

An analysis of existing evidence around perceptions of the Tanzanian education system

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Question

Produce an analysis of existing evidence around perceptions of the Tanzanian education system.

Areas to cover:

- *Positive and negative perceptions of the Tanzanian education system in general, and the reasons behind those perceptions.*
- *What are the views about when children should start and stop formal schooling? What are the views of different levels of education, and which is most important?*
- *What skills do children need the most for their future, and are these skills being developed in schools?*
- *What happens to children who drop out of school, what are their options?*

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1. Overview

This Helpdesk report has been commissioned to help understand the extent to which the education system currently meets young people's needs and how far the school represents a safe space for young people. In line with the plan to gather insights and identify trends, themes and areas for discussion for policy meetings about the wider population's views on the above issues, the following datasets were identified for this report:

- Ipsos MORI Omnibus Survey, Tanzania, 2016
Responses to the latest nationally representative omnibus survey.
- OPM, 2016. EQUIP-Tanzania Impact Evaluation. Midline Technical Report, Volume I: Results and Discussion and Midline Technical Report, Volume II Methods and Supplementary Evidence
These reports present the findings from the midline (ML) round of the Education Quality Improvement Programme in Tanzania (EQUIP-T) impact evaluation (IE).
- Twaweza, 2016. Reality Check, Citizens' views on education in a fee free era
In this brief the views of citizens about the state of education in Tanzania over the last one year are presented.
- Twaweza, 2016. A New Dawn? Citizens' views on new developments in education
This policy brief presents citizens views and experiences with the public provision of basic education.
- Twaweza, 2015. The key to life? Citizens' views on education
This brief reports citizens' views on education, with a focus on the quality of secondary school education.
- Twaweza, 2014. What's going on in our schools? Citizens reflect on the state of education
This brief reports the most recent citizen opinions and facts on schools and learning in Tanzania.
- Twaweza, 2013. Form Four Examination Results Citizens report on the learning crisis in Tanzania
In this brief Uwazi at Twaweza contributes to the debate surrounding the Form Four examination results of 2012, presenting the most recent nationally representative education data available to date.

2. Positive and negative perceptions of the Tanzanian education system in general, and the reasons behind those perceptions

2.1 Positive perceptions

Education has improved since the introduction of free education: According to Twaweza (2016b), 76% of those surveyed believed the introduction of free education would improve quality by improving the teaching environment (p.3). According to Twaweza (2016a), 50% of those surveyed reported that the quality of education has improved, 35% stated that it has remained the same and 15% believed that it has deteriorated (p.2). However, according to Twaweza (2016b), half of citizens surveyed think that the quality of primary education has improved over

the last ten years, so it is unclear if those citizens questioned for Twaweza (2016a) are also more optimistic about improvements in the education system in general.

Schools are capable of providing children's requirements without parental contributions:

69% of those questioned for Twaweza (2016a) believed that public schools will be able to fully provide for pupils (including food, education resources, water and security) without parental contributions. Moreover, 73% agree that this is what schools should be doing (p.3). In addition, 88% of citizens are optimistic that the policy to provide free education would be implemented according to schedule (Twaweza, 2016b). However, despite this optimism, Twaweza (2016b) found that, of the 90% of parents who made financial contributions towards their child's public school education, their contributions paid for i) security (66%), ii) tests (57%), iii) desks (34%), iv) graduation parties (4%) and v) school trips (4%) (p.4). This is relevant because the allocation of the Capitation Grant is 40% for textbooks, 20% for writing materials, 10% for administration and 10% for examination papers and printing. So only some of the items that parents contribute towards can be covered by the administrative allocation (p.4).

Over half of citizens agree that primary school adequately prepares pupils for secondary school:

There is reported 'widespread faith' in the school system, with 6/10 citizens believing that pupils are prepared for the transition to secondary school (Twaweza, 2015). However, responses differ according to levels of education either directly or indirectly experienced by citizens. Whilst 64% of the general population believe that pupils are prepared, this falls to 62% for parents of secondary school pupils and to 50% for those who have graduated from Form 4 only (p.4).

2.2 Negative perceptions

The private system provides better quality education than the public system: In response to Twaweza (2016a), 80% of respondents reported to have children attending school and 90% of those stated that their children attended a public school. However, 60% reported that they would send their child to private school if both public and private schools were fee-free, compared to only 36% who would send their children to public school. The reasons for this include i) private schools provide a better education (45%) ii) teachers are more motivated and hardworking in private schools (21%) and iii) there are more teachers in private schools (12%) (p.5).

The quality of education will deteriorate with the introduction of free education: 15% of those surveyed for Twaweza (2016b) believed that the rapid increase in enrolment as a result of the free education policy would stretch resources. In addition, 49% thought that some pupils would fail due to the prohibition of extra classes, and 22% believed that there would not be enough teaching materials (p.3). The fear about textbooks is in line with responses to Twaweza (2013), in which 55% of parents of children in primary school reported that their children do not have access to textbooks. The situation is better at secondary school, with 54% of parents stating that their child has at least two books, although 32% report that their child has no access to textbooks (p.4). 10% of parents also reported that they did not know about their child's access to books (p.4).

Citizens have both low perceptions and expectations of learning outcomes: Only 10% believe that over 75% of pupils have developed appropriate reading and numeracy skills by the end of Standard 2, compared to 35% who believe that less than 25% of pupils have acquired such skills (Twaweza, 2014 p.5). These perceptions are largely correct and may even be optimistic, as Uwezo learning assessments demonstrate that only 20% of children in Standard 3

can read a simple story in Kiswahili and complete basic multiplication (p.5). Twaweza (2013) also found that 72% of primary school students and 66% of secondary school students cannot multiply (p.8). Interestingly, only 31% of respondents to Twaweza (2014) state that over 75% of pupils *should* be able to perform at their grade level, meaning that expectations are also low.

83% of citizens are also aware of low achievement and downward trend in the Certificate of Secondary School Examination results (Twaweza, 2013 p.3). However, 71% could not identify how many pupils scored Division 0, so although there is a general awareness of low performance there is not a high level of knowledge of actual achievement.

According to the 2015 Twaweza survey results, citizens have particularly low expectations of secondary school graduates – as the brief reports, to expect pupils to be able to read and write fluently after ten years of education is a modest expectation. Interestingly, critical thinking comes above numeracy and basic maths, whilst 16% of respondents did not know what the most important skill should be (p.3). However, the most popular responses to what career parents hoped for their children were doctor – 29% and teacher – 27%, which do not necessarily match the low expectations parents hold for what they hope their children will learn at school (although it should be noted that the question about Form 4 graduate skills was asked to all respondents whereas the question about careers was targeted only at parents of secondary school children).

Lack of parental engagement, school infrastructure and poor student performance are perceived to be the top three challenges facing the education system in 2016: 85% of respondents to Twaweza (2016a) reported a lack of parental involvement to be a serious problem, followed by 83% identifying school infrastructure and poor student performance. Lack of student discipline was also identified as an issue by 79% of respondents (p.6).

20% of parents/guardians reported never to have met their child's teacher, with over half (57%) having only visited their child's school once or twice over the last twelve months (Twaweza, 2016 p.6). The percentage of parents who have never helped out at their child's school is even higher at 88% (p.6). Interestingly, there is a discrepancy between what parents think their responsibility is at school and what they do: 88%, the same percentage as those who have never helped out at school, claim that 'it is their responsibility as citizens to actively contribute to improving the quality of education in public schools' (p.7).

There does appear to be more parental engagement with children's exercise books and homework, despite seven out of ten pupils reporting that they are given homework 'rarely' or 'never' (Twaweza, 2014 p.3). 35% of parents reported that they had inspected their child's exercise book in the week before the interview and 29% on the day of the interview. However, 41% of parents did report to having either checked a long time ago or never. A more positive picture is reflected by the 2014 Twaweza survey, in which 68% of children report that their parents review their exercise books 'most of the time' or 'always' (p.3) – this more positive view of course could be down to differing interpretations as to what children define as 'most of the time'. Regarding homework, there was a relatively even split between those parents who had helped their child with their homework in the past week (41%) and those who had never (or a long time ago) helped (41%) (Twaweza, 2013 p.6).

The midline report from the EQUIP-Tanzania Impact Evaluation programme (EQUIP-T) may offer some insights into why parents may not become more involved in school matters. It is reported that, whilst teachers feel that parents do not value education, parents feel that teachers look down on them, feel ignored on certain issues and fear repercussions on their children's learning

if they do challenge teachers ((OPM, 2016a p.xi). In addition, some parents commented that communities do not hold enough knowledge to hold schools to account for the standard of education that they are providing (p.xi), particularly those parents who themselves are not educated and may be illiterate. In focus group discussions a number of parents reported that they felt unable to comment on progress or the quality of teaching and that the teacher knew best (p.94).

A lack of parental involvement may also be partly attributed to a disjunction between parents' general positive perceptions of education and a family's socioeconomic reality. Both respondents and teachers in the EQUIP-T midline report acknowledge that poorer families need their children to contribute to the household, despite all parents confirming that they want their children to receive a good education. In addition, teachers point to the current lack of economic returns to education in pastoralist communities as reinforcing local beliefs that education is not only unnecessary but even a barrier to the pastoralist way of life. So although parents appear to generally hold a positive view of the idea of education, they may not view it as feasible or even desirable within their own socioeconomic reality (OPM, 2016a p.95).

Key to further involvement of parents and communities in education appears to be improved relationships between parents and teachers. Effective village and school meetings, more regular communication between schools and parents, and community initiatives to raise awareness of entitlement and best practice in quality education have also been raised as ways to improve parental involvement in their children's education. OPM's research found that improving the relationship between parents and teachers in particular led to parents feeling more responsible for both their children's education and school development, and also made them feel more confident about being actively involved (OPM, 2016a p.94).

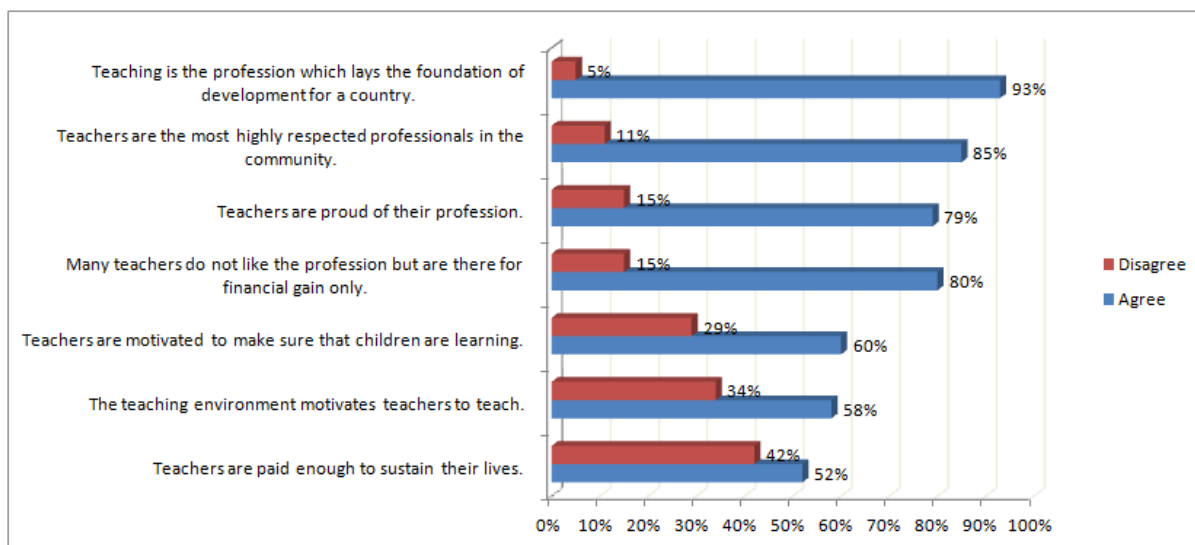
2.3 Perceptions of teachers

The role of teachers

One third of respondents to Twaweza (2016a) identified the **shortage of teachers** as a problem, further reflected by beliefs that the private schools offer a better quality of education due to there being more teachers (p.1). **Teacher absenteeism** was also reported to be an issue, with responses from pupils who attended school the day before the survey showing that only 3 out of 10 teachers were in class for the expected time: in 38% of reported cases the teachers was not in class at all (Twaweza, 2014, p.3). This experience is further supported by Twaweza (2013), which found that around 30% of primary and secondary pupils had a teacher present in all lessons, 59% reported that teachers attended some lessons and not others, and 10% reported that no teacher taught them the last day that they were in school (pp.5-6). In addition, the 2013 Twaweza survey found that more than one teacher is typically responsible for pupils, which can mask higher rates of absenteeism. Other identified practice is teachers turning up to a lesson, giving out an assignment and then leaving (p.6).

80% of citizens also believe that **teachers do not like their profession despite being proud of it** (Twaweza, 2016, p.2). The following statements illustrate the views held by citizens about teachers:

Table 1: How much do you agree with the following statements¹



On the one hand, 80% believe that teachers are only in the profession for financial gain. However, almost half (42%) do not agree that teachers are paid enough to sustain their lives. This could mean that up to 28% of respondents believe that teachers are in a profession for the money even though it does not pay well enough to sustain their lives². Furthermore, when asked what would motivate teachers further to provide a good quality of education to pupils, by far the most popular response was salary increment with 56% - good working conditions came next with 19% (p.6).

This citizen view is reflected by anecdotal evidence from a Twaweza survey in which 96% of surveyed teachers claimed to be dissatisfied with their job, with one third reporting that they would not choose a teaching job again, mainly due to a harsh work environment (38%) and low salary (26%) (Twaweza, 2016b p.8).

Teachers as key to improving the quality of education

In the 2016b Twaweza survey, half of respondents connected learning outcomes (positive and negative) to the role of teachers: the effort they made, the lack of teachers or that they spent time looking for other income. Only 7% mentioned student absenteeism and parents not following up on their children’s efforts as a factor, with the same percentage identifying parent and teacher cooperation. A significant number - 29% - of respondents did not know the drivers of learning outcomes at the end of primary school (p.5).

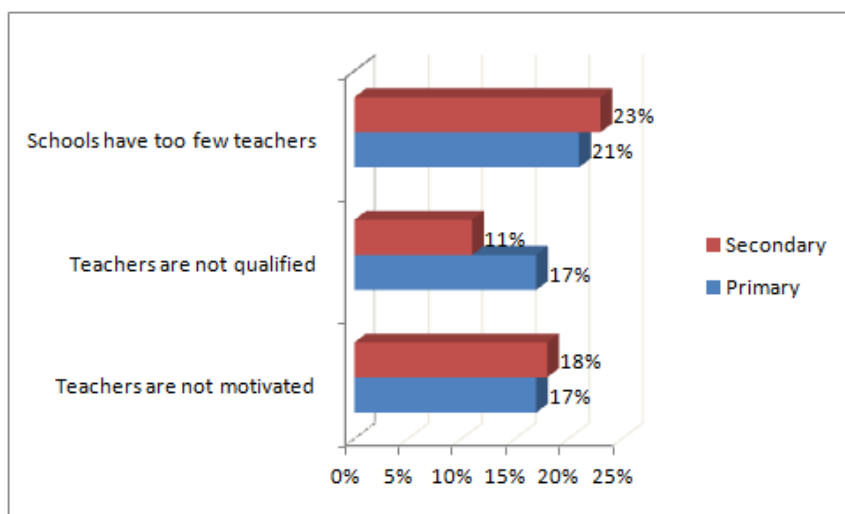
34% of respondents to Twaweza (2013) also attributed responsibility for the poor performance of pupils in the 2012 Form Four results to teachers, although slightly more – 38% - blamed the government. Only 8% held pupils themselves to account, 7% blamed the Ministry of Education and just 3% and 1% attributed responsibility parents or the community (p.9). In the same survey,

¹ Twaweza, A New Dawn? 2016, p. 6. Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey – Round 7 (December 2015/January 2016)

² Note that this statement is not verifiable as the data used refers to percentages rather than numbers of respondents.

respondents identified issues related to teachers as the top three main obstacles which were preventing pupils in their community from passing exams:

Table 2: Parents' perceptions of the main obstacles to children passing their exams³



In line with the identified obstacles, when asked what the government should do to improve the quality of education in secondary school teachers were again the focus on respondents' solutions (Twaweza, 2014 p.9):

- 24% advised the government to increase the number of teachers in schools
- 17% advised the government to work towards improving the quality of teachers
- 13% advised the government to increase teacher salaries and pay teachers on time

Twaweza (2016a) reports that '*citizens' assessment of education outcomes is still limited to school inputs and infrastructure as opposed to learning outcomes*' (p.10). Certainly, when asked about the challenges facing public schools since becoming fee free, respondents identified a lack of teachers, lack of desks, lack of classrooms and lack of books as the top four challenges (p.4). However, in the Taweza (2016b) only 10% of respondents identified increasing the number of teachers as a way for the government to improve the quality of primary education, considerably behind following up on teachers' performance (40%) and increasing salaries (19%) (p.7). Furthermore, although 66% of citizens in the 2016 Reality Check survey identified finding and retaining good teachers as a 'serious problem', the issue came fifth behind i) lack of parental involvement (85%) ii) school infrastructure (83%), iii) poor student performance (83%) and iv) lack of student discipline (79%). In fact, 24% of respondents reported that finding and retaining good teachers was 'not a serious problem' (p.6).

Based upon these results, the challenges facing schools identified by respondents in Twaweza (2016a) do not appear to be in line with a) the identified leading problems facing schools and b) the advice for the government on how to improve the quality of schools. Whilst it is not possible to draw strong conclusions as to why this is, one explanation could be the difference in the wording of the questions. An optimistic analysis could be that, despite the claim in Twaweza (2016a) that citizens are judging education outcomes on inputs and infrastructure, more citizens

³ Twaweza, 2014 p.10. Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi, Mobile Phone Survey – Round 1, April 2013

are becoming aware that monitoring the effectiveness of teachers, rather than just their number, is important to improving the education system.

2.4 Perceptions of equity

Regarding disability, a large majority of respondents reported that schools in their community did not cater for disabled pupils – 85% of 1987 respondents. However, for the 297 respondents who reported that schools did cater for disabled pupils, their views are positive. Only 4% of 297 respondents claimed that the quality of education provided to students within communities was very poor and 56% rated it as high or very high. So it appears that, although schools generally do not cater for children with disabilities, where they do the quality of education is perceived in a positive light by the local community.

Gender is not explicitly addressed in the Twaweza surveys, although one issue that stands out is the high percentage of pupils who are taught by male teachers – 76% according to Twaweza 2014 (p.2). Respondents to the IPSOS survey did report that, on the whole, male and female pupils are treated equally (86%). Interestingly, more respondents felt that schools treated girls better than boys (7.95%) than vice versa (5.64%). However, when it comes to who is more likely to drop out of school, respondents overwhelmingly reported that girls were more likely to than boys (74% compared to 5%), although 20% believed that boys and girls were equally likely to drop out of school.

Perceptions on early pregnancy and schooling were gathered in the 2016a Twaweza survey. 62% of respondents believed that girls should be allowed back into school after giving birth, although only 7% agreed that she should be able continue with school whilst pregnant (p.8). With 21% of respondents believing that the pregnant girl should be permanently expelled, it would appear that a majority of citizens are against official government policy which expels pregnant girls from both primary and secondary school, although a sizable minority believe that she should not go back to school after having given birth.

3. What are the views about when children should start and stop formal schooling? What are the views of different levels of education, and which is most important?

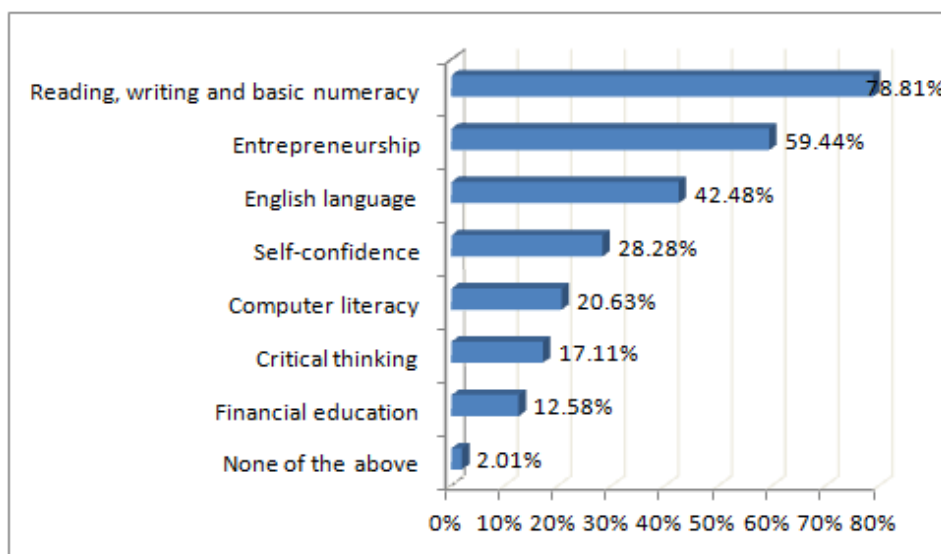
Almost all respondents (97%) to the Ipsos survey believed that children should go to preschool, although there were different views about what age they should start. 40% thought children should start aged 5, 28% at aged 4 and 21% at aged 3. However, only 9% identified preschool as the most important stage of education. 41% selected higher education/university as the most important stage, followed by secondary with 25%, primary with 14% and technical/vocational with 9%. Reflecting the view that secondary education is important, 85% of respondents agreed that all children should go to secondary school.

4. What skills do children need the most for their future, and are these skills being developed in schools?

As can be seen from Table 3 below, reading, writing, and basic numeracy were identified as an important area for schools to develop by respondents to the 2016 Ipsos survey. 60% of

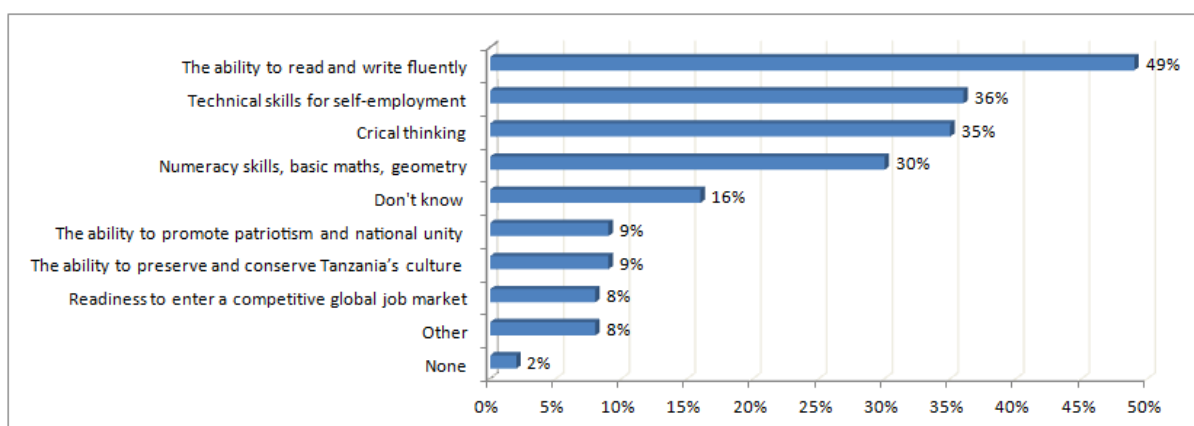
respondents to this survey also agreed that the skills that children needed for the future were being developed in schools.

Table 3: Of this list, which three skills do children in your community need most for their future?⁴



Partly in line with the Ipsos responses, the 2015 Twaweza survey found that the most important skill was viewed by respondents as having the ability to read and write fluently. Having the technical skills for self-employment was reasonably highly rated by respondents, reflecting the second most important skill identified by respondents of the Ipsos survey of entrepreneurship. However, the importance of having technical skills for self-employment is somewhat at odds with the top two career aspirations (doctor and teacher) that parents had for their children (Twaweza, 2015).

Table 4: What is the first most important skill that a Form 4 graduate should have?⁵



Another skill identified by parents and worth mentioning in light of the change of language policy is that 42% of citizens identified the English language as an important skill for pupils in their

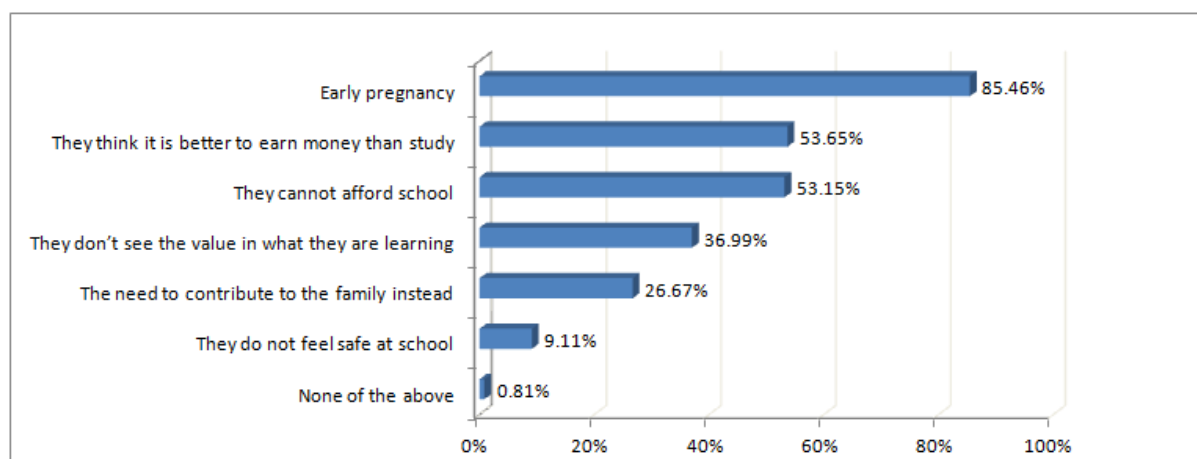
⁴ Ipsos, 2016 Q.5

⁵ Twaweza, 2015 p.3. Source of data: Sauti za Wananchi Mobile Phone Survey - Round 27 (November 2014)

community. This preference is also mirrored by respondents to the 2015 Twaweza survey, of whom 63% reported that ‘English should be the language of instruction for both primary and secondary school’ (p.5). Although the 2015 Twaweza survey was conducted in the context of switching language from Kiswahili at primary to English at secondary school, the brief nevertheless notes that ‘English skills are in huge demand’ (p.6). The surveys to date do not ask respondents their views on adopting Kiswahili as the medium of instruction in both primary and secondary school, so it has not been possible to gauge reactions. It remains to be seen to what extent English skills will be developed when it is classed as a foreign language.

5. What happens to children who drop out of school, what are their options?

Table 5: Of this list, which do you think are the three most common reasons young people drop out of school?⁶



Ipsos 2016 asked respondents why young people drop out of school (see Table 5 above), but did not ask what happened to them. By far the most drop out due to early pregnancy, and according to Twaweza (2016a), 21% of respondents reported to know a female family member who had dropped out of either primary or secondary school due to pregnancy. Of those respondents, 72% reported that the girls became housewives (p.8).

6. Are schools considered a safe place? What are the biggest dangers/challenges young people face at school?

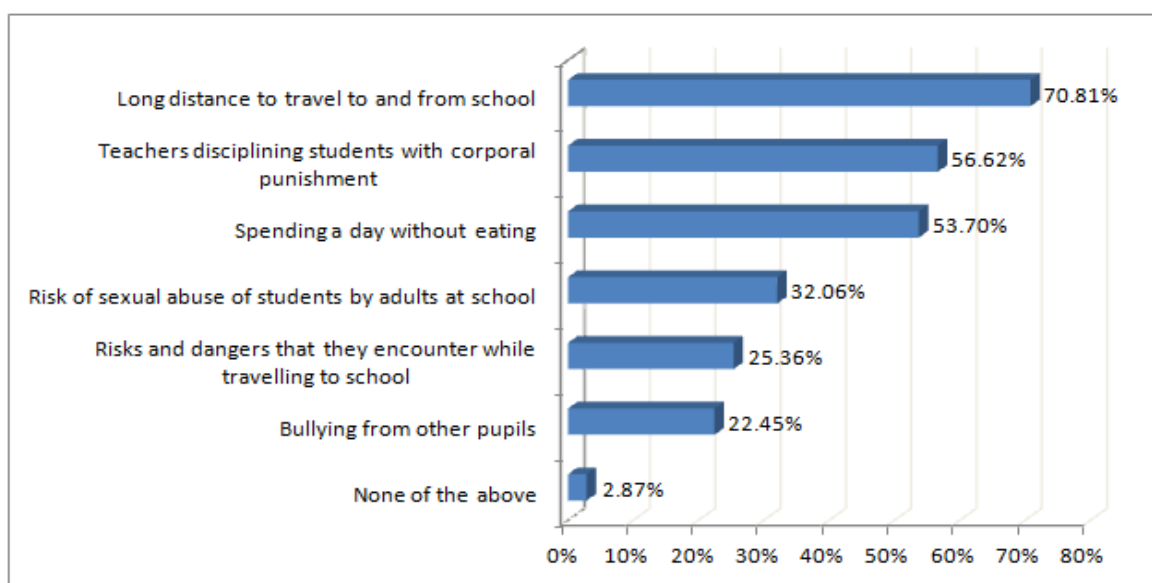
Although the Ipsos survey asked whether schools were considered safe places, it was part of the same question as ‘what are the biggest dangers/challenges young people face at school?’ and the respondents were only required to respond to the latter. However, out of the 6 identified common challenges that pupils face at school (see Table 6 below), 3 were dangers faced within school: i) teachers disciplining students with corporal punishment (57%), ii) risk of sexual abuse

⁶ Ipsos, 2016 Q.15

of students by adults at school (32%) and iii) bullying by other pupils (22%). This would suggest that schools are not considered a particularly safe place for pupils.

In addition, teachers were reported as being the most likely to bully or harass students, with 70% of respondents identifying teachers compared to 13% identifying other students. Still, three quarters of respondents agreed that 'teachers should be allowed to use canes to keep discipline in the classroom'. When asked what other methods of discipline were used by teachers, a minority (4%) of respondents identified kicking, although this was behind farming (62%), fetching water (44%) and digging pit latrines (25%). This implies that, excluding the cane, pupils are not generally physically beaten by teachers to maintain discipline.

Table 6: Are schools considered a safe place, and are teachers people that children/parents can trust? Of this list, please rank the three most common challenges that students face at school?⁷



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⁷ Ipsos, 2016 Q.16

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About this report

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