaluating teaching practices in the classrooms. The rest items scored Mean greater than 3 ( $M > 3$ ) implying that surveyed respondents agreed that DEIs were accountable for inspecting the way schools are managed, level of community participation in school administration, school infrastructure and training and development of teachers. According to public choice theory,

accountability of DEIs in delivery of decentralized education influences effective implementation of decentralization to deliver secondary school education, and hence improve academic performance of students. However, the situation in Tandahimba and Mtwara is contrary to what the theory proposes.

Focus group discussion supported that decentralization has brought some changes in terms of education inspection compared to before. This is in fulfilment of ERP, SEDP I, SEDP II and ETP. In similar point of view, the findings were corroborated by key informants during the in-depth interview by informing the study that school inspection is conducted frequently nowadays and teachers or heads of schools cannot know for certain when inspectors come so teachers are required to be ready and to prepared every time. During focus group discussion with parents and board members at Chingugwe Ward in Tandahimba DC, parents lamented that they are not involved in school matters and so they don't know if inspectors were coming as required or not. However, overall result suggests that accountability of district education inspectorate officers is high. This is corroborated by Adam (2022) who established that quality assurance officers regularly conduct Whole School Visit and prepare a school summary report card which indicates status and score of school in terms of how effective it is to deliver quality education to students.

**Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Accountability Parameters (N=229)**

Parameter/indicator	N	Mean	SD	Mean score interpretation
<b>District Education Inspectorate Officers</b>				
Effectively evaluate teaching practices in classroom	229	4.1703	.95136	Strongly agree
Inspect how heads of schools manage the school	229	4.2445	.81732	Strongly agree
Assess the level of community participation in school	229	4.1572	.84899	Strongly agree
Evaluate school infrastructure for education delivery	229	4.2183	.86116	Strongly agree
Assess teacher's training and development	229	3.5852	1.47730	Agree
Overall mean		4.0751	.99123	Strongly agree
<b>District Education Officers</b>				
Conduct the induction of teachers	229	3.9520	.92829	Agree
Deploy teachers properly and fairly	229	4.2052	.74148	Strongly agree
Balance the required number of teachers in schools	229	3.9520	.92355	Agree
Deals with teachers problems such as late promotions	229	2.3930	.86508	Neutral
Issue study leave without discrimination	229	4.0480	.80151	Strongly agree
Disciplining un-ethical teachers	229	4.0044	.89098	Strongly agree
Exams supervision	229	3.9869	.88595	Agree
Conduct meetings with stakeholders	229	4.2096	.73131	Strongly agree
Overall mean		3.8439	.84752	Agree
<b>Heads of Schools and Schools' Management Teams</b>				
Supervise school activities	229	4.2183	.66584	Strongly agree
Control school resources	229	3.9825	.84793	Agree
Planning of school projects	229	4.0044	.89098	Strongly agree
Ensure teachers' discipline	229	4.2009	.73972	Strongly agree
Supervise students' discipline	229	4.2926	.62617	Strongly agree
Development and enforcing teaching timetable	229	4.3493	.57755	Strongly agree
Conduct meetings with stakeholders	229	3.9738	.97297	Agree
Provide feedback to the community	229	3.9520	.92355	Agree
Frequently conduct school meetings with parents	229	4.2358	.70483	Strongly agree
Board members convene regularly	229	3.9651	.74845	Agree
Overall mean		4.1175	.76979	Strongly agree
<b>School Board</b>				
Planning of school development projects	229	3.7118	1.07805	Agree
Discipline management at school	229	4.0873	.82253	Strongly agree
Budgeting	229	3.8865	.88617	Agree
Provide feedback to community	229	3.9083	.82471	Agree
Make sure education is delivered to students	229	3.9039	.91739	Agree
Frequently convene to decide on school matters	229	4.1747	.69778	Strongly agree
Overall mean		3.9454	.87111	Agree
<b>Teachers Services Commission</b>				
To ensure teacher's discipline	229	3.5371	1.26167	Agree
To ensure teacher's promotion	229	3.2052	1.41631	Agree
To ensure teacher's welfare	229	3.2358	1.33651	Agree
Overall mean		3.3260	1.33816	Agree

**Scale:** Mean  $\leq 1$ =Strongly Disagree, Mean  $>1\leq 2$ =Disagree, Mean  $>2\leq 3$ =Neutral, Mean  $>3\leq 4$ = Agree, Mean  $>4\leq 5$ =Strongly Agree

However, the findings contradict with the theoretical argument of public choice theory, according to which accountability of DEIs in delivery of decentralized education influences the effective implementation of decentralization to deliver secondary school education, and hence improve academic performance of students. The contradiction is borne out of the existing low academic performance of secondary school

students in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs. According to the public choice theory, it would be expected that the academic performance of students in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs to be high. However, ground reality is contrary to the theoretical argument of public choice theory, which proposes that accountability of education actors influences decentralization process. The ground reality show low academic performance of secondary school

students in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs (NECTA, 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b; 2018a; 2018b; 2019a; 2019b; 2020a; 2020b; 2021a; 2021b).

### **Accountability of District Education Officers**

Findings in Table 4 indicate that district education officers are accountable ( $M > 3$ ) on all parameters except dealing with teachers' late promotion ( $M=2.39$ ,  $SD=.86508$ ), which implies that participants were neutral about the accountability of DEOs on teachers' late promotions. The highest scores were recorded on items 'conduct meetings with education stakeholders' and 'deploy teachers properly and fairly' which averaged ( $M=4.2096$ ,  $SD=.73131$ ) and ( $M=4.2052$ ,  $SD=.74148$ ) respectively. Overall mean score show that respondents agreed that district education officers are accountable to their responsibilities ( $M=3.8439$ ,  $SD=.84752$ ). Similar results were found in Meru district by Muro and Namusonge (2015) who posited that there are prospects for improving accountability in LGAs.

Findings of the study were confirmed during focus group discussion with teachers that district education officers were less concerned with the promotions of teachers among other teachers' welfare issues. The study was informed that there are teachers who had not been promoted since they were employed and it has been 10 years now or more. These findings are in conformity with public choice theory which explains that success of education delivery depends on the accountability of education actors. Accountability works on improving the quality of relationships between the different stakeholders in service delivery arrangements. On the contrary, Maulid (2017) found that accountability of DEO in Tanzanian LGAs is restricted in space by the higher authority. Similarly, Mdee and Thorley (2016) found that in LGAs in Tanzania there is no space and clear line for accountability. The accountability is unclear at all levels of the system which make citizens-led accountability jeopardized.

The main concern of accountability systems is to improve management and administration of resources in local government authorities in provision of social services such as education to the community. These efforts are originally concerned with making LGA more transparent and accountable. Generally, the findings imply that district education officers' accountability is high. Therefore, this study's point of view is that DEOs' accountability supports decentralization in

Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs. By itself, it would be expected that the academic performance of students in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs to be high. However, the situation in the two LGAs is different to what the public choice theory suggests. While the theoretical argument of public choice theory suggests that accountability of education actors influences decentralization process, the existing situation depict low academic performance of secondary school students in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs.

### **Accountability of Heads of Schools and School Management Team**

Results in Table 4 indicate that respondents agreed that the heads of schools and school management team are accountable in supervision of school activities ( $M=4.2183$ ,  $SD=.66584$ ). Also, the results reveal that heads of schools and school management team are accountable to control school resources ( $M=3.9825$ ;  $SD=.84793$ ). In additional, heads of schools and school management team were found to be responsible and accountable for planning of school projects ( $M=4.0044$ ,  $SD=.89098$ ). In general, overall results in Table 4 indicate that secondary school teachers agreed to all parameters ( $M=4.1175$ ,  $SD=.76979$ ). These findings are in line with public choice theory which explain that accountability of education actors such as school management team in supervision of school activities to control school resources and planning of school projects improves the impact of decentralization in education delivery. However, the actual situation in the selected LGAs is low academic performance reflecting inadequate delivery of education.

In view of that, the information which was presented in the focus group discussion with teachers enlighten the study that some heads of schools and school management teams fall short in accountability in some tasks or activities, specifically in controlling of school resources and provision of feedback to the community. During semi-structured interview with DEO of Tandahimba District Council, the study findings were confirmed and a little doubt was shed on the ability of some of the heads of schools. The study was informed that although most of heads of schools are accountable to their actions in the whole process of education management at their school, some heads of schools had proved beyond doubt to be burdens for their schools as they did not have managerial skills, experience and knowledge. Appointment of head of

school did not follow the available guideline but technical know who rather than technical knowhow. Some of heads of schools manage schools haphazardly.

Cuomo (2005) found that accountability helps to ensure rational use of public funds through compliance with rules, regulations, policies, procedures, ethical standards and management directives, efficient and effective operations of planned objectives, safeguarding institutional resources against forms of misuse, reliability of the financial records and timely reporting, regular auditing of institutional financial statements and the proper keeping of inventory records and their whereabouts. Jarl *et al.* (2011) adds that within schools, teachers have to be accountable to each other and to the stakeholders such as the parents, politicians, civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations within the community. The author further posited that the heads of schools and school management teams have to undergo training in planning, finance and budgeting because they are accountable for these functions and at the same time they have to keep an eye on the performance of the school.

The literature agrees with public choice theory that success of decentralized education delivery has its foundation on the transparency of responsibilities and accountability of school management team and head of school to community, school and LGA in implementation of education policies and activities. Thus, as teachers and education officers in Tandahimba and Mtwara District councils agreed that school management team and head of school are accountable to supervise school activities, control school resources, plan for school projects, ensure teachers' discipline, supervise students' discipline, develop and enforce teaching timetables, conduct meetings with stakeholders, provide feedback to community, and conducting school meetings with parents, there is high level of decentralization in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs. However, the status of academic performance is contrary to what public choice theory postulates. The academic performance is low in the selected LGAs suggesting poor delivery of education.

### **Accountability of School Board**

Results in Table 4 indicate that school boards are highly accountable with managing the discipline at school (M=4.0873, SD=.82253) and convening of board meeting to discuss schools' matters

(M=4.1747, SD=.69778). Besides, the findings indicate that school boards are accountable for planning of school development projects (M=3.7118, SD=1.07805). Furthermore, respondents agreed that school boards were accountable for budgeting process (M=3.8865, SD=.88617). Furthermore, participants agreed that board members made sure that education is delivered to students (M=3.9039, SD=.91739). The overall mean score indicate that participants agreed that board members were accountable to their tasks.

The findings corroborate with public choice theory which advocates for accountability of school board in order to have a successful decentralization in delivery of education. So with this level of accountability of school boards, the decentralization level might be high. As such, it was expected for academic performance to be high too, as in accordance with public choice theory. However, the status of academic performance of secondary school students is low. Thus, the theoretical arguments of public choice theory and principal-agent theory which propose that decentralization leads to effective delivery of education is refuted.

### **Accountability of Teachers' Service Commission**

Results in Table 4 depict that TSC is accountable for making sure teachers' welfare is improved (M=3.2358, SD=.1.33651) on average. Similar results were indicated for item 'accountable for ensuring teachers' discipline' (M=3.5371, SD=1.26167) meaning teachers service commission is accountable for teachers' discipline. In the same line of thought, results in Table 4 show that surveyed teachers and district education officers reported that teachers' service commission is accountable to ensure teachers' promotions (M=3.2052, SD=.1.41631).

Though accountability of TSC officers falls under the scale of agreeing, these results are in line with the public choice theory which suggests that success of education delivery depends on accountability of education actors such as teachers' service commission in the management of teachers.

The findings were corroborated by the information which was presented in the focus group discussion with teachers. The study was informed that TSC is accountable in disciplining un-ethical teachers rather than ensuring teachers' welfare which is a task of teachers union and workers union. Though TSC was found to be accountable in its

responsibilities, the status of academic performance in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs is contrary to what public choice theory suggests. The academic performance is low, suggesting poor education delivery in the study areas. This refutes public choice theory, which suggests that success of education delivery depends on the clearly defined responsibilities and accountability of education actors regarding the administration of education sector, which is the case in this study. Thus, the proposition is that there is high level of accountability of education actors but the status of academic performance is low. Therefore, accountability of education actors has not helped the delivery of education in the selected LGAs.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusion

The study concludes that education actors were accountable in their roles in the whole process of implementing decentralisation to improve delivery of education in secondary schools in Tandahimba and Mtwara DCs, Tanzania. The heads of schools and management teams were most accountable followed by district inspectorate officers, school board, district education officers and lastly the teachers' service commission. Findings of this study corroborate with public choice theory which advocates for accountability of education actors in order to have successful decentralisation in delivery of education. While it was expected for academic performance to be high as per the public choice theory, the status of academic performance of secondary school students was low.

Thus, the theoretical argument of public choice theory which proposes that decentralisation leads to effective delivery of education is refuted. Therefore, accountability of head of schools and school management team has not supported effective decentralisation in delivery of education in the selected LGAs. However, the qualitative results revealed that parents were not involved in school management. Moreover, some heads of schools were burdens in their schools as they did not have managerial skills, experience and knowledge. This reduced the accountability of heads of schools and school management teams. As such, the unimpressive level of accountability might be associated with the low academic performance of students.

## Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, this study recommends that the local government should enhance the accountability of head of schools and school management teams by involving community and parents in the management of schools. Furthermore, heads of schools and school management teams are required to comprehend the importance of community participation in school matters. Moreover, heads of schools have to be trained after being appointed so as to impart them with managerial knowledge and skills so as to regulate their performance and eventually their accountability.

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