

Enhancing the Role of Civil Society Organizations in Public Education Sector Monitoring and Accountability

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of civil society in monitoring education sector policies and programs to ensure transparency and accountability with a view to enhancing that role. The paper hypothesizes that if the civil society effectively monitors education policies and programs, then accountability and transparency during formulation and implementation will improve and therefore address the challenges faced by marginalized and vulnerable groups in accessing equitable quality education. Evidence obtained from case studies, empirical and anecdotal studies build a prima-facie case that civil society engagement has influence on government policy. Enhancing this role would increase chances of improving quality of monitoring education sector policies for accountability. The study finds capacity, resources, access to information and data, civic space, government policy and regulatory frameworks as the critical factors that moderate the relationship between civil society action and influencing government policy. Downward and internal accountability within the civil society hasn't been given much attention even as it is appreciated the impact it may have on the locus-standi to question government. External actors' desire to change local socio-political set up is dependent on having sufficient local information on what works and what doesn't. The paper suggests the need to understand the education service delivery value chain within the sector planning and implementation cycle. It further notes negotiated positions and institutionalization of processes, playing the "critical friend" in conventional accountability frameworks and regular access to quality information and data enhances credibility of actions. Working with external actors and the media within the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectives for progressive mutual development partnerships, strengthening downward accountability within the civil society in a peer review mechanism set up, technical, institutional and political capacity as well as understanding the underlying political economy will enhance the role of civil society in monitoring government policy to enhance accountability.

Key words: Civil Society Organizations, Accountability, Monitoring, Public Education Sector

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1. Introduction

Recent trends in education sector reforms and consequent changes to the structure of education sector plans indicate the need for a shift in how civil society is organized to engage with the emerging policy and advocacy frameworks. Globally, since the advent of the Education For All (EFA) goals, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there have been deliberate efforts to build a global education sector development framework, a process that has seen administrative and policy reforms world over. Common global positions emerged and each country was expected to align its national education policies with the global frameworks. A good example is education sector planning and financing frameworks whose similarity make it possible to monitor sector plans and compare issues in different countries, sensitivity in allocating resources and a common framework for civil society and government engagement. Further, to support implementation, a reliable resourcing framework was needed to support least developed countries. This thinking saw establishment of Global Partnership for Education (GPE) which supports development and implementation of national education sector plans and civil society policy advocacy with emphasis on policies that enhance inclusion and provision of equitable quality education to oppressed groups. Likewise, the civil society needed to adopt a similar approach for systemic engagement from local to global arenas. A good example is emergence of the Global Campaign for Education Campaign (GCE) movement which systemically engages education sector processes at global, regional, national and local platforms.

To put in the context of a developing country in Africa, we take the example of Tanzania. Before the advent of pluralistic politics in 1995, the civic space in Tanzania had shrank to near zero mostly due to one party politics of the time. However, political and civic freedoms have expanded since 1995 and ushered in many actors into the policy debate arena. Tanzania was one of the first African countries to achieve universal primary school education in the 1970s but structural adjustment programs (SAPs) from Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) systematically robbed the state this capacity and many children dropped out of school (Hagerty, Mannion and Munday, 2007). However, the situation has since been reversed and the country reports 82% and 98.5% primary school net and gross enrolment

rates respectively. Increasing democratic consolidation and its effect on civic space in education sector has been witnessed in Tanzania and citizens view education as the primary services the government should provide (Bratton, 2007; Afro barometer Network, 2006 & Munday, et. al. 2008). A fundamentally new approach in the country's education sector plans in the emphasis on partnerships and participation and extensive reference to the role of civil society and community led initiatives working together with government to deliver sector plan goals. The civil society has been involved in joint stakeholder meetings on planning, implementation and monitoring, contribution of experience and resources, facilitating community participation as well as conducting education policy analysis and advocacy. This presents a fertile opportunity to enhance civil society engagement in government policy processes in Tanzania, a scenario that is replicated across many developing countries.

Although these reforms continue to present new opportunities for the civil society, they present challenges in equal measure. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in monitoring formulation and implementation of education policies and programs to foster accountability and transparency with a view to providing useful insights on how this engagement can be enhanced . This is premised on the hypothesis that ***“if CSOs effectively monitor education policies and programs, then accountability and transparency during formulation and implementation will improve and therefore address the challenges faced by marginalized and vulnerable groups in accessing equitable quality education”***. The assumption is tested by discussing attendant questions that revolve around the role of CSOs in enhancing monitoring and accountability of government policies and programs. Devarajan et al. (2011) raises five critical questions that point to improving government accountability through public action by CSOs. *1) Does civil society engagement substantially improve accountability in practice? 2) In the event CSOs succeed in influencing government policy, is it always in the direction of improving service delivery, equity and human development? 3) Which factors moderate the relationship between effectiveness of CSO action and formal political and state mechanisms of accountability? 4) Are CSOs in themselves independent of inequalities, transparency and accountability issues? 5) How does entry of external actors enhance CSO of influencing government policy?* To answer these questions, case studies were examined and

relevant secondary literature was reviewed by consulting selected case studies, empirical and anecdotal studies, manuscripts and journal articles that focused on the subject of monitoring, transparency and accountability with reference to civil society organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

2. Historical perspectives of Civil Society and Civic Engagement

Although the concept of civil society as known today is widespread across the world, it has its origins in the global north (Kastrati 2016). But also, there are other forms of civil society organizations from socio-political traditions of the east and south that haven't been captured by the normative concept of civil society as defined from the north (Neubert, 2011). Cicero, a Roman scholar introduced the concept of "societas civilis" around 63 BC and argued that the subjects had a role to play in determining political and economic welfare in the society while Socrates argued that conflicts in the society can be resolved through public debates, a process that involves the civil society. Plato saw the ideal state as a society in which people dedicate themselves to the common good of the whole society while Aristotle saw the society as a the 'polis', comprising of a "political community" that enabled citizens to share in the virtuous task of ruling and being ruled (O'Brien, 1999, Kastrati, 2016). However, English philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his writings about moral and political philosophy argued that introducing the concept of civil society would disintegrate the society and the only way to hold the society together was through the power of the sovereign state (Thomas, 1960). In this sense, Hobbes did not see the need for strict separation between the civil society and the state, an element that has been witnessed in several socialist-communist leaning political jurisdictions where the state largely controls civic spaces as opposed to the freer contemporary liberal democracies.

Although the idea of civil society in Africa emerged during colonial times, the concept gained root in late 70s and early 80s. This was boosted by international development discourse of the 80s that argued that international organizations from the global north cannot purport to know real development needs of target communities and therefore needed local structures upon which development partnerships would be crafted (Katariina & Tiina, 2020). Thus, CSOs proliferated in Africa to give international development organizations local identity, a public engagement framework and also served to promote

sustainability. The CSO movements that emerged at the time were mainly Community Based Organizations (CBOS) Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Trade Unions, which to a large extent matched European patterns. These organizations form the nucleus of the African civil society and bear varying degrees of relevance and influence. Since then, the civil society, together with the democratization movement has been firmly established as part of the conceptual framework of political sociology and political sciences in Africa. As a result, the concept of civil society has become part and parcel of the political discourse in Africa and has gained support from international development organizations.

Cohen & Arato (1988) argue that contemporary social movements in the global East, West, South and North rely on various eclectic dimensions inherited from the history of civil society. These dimensions largely form the basis on which contemporary social movements articulate their projects of democratization, equity, accountability, freedom and justice but the dimensions are largely applied more as ideological underpinnings than pragmatic components that inform civil society planning and action. The eclectic dimensions presuppose a tripartite framework of civil society, state and economy within which power and relationship interplays determine resource distribution and flow of benefits and growth in a society. Understanding the dynamics within this triangle is crucial for the work of civil society actors seeking to participate in and scrutinize government policies and programs.

Civic engagement in education sector can greatly benefit from historical analogies drawn from civic engagement movements of the past and analyzing the contexts within which successes have been achieved. This can be done by adopting and adapting historical civic engagement practices that can deepen today's civic engagement practices in education sector and partnerships that underlie them. For instance, education policy advocacy activists can borrow from historical success stories of past civic engagements like the civil rights movement in America, anti apartheid movement in South Africa, the salt walk in India e.t.c. to enrich today's organizing and mobilizing in education sector civic engagement efforts.

3. Accountability and monitoring in the context of education

The concepts of accountability, transparency, monitoring, participation and inclusion have gained currency in today's development discourse, becoming nearly universal elements in policy statements of local and international development practitioners (Crothers & Brechenmacher, 2014), an element that has led to growing interest in social accountability initiatives that seek to improve public service delivery by rights bearers (Malena, Foster & Singh, 2004). Accountability (social) can be referred to as a process where citizens organized in various forms and groups undertake civic engagement activities with a view to monitoring government policies and programs with the sole aim of improving quality of service delivery. In the public sector context, it can be defined to refer to a broad range of actions and frameworks that citizens, communities, independent media and civil society organizations can use to hold government accountable, which complement and reinforce conventional accountability frameworks such as political checks and balances, accounting and auditing systems, administrative rules and legal procedures. These are based on critical foundational factors that include obtaining, analysing and disseminating information, mobilizing public support, identifying power centers as well as advocating and negotiating change. In this paper, we look at accountability and monitoring of education sector by assessing how social accountability and monitoring concepts can be applied by CSOs to improve their civic engagement in education sector. To achieve this, we examine selected case studies from civil society organizations working on education policy advocacy in Sub Saharan Africa plus empirical literature to explore how effective CSO engagement to influence government policy can be enhanced as presented in section 5.

Despite progressive achievements in education sector, there exists challenges that could make the world miss Education 2030 agenda targets. Literacy and numeracy competencies among children are not matching their class grades and age (UWEZO, 2017), there is increasing focus on examinations as opposed to acquisition of knowledge and skills needed to earn a living (Inyega, Arshad-Ayaz, Naseem, Mahaya & Elsayed, 2021), there is acute underinvestment in technical and vocational courses (The World Bank, 2012), proliferation of low quality private universities is threatening the basic essence of higher education (Makulilo, 2012), dilapidated learning facilities in many parts of developing countries,

gender discrimination and inequality in access to education (Lubbale, 2020) and a problem of inadequate qualified teachers are some of the pointers that there is need to heighten efforts by stakeholders working together towards achievement of SDG4 goal (UNESCO, 2017). In a situation like the one described above, there arises blame game of who is accountable. It is important to observe that all stakeholders – ranging from government, civil society, communities and families – have a role to play, which brings in the emphasis why accountability and monitoring matters (McGee & Gaventa, 2010; UNESCO, 2017). Individuals, communities and institutions have an obligation to account how they meet their expected roles along the education provision value chain on the basis of a legal, political, social or moral justification.

UNESCO (2017) identifies core elements of an effective education accountability and monitoring framework. It involves first having a credible education sector plan in place that is developed through participation of diverse stakeholders – including the civil society – through an open and transparent broad consultation process. It is therefore important for CSOs to find formal frameworks through which they can engage with education sector planning processes. Secondly, access to information and data is critical for a meaningful education sector accountability process. This means CSOs must find ways of improving access and quality of information and education data in their respective countries. Thirdly, the need to push for strengthened conventional accountability frameworks that involve political checks and balances, accounting and auditing systems, administrative rules and legal procedures. It therefore means CSOs should work with both administrative, legislative and legal structures in their respective countries to address policy and legal lacunas that may permit non compliance with obligations to be accountable. In essence, accountability and monitoring in education sector should aim at improving education service delivery, budget transparency, freedom of information, participation and inclusion of all stakeholders as well as guaranteeing civic space for citizens to freely discourse.

4. Role of Civil Society Organizations in Monitoring Public Policies

The concept of civil society is broad to the extent that there is no commonly agreed definition (Spurk, 2010). Literature reviewed to this effect point to an assumption that it is probably this fuzziness that

explains its popularity in that it can be many different things to all people (Glausius, 2004, Kastrati, 2016). Although there are controversies around the world about what civil society concept entails, Hyden et al. (2003) elucidates a description of the core meaning of civil society as espoused in Whyte (2004). That *“civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development nongovernmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.”* Understanding the civil society and its role can be best done not by looking at its definition but focusing on its two distinguishable dimensions – the theoretical and normative roles. Theoretical role analyzes dimensions which hold that social life and social values need to be upheld to improve welfare of society with citizens and civil society as key players while the normative role argues the need to motivate and mobilize citizens and other actors to establish and develop various contents and forms of civic engagement activities (Kastrati 2016). The roles are complementary in the sense that theoretical focus forms the basis of normative action.

From a general perspective, the role of CSOs has more to do with paying attention to the “demand side” of good governance by strengthening the voice and capacity of citizens, especially the vulnerable and marginalized, to directly demand greater accountability and service delivery from government (Malena, Foster & Singh, 2004). This narrative has gained prominence among international development organizations and aid agencies and with attention to critical role that CSOs can play as native sources of pressure that can improve accountability in public sector.

5. Conceptual and empirical basis

There is assumption that improved CSO engagement in public policy processes has the potential to directly influence accountability and transparency thereby improving quality of public service delivery to the citizens. This is premised on the understanding that a direct relationship exists between CSO monitoring of government policies and improved accountability and service delivery (Devarajan et al. 2011; Crothers & Brechenmacher, 2014)) While this assumption could be plausible, it is important to observe that it is moderated by several critical factors that have the potential to shape the nature, direction and strength of the relationship as shown in figure 1 below. Such factors include 1) capacity and productivity of both CSOs and relevant government entities, 2) the civic space and latitude for engagement available to CSOs, 3) government policy and regulatory frameworks, 4) availability of resources and funding to CSOs and 5) access to credible accurate information and data. In the discussion about how to enhance CSO capacity to monitor accountability in education sector, a focus on the above factors is critical. They are the building blocks upon which engagement strategies are designed.

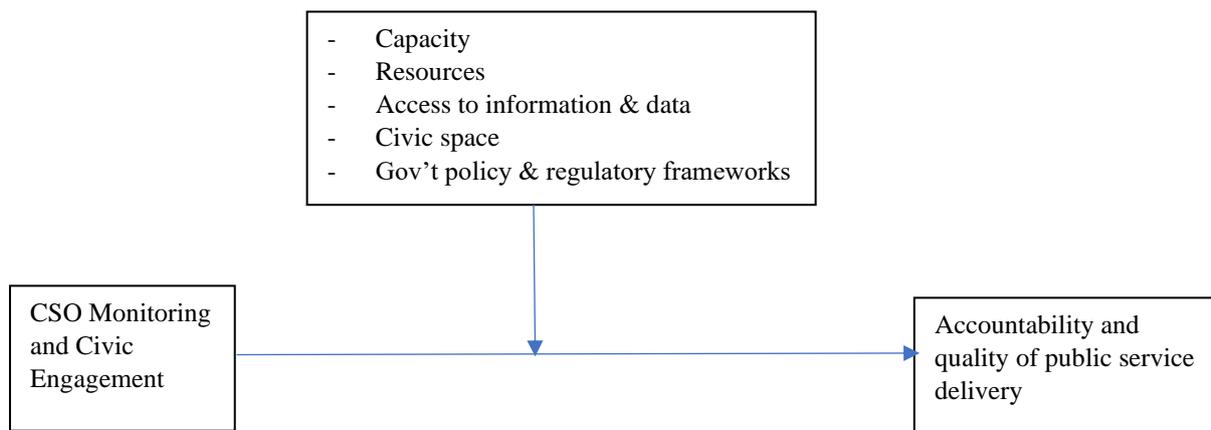


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework showing relationship between CSO engagement and accountability and factors moderating the relationship.

This thinking forms the conceptual basis upon which this paper is presented. Reference is made to selected case studies from civil society organizations working in education policy advocacy in Sub Saharan Africa and empirical literature. In both empirical and case studies, effect of moderating factors is evident.

There have been several studies around the question of CSO engagement and government policy. The studies have focused on various elements of the question ranging from role of CSOs in influencing government policy, impact of CSO engagement on government policy, factors determining the influence of CSOs on government policy, whether capacity of CSOs has a bearing on ability to influence policy and whether external actors play any significant role. As observed by McGee & Gaventa (2010) a large number of micro studies have been done but they are not easily comparable. They concentrate on assessing the impact of particular initiatives and not on broader developmental, democratic or empowerment impacts. Literature review also demonstrate methodological challenges in assessing impact of CSO engagement on government policy, with most studies focusing on assessing single initiatives and not considering that such initiatives exist within a complex long term social and political process. The evidence base in this field is still emerging and remains relatively weak in its depth and quality.

Evidence from a study by Devarajan et al. (2011) on the role of CSOs in monitoring government policy in Africa broadly suggest that when higher-level political leadership provides sufficient or appropriate powers for citizen participation in holding state agencies or frontline providers accountable, there are positive impacts on outcomes. The study argues that there is substantial potential for greater achievements in this area, which could be enhanced through inclusion of external aid agencies in the campaign. However, such efforts and support should build on existing political and civil society structures instead of lifting practices from elsewhere and implanting them onto the target societies. Based on these findings, a *prima facie* case is built that CSOs engagement, if well structured and supported, can bring meaningful accountability gains in public sector, stop wastage of billions of dollars in the “leaky pipes” of corruption and improve quality and quantity of public services.

Another study by Malena, Foster & Singh, (2004) on impact of social accountability initiatives in least developed countries found that when CSOs engage in monitoring and accountability, it leads to improved quality of governance, increased development effectiveness and empowerment of citizens. This emanates from citizens direct engagement with the political class in a more organized, systematic

and structured manner that gives them a chance to clearly articulate their demands and participate in a more transparent decision making process. Further, the study argues that providing rights information and conscientizing the masses leads to an empowered populace. However, the study cautions that much of empirical evidence seems to rely on untested normative assumptions and under-specified relationships between CSO engagement and changes in government policy. In essence, the studies have not clearly established the strength of this correlation as well as its nature and strength. Virtually none of the literature gathered explored possible risks or itemizes negative effects that could arise from CSO engagement in monitoring government policies and pushing for accountability.

Literature review points to a number of approaches that have been applied by CSOs across the world to solve accountability failures. The open budget initiative that seek to make budget and financial information available to the masses has led to legislation of the “right to information” laws in some countries like Ghana, Kenya Zimbabwe and Uganda (Devarajan et al. 2011). These initiatives have led to programs like the Open Budget Index, whose impact, plus others, is reviewed in detail in McGee & Gaventa (2010) and Barret & Gaventa (2010). As much as most of the impact of such initiatives is qualitative and focuses on intermediate outcomes such as citizens becoming more aware, there are examples where impressive successes have been recorded. For instance, a survey instrument named Public Expenditure Tracking System (PETS) was pioneered in Uganda to measure discrepancies between school budget allocation and what actually reached the schools (Reinikka and Svensson, 2004). The study argues that publication of the results in mass media led to tremendous improvement of flow of funds to schools. In this case therefore, it can be argued that access to budget information gave citizens power to confront district authorities thereby improving accountability in relation to accessing funds to schools. The success in Uganda was followed by a proliferation of programs applying PETS in different countries, both posting varying degrees of success. However, Hubbard (2007) presupposes that citizen-power channel in case of Uganda as a driver of success is just part of the story. He argues that the success may have relied on the policy priorities in the Ministry of education following election of President Museveni in 1996 of which one of his commitments was to introduce universal free basic education in Uganda. It therefore behooves upon us that understanding the broader political and socio

economic context of a country is key to a successful accountability program. Another approach that can boost CSO influence on government policies is civic education. Studies in Benin, Sao Tome and Principe, Nigeria and Mozambique indicate that civic education has the potential to enlighten the masses and make them more conscious of the kind and quality of public services they receive. For instance, a study in Benin indicates that in the run up to 2006 elections, CSOs held town hall meetings to conduct civic education and in regions where town hall meetings were held, there was less electoral violence and citizens were more vocal in demanding accountability from individuals seeking electoral positions (Vicente and Wantchekon, 2008)

Our review of case studies and empirical studies in search of impact and effectiveness of CSO monitoring on accountability and transparency of public service delivery, came across the following list of cases and studies that show positive results in different approaches for citizens to constructively engage with government. These approaches are based on evidence gathered from transparency and accountability practices by various CSOs in Africa and have yielded impressive results. It is worth noting that the approaches are suitable for application in monitoring accountability in education sector.

Case studies

Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC) influences equal access to quality education for vulnerable children. When schools closed in 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic, the government said learning would continue via TV and online platforms. This meant children from poor and vulnerable communities with no access to TV or smartphones/internet were missing out. The coalition undertook a joint assessment with the ministry of education and found that majority of children were exposed to many dangers since they were not attending school. They also found that schools were adhering to Covid-19 and thus it would be safe to reopen. The coalition presented the findings at the Joint Education Sector Review meeting together with cooperating partners and also held a press conference lobbying and urging the government to re-open schools. On 18th September 2020, the President ordered that schools should reopen. (Source: ZANEC, 2021)

Success factors: Evidence-based advocacy, use of the media, being a “critical friend” of government

Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC) in Kenya finds ways of expanding CSO participation in policy engagement processes. When Covid-19 struck the right to quality basic education for every child was threatened! Government moved learning to online platform of which massive dropout after the

pandemic was expected and this would roll back sector gains. The Covid-19 Education Management Committee was exclusive of the civil society. CSOs felt the Covid-19 response plan was inadequate and there was no chance of contributing to Covid-19 guidelines. Generally, there was constricted stifled space for Civil Society. The coalition's immediate problem was how to engage and arrest the inequality that Covid-19 guidelines were perpetrating. Instead of jostling for space at the national steering committee, the coalition cascaded down to its county education networks and created space for stakeholders to voice their concerns on access to learning opportunities during the pandemic. This built a vibrant grassroots campaign that attracted the attention of the national steering committee. The coalition held a national media event informed by engagements from the counties. A synthesis of these issues were also shared at the Local Education Group (LEG) meeting. In the end, CSO concerns were able to get to the table of the steering committee where they had no space in the first place. (Source: EYC, 2021).

Success factors: Strength in networks/numbers, working with grassroots organizations, use of the media, existence of formal structures of engagement, reference to policy instruments

Basic Education Network (BEN) of Ethiopia contributes to addressing the problem of Education and Training Policy (ETP 1994). As a result of the assessment done on existing policy limitations of schooling, it emerged that problems related to the policy were low quality of education, low access of education in remote and peripheral areas, inefficiency in management and a large number of under-qualified and less motivated teachers. BEN mobilized a diverse range of CSOs including teacher unions, the media, groups representing marginalized groups and developed a proposal to amend the policy. The demands were presented at a high level government consultation forum which were adopted and incorporated in the 5-year education development sector plan which expressly indicated review of ETP as one of the priorities. (Source: BEN, 2021)

Success factors: Strategic partnerships, Using evidence, Inclusivity and Strategic engagement

Education For All Somalia (EFASOM) coalition achieves success in pushing for inclusion of braille teaching and learning materials for visually impaired in a curriculum review process. The coalition, having experienced the difficult of accessing braille material through one of it's members whose mandate was serving visually impaired children, took advantage of the curriculum review process that was underway in their country to push for official inclusion of braille materials in the text book production program. The coalition member running a program for blind children was co-opted in the technical committee that was tasked to develop the materials (Source: EFASOM, 2021)

Success factors: Strategic engagement, evidence and past experience with visually impaired

The National Education Coalition (NEC) in South Sudan works with parents/communities to bring pregnant girls back in school. Major challenges facing girls' education include gender inequality, poverty, and early forced pregnancies and marriage. Girls as young as 10 years are married off for wealth. Gender roles negatively affect girls' education since girls are perceived as domestic helpers and are not allowed to attend school. Should a teacher impregnate a girl, they are transferred to other schools instead of being interdicted and charged in a court of law as stipulated in the General Education Act of 2012. The coalition undertook public mobilization and awareness raising through radio talk shows and workshops about the plight of girls who fall pregnant while in school. It also involved working with parents of affected girls to first bring them back to school and thereafter seek justice. (Source: NEC South Sudan, 2021).

Success factors: Use of the media, reference to policy and legal frameworks, working with affected communities

Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) succeeds in lobbying for budget increase to critical education budget-lines under Vote 15 – Primary and Secondary Education. The budgeting process in the country is exclusive to the executive and legislature arms of government. Since 1980, there hasn't been any public amendment to the budget as prepared by the executive. 26 November 2020, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development presents the budget before Parliament. 10 December 2020, ECOZI and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Primary and Secondary Education hold a stakeholders consultative meeting to examine education budget in the national estimates. ECOZI and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Primary and Secondary Education make recommendations for establishment of a clear mechanism for state funded education, ring fencing resources for COVID-19 prevention and education budget as % of the national budget be made up to 20%. The proposals are taken to the floor of parliament by the portfolio committee on education on 11 December 2020. 15 December 2020, following debate in parliament, the Minister for Finance and Economic Development announces an increase in education budget vote with over ZWL 500 million. The ministry of education also sets up a grant-in-aid kitty to kick start state funded education in 172 districts. (Source: ECOZI, 2021)

Success factors: Working with parliament as the people's representatives, use of evidence and facts.

Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) in Kenya, demonstrate the significant role budget transparency plays in improving accountability. MUHURI's work also shows how public engagement in the budget process can strengthen oversight and lead to improved public service delivery.

Success factors: Structured public engagement in budgeting processes

Empirical studies:

| Approach | Evidence of influence from reviewed literature |
|---|---|
| Social Audits & Community score cards | A study on influence of social audit and community scorecard mechanisms by civil society organizations on governance in Kenya established that community scorecards and social audits had significant influence on governance in Kenya and that government regulations moderated the relationship between social accountability mechanisms used by the civil organizations and governance in Kenya. Waiganjo & Mukulu (2019). |
| Participatory budget processes | Kasozi-Mulindwa (2013) in her study on the process and outcomes of participatory budgeting in a decentralised local government framework in Uganda found that adapting public management reforms to the local environment, and citizens exercising their rights and responsibilities, are critical to the achievement of desires, goals and outcomes on budgets. It demonstrated that owing to power relations, inadequate locally raised revenues, citizens' lack of knowledge, skills and competencies in public sector financial management, and inherent cultural norms and values, "passive" participatory budgeting may not achieve the desired goals and outcomes in developing countries under a decentralised local governance system in Uganda. |
| Budget monitoring, advocacy and public expenditure tracking | Reinikka and Svensson (2005) and Sundet (2008) in multi country studies that covered Uganda and Tanzania showed that budget monitoring and public expenditure tracking contributed to enhanced resource utilization, efficiency and curbing wastage and if combined with public information campaigns, can contribute to reduced leakages and thereby improved delivery of services |
| Aid transparency initiatives | A multi country study demonstrated decrease in corruption relating to aid received where aid transparency programs were in place. Christensen et al. (2010) |
| Downward accountability by CSOs | Awuku, Darko & Gyan (2020) in a study conducted in Ghana demonstrated that downward accountability contributed to power sharing among partner organizations and when directed at beneficiaries of NGO interventions could go a long way of helping NGOs improving the mindset that people have about their activities and improve the response rate towards project intervention. |

Although caution has been raised against drawing generalizations from evidence available, a general emerging consensus is that CSO engagement has had positive effects on accountability and

transparency of government policy processes and service delivery (McGee & Gaventa ,2010) and this evidence can be used as the building base for strengthening civic engagement processes (Davis & Dart, 2005). There is consensus that enhanced CSO monitoring and push for accountability has contributed to increased state and institutional responsiveness, corruption mitigation, building new democratic spaces for citizen engagement, expanding civic engagement spaces, empowering local voices, better budget utilization and better delivery of services.

6. Moderating factors

In considering whether CSO engagement has any significant influence on government policy processes, literature reviewed and observations from case studies build into a consensus on key factors that come into play to shape the nature and quality of the said influence. Malena, Foster & Singh, (2004) argue that capacity of CSOs both as an institution and individuals working within the organizations is a critical factor that has a bearing on productivity as far as ability to monitor government policies in general and education policies in particular is concerned. For CSOs to harbor enviable power of influence, they need to spruce up their capacities in relation to breadth and type of membership and reach, technical and advocacy skills, legitimacy and representativeness, ability to organize and mobilize and building civil society-state synergy. Ultimately, a successful policy monitoring and accountability process will to a certain extent depend on some form of synergy and effective interaction between CSOs and government. Ackerman (2004) argues that unilateral state action leads to manipulation while unilateral civil society action leads to repression and violence by the state and that meaningful results are realized when both parties are actively engaged in some sort of synchrony. He further observes that mutual cooperation does not necessarily mean trust, agreement and compromising positions and that even conflict and suspicion can lead to productive synergies.

Another important moderating factor has to do with government policy and regulatory matters. This factor determines the latitude of civic space enjoyed by CSOs in a particular country. It is therefore important for CSOs to study existing political context and culture to explore possibility of success of monitoring and accountability initiatives based on whether the political economy of the regime is

democratic, civil and political rights are guaranteed, whether there is freedom of expression and association and whether there is a culture of political probity and transparency. These elements determine the breadth of civic space available and will shape how CSOs approach their monitoring and accountability initiatives. But also, it is important for CSOs to work together with other stakeholders to repeal retrogressive government policies and regulations to open up space for broader access to information and guarantee basic freedoms that underpin successful monitoring and accountability initiatives.

Money is a constant in the equation. We can observe that CSOs are not as sophisticated in designing funding programs as they are in designing projects. This state of financial fuzziness leads to a cloud of uncertainty hovering over the heads of CSOs all the time, a situation that has a direct effect on effectiveness of their monitoring and accountability work. Unlike in for-profit sector where there are clear and elaborate business models, the non profit sector lacks sophisticated business models that are finance oriented. In his work on social entrepreneurship, Dees (2012) describes the need to understand both the donor value proposition and the recipient value proposition. Clara (2003) observes that CSOs are always in two “businesses”—one related to their program activities and the other related to raising charitable “subsidies.” Considering CSOs are non profit organizations, stakeholders need to critically think about sustainable funding frameworks. There is therefore need to explore possibilities of putting in place such frameworks, combining both traditional grants in aid and social enterprise models. In their work on essentials of social innovation, Kim and Christiansen (2009) argue that non profits will only realize financial freedom once they begin thinking out of the box and explore innovative funding mechanisms to supplement traditional funding pipelines. Access to information and data also comes in as a crucial factor in building an effective monitoring and accountability initiative. Availability of accurate and reliable public documents and data is needed to provided the much needed evidence that will back up accountability campaigns. Case studies and literature review indicate that in some cases, a monitoring and accountability initiative may need to start with pushing for a freedom of information legislation, gaining political will of disclosure of public information and building technical capacity of

public institutions to be able to collect timely, accurate and reliable data (Malena, Foster & Singh, 2004).

7. The practice of transparency and accountability within the civil society

While CSOs present themselves as agents of promoting good governance, transparency and accountability, it is important for them to hold themselves and their peers accountable. This gives them the *locus standi* and wherewithal to gain legitimacy in undertaking monitoring and accountability initiatives on government policies and programs. In some instances, some CSOs exhibit clientelism and rent-seeking behavior within the political power circles and become part of bureaucracies and other unelected entities that are thoroughly entrenched in the political and social relations that influence elite bargains and clientelism, state actors, political processes as well as judiciaries, in some cases (Devarajan et al. 2011) When CSOs are sucked up into these bureaucracies, they are stripped off of oversight power since they become part of the political incentive structure that is intrinsically interested in reciprocal provision of political loyalty and not delivery of quality service to the citizens. In essence, CSOs that fall into such traps are grossly compromised and become victims of a self-perpetuating equilibrium in the sense that even if such CSOs would be interested to point out flaws and lack of accountability in government policies they would not be able to do so because the “deep state” and the “system” would impose clientelist political strategy on them. Unregulated number and nature of CSOs in many jurisdictions have led to emergence of entities that harbor narrow partisan interests, either of individual benefits or portending socio-political interests of a particular group or ethnic community. Presence of such entities in the community of CSOs continue to erode credibility of the CSO fraternity and will deal major blows on monitoring and accountability initiatives, even where such initiatives are driven by credible CSOs. Historical constructs of non profits and work of charity emphasize their relation to the rise of the welfare state and a scientific knowledge base for social work. But charity organizers regarded themselves as religious people working in a religious tradition (Leiby, 1984). A review of their theological and social welfare assumptions about love and community interests puts their doctrine and heritage in a different light. In their struggle for survival, CSOs and non profits have reinvented themselves to adapt to changing circumstances. Literature suggests that during reinvention, adaptation and exaptation processes, the

interests of love and community welfare are overrun by organizational survival interests. This can be referred to as the “Social Darwinism effect on non profit organizations” borrowing from studies by Abatecola, Belussi, Breslin and Filatotchev (2015). Although legislative and policy regulatory frameworks exist, government regulatory authorities especially in the global south have not been able to tighten the noose on errant non profit players and this has permitted a “loose” playfield for undeserving entities to penetrate the community of CSOs. This paper suggests that CSOs should put in place a self-regulatory mechanism that ensure adherence to set standards of practice to protect their credibility and uphold their legitimacy to lead monitoring and accountability initiatives.

8. Effect of external actors

Since early 1990s, there has been heightened external support by international development organizations to accountability programs mainly in developing countries. These have been designed into governance and community led programs that seek to empower local communities to undertake accountability initiatives by themselves. The World Bank and IMF are some of the outstanding examples that have been advocating for public sector reforms with a view to improving accountability and service delivery. However, we observe that the approach used by World Bank is not one that promotes adaptation by local CSOs to grow sustainability but targets coerced policy reforms – in the name of policy advice and structural adjustment programs (SAPs) – within government structures. In such a situation Devarajan et al. (2011) argues that support for CSOs by external actors may follow an approach that combines both organic and experimental methods – organic in the sense that interventions contribute to changes in existing societal and political structures in respective countries without necessarily importing practices from external set ups and experimental in the sense that a structured monitoring and information gathering process is put in place to assess how the situation unfolds. They observe that although evidence suggests a strong case for external support, the process is fraught with difficulties and uncertainties because of external actors seeking to change a socio-political set up and not having sufficient information on what works and what doesn’t in the local context. Evidence shows results from external aid gave meagre results mainly due to underlying predatory culture and practice of political economy systems and assumptions based on a not well thought out theory of change that

often led to distortions in the structure and function of organs that were intended to drive accountability initiatives. This distortion can occur within civil society as well and external actors need to design support programs that are based on evidence and practical lessons from past local experiences. In general, there is a plausible case for external actors' involvement in monitoring and accountability initiatives but this should be done within a framework of discovering and building strong local structures within the civil society and state as opposed to importing approaches that have been theoretically or practically conceived elsewhere.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion we find evidence that CSO engagement has the potential to influence education sector policy processes and improve delivery of equitable, quality education for all, especially to the marginalized and vulnerable groups. Studies by McGee & Gaventa (2010) and (2103), Malena, Foster & Singh (2004), Devarajan et al. (2011) and David & Dart (2005) have demonstrated that a positive correlation exists between CSOs action and increased accountability in government policy processes and have led to improved public service delivery. Case studies and literature reviewed also suggest that formal frameworks and mechanisms of engagement and institutionalization of monitoring and accountability practices enhance the quality of engagement and increase the chances of influencing policy processes as opposed to sporadic unstructured engagements Malena, Foster & Singh (2004). Negotiated processes and practices between CSOs and the state should focus on institutionalization to provide a reference policy or legally anchored reference point for sustained monitoring and accountability efforts. We also find that understanding the education service delivery value chain is critical in order to establish where there are weak links in what Devarajan et al. (2011) call the "long route" to accountability. Citizens as voters delegate authority to politicians through an election and elected leaders are supposed to ensure proper plans are put in place to avail resources and supervise public service workers to ensure services are delivered to the people. The CSOs should therefore provide a platform for citizens to hold their representatives accountable.

As observed by Ackerman (2004), building constructive civil society-state synergies is an enabler to successful accountability initiatives. CSOs may not necessarily adopt a confrontational approach all the time but strive to build a mutual understanding upon which engagements are organized. This does not mean CSOs must agree with or trust the state. In fact, studies have found that “suspicion, disagreement and mistrust” between CSOs and governments have led to successful accountability initiatives. There is evidence that also shows existence of factors that moderate the relationship between CSOs and state. Such factors like capacity, government policy and regulations, civic space and freedoms, access to information and data and funding are important as they determine the quality of monitoring and accountability initiatives. Access to information cuts across as a critical factor and in determining the quality of CSOs monitoring of education sector policies and programs. It emerges as a right and not a privilege and therefore presented as an integral part of successful CSO monitoring and accountability initiatives. In our review of case studies and related literature, we came across several monitoring and accountability mechanisms and frameworks, but apply and respond differently depending of underlying political economy of various jurisdictions. In any of the framework chosen, civic space emerges a critical factor that will give CSOs the latitude to engage in education sector monitoring and accountability processes. It is important to note that studies show socialist-communist leaning political economies allow lesser civic engagement space and opposed to contemporary liberal democracies. We further posit that civil society can play a critical role in democratization of processes within the education sector. The concept of civil society in itself imply participation of the masses in the noble art of ruling and being ruled. We can therefore conclude that the civil society is expected to play a critical role in governance and decision making processes within the education sector. The question of inward accountability among CSOs and being accountable and transparent in themselves is crucial for them to earn the *locus standi* to raise questions of monitoring and accountability within government. Leibey (1984) observes that some CSOs in there struggle to survive, adapt and expatiate within changing circumstances drop accountability standards and these deal ablow to entire accountability campaign. CSOs must therefore strive to be guided by the ethos of moral and political philosophy underpinning justice, freedom, fairness, equity, transparency and general societal welfare and establish a self-regulatory peer review mechanism. In this paper we also find that community members and various

formal or informal community structures are crucial in driving grassroots change processes and can also act as frameworks upon which communities can monitor education sector programs and school and community level. These structures do not only promote accountability but serve as realms of empowerment for participating communities.

10. Recommendations

Based on findings from various studies that have been reviewed in this paper, the following recommendations are made to the civil society as a way to enhance its effectiveness in monitoring and accountability of education sector policies and programs:

1. Identify and establish formal frameworks for engagement with government at every step of the education sector planning and implementation cycle. The critical steps include the education sector review (ESR), development of the education sector plan (ESP) development of resourcing proposals and plans as well as sector plan monitoring and evaluation. But also, it is important to consider the role played by citizens.
2. We further recommend working with community engagement mechanisms that serve to disseminate and interpreted policies and conscientize the masses to excite the oomph needed to thrust them into action.
3. Pursue negotiated positions and actions to institutionalize processes and anchor them on policy and/or legal frameworks. This provides a reference mechanism upon which CSOs can base their advocacy actions thereby enhancing legitimacy and influence.
4. Establish reliable mechanism to regularly access quality information and data relating to key education progress indicators by exploring freedom of information legislation, data collection and processing partnerships with government entities and open data policies. Push for information access and open data legal and policy frameworks where they don't exist.
5. Gain deeper understanding of the education service delivery value chain and appreciate the power and political dynamics that shape each element of the value chain. It is important to note that the service delivery value chain is broader than the school system, touching on national and local politics, clientelism of non elected individuals, power brokers and the so called "deep

state” machinations, the judicial system, dynamics within education sector management, the school system, teachers, learners, parents and community.

6. Strengthening conventional accountability frameworks that involve political checks and balances, accounting and auditing systems, administrative rules and legal procedures. This can be achieved by building synergies with relevant government entities by being a “critical friend”.
7. Conduct further research on the specific influence of moderating factors on monitoring and accountability in education sector in respective country cases. This is because country settings are different and obtaining specific situations in respective countries will help customize interventions.
8. External actors play an important role in supporting local CSOs both in terms of technical and financial matters although there have been instances of real or perceived imbalance in the partnership. This paper recommends that CSOs and external actors work together within the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action in order to harvest maximum impacts from resources and partnerships entered.
9. Technical, institutional and political capacity of CSO is a critical factor in determining ability to monitor and influence government policies and programs. This paper recommends that CSOs should prioritize investments in building solid technical and institutional capacities and focus on building conscious teams that act in accordance with political dynamics in the operating environment.
10. The question of legitimacy and accountability is critical for the civil society to make impact and be accorded meaningful engagement space. This paper recommends that CSOs working in education sector establish a self-regulatory peer review mechanisms to put in place internal checks and balances.
11. The media plays a critical role in raising the profile of an advocacy issue. It is important that CSOs in education sector forge formal partnerships with the media as an avenue for publicizing and heightening public debate on accountability issues within the education sector

12. CSOs should seek to work through networks, alliances and membership structures. As observed in some of the case studies and empirical literature reviewed, such approaches have greater chances of success than working in isolation.
13. Understanding the underlying political economy environment and dynamics relating to civic space regulatory frameworks is crucial for a successful monitoring and accountability initiative. CSOs working in education sector are encouraged to scan socio-political environments and power play dynamics within government and the Ministry of Education in order to strategically design and target their monitoring and accountability initiatives for greater impact.

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