# Enhancing Community Participation in Government-Funded School Projects in Morogoro Region

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**ABSTRACT:** The study investigated the strategies for enhancing community participation in government–funded school project in Morogoro region. The study used case study research design to determine the strategies from a total sample of 23 comprising of 10 Head Masters, 1 Ward Councillor, 2 Ward Educational Officers and 10 School Board Chairmen. Semi-structured interviews were used in collecting data which were then analzyed using thematic analysis. The study found that, early community involvement in project design ensures educational initiatives are more relevant, effective and sustainable. Community contributions in constructing classrooms and laboratories, supported by government funding, enhance the academic environment and promote practical learning opportunities, particularly in science. Furthermore, engaging the community in supervising and securing school projects strengthens accountability and fosters a sense of ownership, improving long-term project sustainability. The study recommends that government-funded school projects should actively involve community members from the outset to reflect local needs, encourage participation in building educational facilities through various contributions, provide clear guidelines for overseeing projects, maintain ongoing community engagement for security and upkeep, and implement training programs to enhance management and collaboration skills among school and community leaders.

**KEYWORDS**: Community, Strategies, School, Government-funded Projects

## INTRODUCTION

Community participation is a crucial ingredient for success in the implementation and sustainability of government-funded school projects (Biwott, 2020). The situation is worse in the Morogoro Region of Tanzania. Several factors contributing to limited effective community participation have been identified, including limited involvement of stakeholders, ineffective practices in project management, and socio-economic constraints that have resulted in delays and inefficiencies in government-funded school projects. Study by Ochola (2020) show that active involvement by the local community in school projects promotes a sense of ownership and may speed up the completion of the project. In many instances, however, other factors such as the practice of project management and availability of funds play a greater role in the success of these projects (Ali & Hassan, 2024). Even where communities get involved, their roles are minimal when project managers do not actively involve them in planning and implementation. The project should involve community participation, but participation alone is not the main gauge of success, but efficient management and resource allocation are also considered essential in determining the chances of success.

Socioeconomic status conditions also limit the communities' involvement in project implementation. For example, a small number of educated community members impacts participation and contribute significantly to the planning process (Hagarsu et al., 2020). Communities like Morogoro residents depend on farming, mainly for subsistence; as a result, the livelihood problems compel them to minimize time spent on education projects (Ojoyi et al., 2015). These are the socio-economic barriers that underline the need for a multi-faceted approach beyond just community. Therefore, this study focused on investigating the strategies for enhancing community participation in government–funded school project in Morogoro region.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study was to investigated the strategies for enhancing community participation in government–funded school project in Morogoro region. The following specific objectives were addressed during the study;

1. To determine strategy for community involvement in government–funded school projects.
2. To determine community contributions in government–funded school projects.
3. To determine ways of engaging the community in government–funded school projects.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Community Involvement in School Development

Kinyata and Abiodun (2020) study on the impact of community involvement in project success across Africa presents a compelling case for the pivotal role of citizen involvement in the development process. The study considered that, when communities are empowered to meaningfully contribute to various critical functions such as yielding of significant gains in the management of public resources, along with a decrease in corruption.

A depth of community involvement ensures that civil servants and political leaders are more accountable to the people they serve. It is in this view that it considers one of the leading causes of chronic poverty in most parts of Africa to be the deficiency in political voice among the poor and marginalized/otlin-disadvantaged citizens.

Graced with this knowledge, the present study sought to understand how participatory budgeting at the local community level could be better facilitated and enhanced. This means that through the introduction of these participatory approaches, the study intends to empower active citizens in contributing to shaping development initiatives that directly impinge on the concerns of their communities. In turn, it ensures increased transparency and accountability, rendering responses articulate in the management of public resources for more equitable and sustainable development outcomes.

Njogu (2014) examined community involvement in rural borehole water projects financed through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in Kerwa sub-location in Kiambu County. The study focused on the Nyakiada water project and found that low levels of community engagement in budgeting and procurement processes were associated with suboptimal project outcomes. The study emphasizes that the active involvement of the community within the administration and oversight functions, such as tendering and procurement, forms part of active project cycle functions. In fact, such active involvement helps boost accountability and ensures transparency in the processes that increase efficiency within resource use and the accomplishment of the undertaking objectives. The study also highlights the pivotal role of community involvement in improving the success and sustainability of CDF-funded projects, including infrastructure projects such as rural water systems and school buildings. By empowering local stakeholders to be involved in budgeting, procurement, and monitoring, projects can better align with community needs and foster greater ownership and commitment from beneficiaries.

### Community Contributions in School Projects

Kabarere et al. (2017) conducted an investigation into parental contributions at high- and low-performing schools in the Gasabo district of Rwanda. They observed that one of the major succeeding factors in education was parental contributions. Parents in the rural areas were seriously contributing for constructing some of the important infrastructures, such as classroom construction to upgrade the quality of secondary education.

It also established that, parental contributions in education solely depend on parental involvement but required the involvement of the community within school activities. Under this approach, achieving quality education is said to require support from the community as a whole and not individually through separate parents, thus filling the important gap in the understanding of how comprehensive community involvement can make a difference for educational outcomes to improve in rural areas.

### Engaging the Community in School Projects

Kinyanjui (2017) investigated the relationship between the financial literacy of project management committee members in Kiharu constituency and the accountability standards observed in CDF-funded projects. The findings indicated that the higher the financial literacy skills of the committee members, the more the accountability standards were followed, hence bringing about great transparency and efficiency in resource use in the projects. These findings imply that, financial understanding is improved in project managers, it would go a long way in ensuring integrity and success of community development projects.

According to Ntuala, (2010) improvement in the financial literacy of the project management committees will provide an opportunity for these stakeholders to become more capable of monitoring expenses. In addition to that, identifying and reducing cases of collusion or fraud, and ensuring that funds are used in ways it corresponds with the intended purposes of the CDF program and local community needs. Ultimately, results from this study can be used to help shape policy interventions and capacity-building efforts that seek to strengthen the financial oversight and accountability of community-driven development initiatives.

Dass and Rinquest (2017) noted that if issues of socio-economic status and disparity in access to education were anything to go by, then government efforts to fund schools and involving communities, especially secondary schools, should be addressed. The funds are for the maintenance of school property, purchasing of learning and support material and equipment, and paying for services rendered to the school. Because the funds are enormous, management needs a team whose financial capability is apt. Such, the involvement of parents would be an avenue to inject the concept of accountability and transparency. This has been the concern for the current study.

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## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study was conducted using case study research design which looks into cases in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the context of specific cases. A case study research design also examines the particularity and complexity of a case, coming to understand its activities and particular circumstances (Stake, 1995).

### Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A total of 23 sample size of participants was used comprises of 10 Head Masters, 1 Ward Councillor, 2 Ward Educational Officers and 10 School Board Chairmen. The number of participants was determined due to the nature of the study that required qualitative information, and saturation of the data needed (Silverman, 2013; Creswell, 2012).

Purposive sampling techniques were employed in the selection of respondents. This non-probability sampling method was chosen to ensure that individuals with specific knowledge and experiences related to the educational landscape were included, thereby enhancing the depth and relevance of the data collected (Palinkas et al., 2015). Selecting key stakeholders directly involved in educational governance and administration, the study aimed to gather insights that reflect the complexities and dynamics of community engagement in the educational sector.

### Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interviews were employed for data collection from respondents to allow for a flexible yet focused approach. This method enabled the interviewer to ask predetermined questions while also facilitating the exploration of emerging themes and ideas relevant to the study. As noted by Kvale (2007), semi-structured interviews provide a balance between structured and open-ended questioning, allowing for richer, more nuanced responses. This approach is particularly beneficial in educational research, where understanding the participants' perspectives can lead to deeper insights into community involvement and educational outcomes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

### Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed through identification and generation of initial themes based on the codes developed in the previous phase. The researcher looked for shared patterns and meanings across the dataset, compiling clusters of codes that represented core ideas or concepts relevant to the research questions. Themes, which were broader than codes, served as the unit of analysis and helped interpret the data and develop arguments. The themes were derived from the data, the research questions, and the researcher's knowledge. Both inductive and deductive approaches were used, and tables and matrices were employed to aid in organizing the emergent themes for coding. This phase enabled the selection of appropriate themes to draw meaningful conclusions in line with the study's objective.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Community Involvement in Government–Funded School Projects

The first specific objective of this study was to determine strategy for community involvement in government-funded projects in Morogoro regions. Findings have revealed that community involvement from the early stages of project design is vital for enhancing local education infrastructure and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders, as evidenced in the following quotation;

. "By engaging the community early on, we ensured that their perspectives were included in decision-making, which made the implementation process smoother and more successful" (WEO1, Personal Communication, 21 August 2024).

Findings also indicate that early involvement school projects are both successful and sustainable. A key example of this approach is the Science Education in Secondary Schools (SESS) project, launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1996, aimed at improving classroom performance in secondary science and mathematics.

Furthermore, findings indicate that involving local community members from the start allow projects to better align its objectives with the specific needs and priorities of the target communities, project leadership is able to design more tailored and effective strategies for enhancing the education infrastructure, Headmaster respondents mentioned;

"We received funding from the government for the purposes of construction of classrooms and science laboratories." (HM1, Personal Communication, 21 August 2023).

A Ward Councilor added the following:

"Importantly, the active involvement of the local community plays a significant role in the development and sustainability of these facilities, contributing to the overall improvement of education in the area." (WC2, Personal Communication, 22 August 2024).

This early engagement fosters strong sense of collaboration and shared ownership among stakeholders, which is crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of educational projects. The active involvement of the community contributes to the success of the project by leveraging local knowledge and resources. This collaborative approach also encourages the community members to take responsibility for the project's outcomes, enhancing both their commitment and the overall effectiveness of the initiative.

With reference to SESS project, prioritizing community involvement, provides a valuable lesson for future educational development initiatives. Early engagement not only enhances the project's relevance and effectiveness but also ensures its sustainability by

promoting community ownership. As study by Kambuga (2013) shows, when communities contribute (whether through financial or labor support) the sustainability of school projects, such as classroom or laboratory construction, is significantly improved.

## Community Contributions in Government–Funded School Projects

The second specific objective of this study was to determine community contributions in government-funded school projects. Findings have shown that community make various kinds of contributions to make school projects sustainable, as evidenced in the following quotation;

"I contribute my time and energy by participating in the construction of classrooms and science laboratories in government-funded school projects." (WC2, Personal Communication, 22 August 2024).

Classrooms are spaces where students engage in formal learning, while science laboratories are designed to facilitate hands-on scientific exploration through specialized tools and equipment. These educational facilities are essential to ensuring that students receive the practical and theoretical knowledge necessary for academic success. Importantly, the active involvement of the local community plays a significant role in the development and sustainability of these facilities, contributing to the overall improvement of education in the area.

Also, the community participate by making financial contributions from time to time as evidenced by quotation from Headmasters who shared:

"We voluntarily contribute some little money for the purposes of constructions of classrooms and science laboratory, which are essential for the development of science combinations in schools." (HM7, Personal Communication, 25 August 2023).

The construction of new classrooms and science laboratories is important for providing students with better opportunities for developing their understanding of the natural world. Access to reliable learning resources and equipment allows for a more structured process of scientific inquiry, aligning with findings by Madon et al. (2018). These dedicated spaces enable students to effectively engage with scientific concepts and ideas, thereby enriching their learning experience.

Furthermore, national education standards, as highlighted by Thompson & Hayden (2018), encourage active participation in group activities and practical work. This participatory approach deepens students' understanding of the subject matter and helps them adapt their knowledge to new contexts. By constructing modern educational facilities, government-funded school projects aim to create environments that foster curiosity, critical thinking, and engagement with the curriculum. This enhances the overall quality and sustainability of science education in the community.

## Ways for Engaging the Community in Government–Funded School Projects

The last specific objective of the study was to determine ways of engaging the community in school projects. Findings have revealed that the community can be engaged in the government-funded projects in schools by involving them in project supervision as evidenced in the following quotation;

"The community is engaged in the project to carry out supervision roles, security services, and site clearance" (WC1, Personal Communication, 21 August 2024).

This sentiment reflects the broader view that community engagement is crucial in ensuring the quality of work, adherence to project designs and timely delivery of outcomes. By empowering local stakeholders to monitor and supervise the project, there is a stronger sense of ownership, which ultimately enhances accountability and contributes to the sustainability of the project.

The findings of the study support the observations of Ogunde et al. (2017), who noted that community involvement in project supervision not only enhances the safety and security of the project but also provides direct oversight of procurement processes, materials, workers, and equipment. This active engagement is key to safeguarding the project's integrity and ensuring that it meets its objectives within the local context.

The findings emphasize the essential role of community engagement in the supervision and security of school development projects. Active collaboration between the school leadership and local communities is vital in ensuring the accountability and long-term sustainability of these projects.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of this study was to investigate strategies for enhancing community participation in government–funded school project in Morogoro region. Based on the findings it is concluded that community involvement from the early stages of project design plays a crucial role in ensuring the success and sustainability of government-funded school projects in the Morogoro region. Early engagement, as demonstrated in projects such as the Science Education in Secondary Schools (SESS) initiative, enables the alignment of project goals with the specific needs of local communities. This approach fosters a strong sense of ownership and commitment, ensuring long-term project viability.

It is also concluded that active participation of the community in the construction and supervision of school facilities, such as classrooms and science laboratories, greatly enhances the quality and sustainability of these projects. The involvement of local stakeholders not only ensures that projects are relevant and responsive to local educational needs but also promotes accountability, security, and effective resource utilization. Therefore, early community involvement, coupled with their contributions during project

execution, is essential for enhancing educational infrastructure. When communities are engaged, they leverage their local knowledge, resources, and commitment to ensure that school development projects have a lasting, positive impact.

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that the Government-funded school projects should involve community members from the start. This ensures projects reflect local needs and incorporate valuable insights. Engaging the community early increases the chances of achieving sustainable outcomes.

It is also recommended that local communities should be encouraged to participate in building educational facilities through labor, materials, or financial support. Government agencies can incentivize this involvement. Fostering community contributions promotes ownership and responsibility for facility maintenance. There is also need for clear guidelines and tools to oversee school projects. Providing supervision manuals and project plans empowers local stakeholders. This oversight helps ensure projects are completed efficiently and according to design.

Furthermore, it is recommended that schools and local governments should create systems for community contributions to security and upkeep. This collaboration ensures the longevity and educational benefits of projects. Also, training programs should equip school and community leaders with essential management and supervision skills. This capacity building strengthens local leadership. It also fosters collaboration between government, schools, and the community for sustainable educational initiatives.

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