Promoting Active Engagement of School Management Committees in Tanzania: A Research Proposal

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1   Introduction

This research proposal describes the methodologies and specifications to be employed in testing hypotheses pertaining to strategies for promoting citizen action to improve education outcomes in Tanzania. Specifically, the proposed research focuses on school management committees (SMCs), combining an experimental approach with analysis of observational data to identify strategies for improving the efficacy of these bodies.

Despite a rapid expansion of primary school enrollment over the past 15 years, half of all school-age children in Tanzania lack basic literacy and numeracy skills (Uwezo East Africa, 2014). This situation persists despite massive injections of foreign aid, and government policies and plans on the books to improve the quality of education, suggesting a failure of government accountability.

Government accountability failures and correspondingly low levels of service provision represent an unfortunate commonality across much of sub-Saharan Africa and the developing world. In many cases they reflect the absence of fully consolidated democracy. Elections in many countries fail to serve as a source of accountability given a lack of programmatic parties competing for people's votes, and a lack of open and informed public debate (Joshi and

Houtzager, 2012). In response, the international development community has seized upon the promotion of "social accountability" (SA) as an alternative means of holding elected representatives and service providers to account. Broadly speaking, "social accountability is the ongoing engagement of collective actors in civil society to hold the state to account for failures to provide public goods" (Joshi and Houtzager, 2012, 150).

The first generation of SA initiatives relied on local dissemination of service delivery outcome data as a means of engendering action by citizens that would in turn improve responsiveness by service providers. The impact of these initiatives was fairly limited, leading many to conclude that information provision is typically insufficient to promote widespread citizen action (Fox, 2015; Twaweza, 2015; Lieberman, Posner, and Tsai, 2014*b*; Joshi, 2014; Bruns, Filmer, and Patrinos, 2011).

Despite this realization, the role of factors other than information in promoting citizen action has not been studied in a rigorous manner, likely reflecting the difficulty of isolating and identifying causal impact. EGAP's Metaketa Initiative is working to fill this gap, sponsoring studies that investigate, *inter alia*, how public information affects voter attitudes and behavior; the role of common knowledge in promoting collective action; the method of delivery (private vs. social) and the type of information provided (contextual vs. relative); the relative impact of mediated information vs. first-hand experience; and the extent to which local networks increase accountability.[1]

The Metaketa-funded studies focus primarily on voting behavior as their outcome of interest. However, given the constraints on representative democracy in many countries described above, understanding the triggers of citizen action beyond voting is equally important. In particular, what motivates people to take collective action and feel that their collective efforts will have an impact is not well understood. When it comes to various types of citizen action (participating in a protest or rally, making demands on service providers) expectations about collective action are critical (Joshi, 2014). Not only is acting alone unlikely to be very

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[1]http://egap.org/metaketa/metaketa-information-and-accountability

effective, it can lead to ostracism and exclusion, particularly in more communal societies. It is also important that people think their actions as a group will have an impact – i.e., that they have a sense of *collective efficacy* (Van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears, 2008).

A key determinant of expectations about collective action is the extent to which someone is embedded in a group with shared experiences and repertoires. In their landmark study of *Poor People's Movements* in 1930s and 1960s America, Piven and Cloward (1977) observe that "those whose lives are rooted in some institutional context, who are in regular relationships with others in similar straits, who are best able to redefine their travails as the fault of their rulers and not of themselves are best able to join together in collective protest" (p. 19). More recently, scholars have pointed to the importance of considering the broader political and historical context in which citizens are taking action (or not), noting that initiatives that are more "strategic" (deploying multiple tactics, encouraging enabling environments, and leveraging existing reforms) are more likely to achieve success than "tactical," bounded interventions that ignore context and politics (Fox, 2015; Joshi and Houtzager, 2012).

Taken together, this points to the value of studying existing institutions for collective action, and identifying strategies to enhance their effectiveness with respect to promoting social accountability. In the context of citizen action to improve education outcomes in Tanzania, the school management committee (SMC) represents an ideal object of inquiry.

This proposal proceeds as follows. The subsequent section provides relevant background information, Section 3 presents hypotheses, Section 4 outlines the research strategy, and Section 5 covers study logistics.

2 Background

2.1 The rise of "school autonomy"

Over the past two decades, reforms in many low- and middle-income countries have promoted "delegation" or "school autonomy" – transferring legal and administrative responsibilities

to elected or appointed school governing bodies such as school councils, school management committees, and school governing boards (Winkler and Yeo, 2007, p. 3). The decentralization of education management reflects broader trends with respect to public service delivery; decentralization reforms of one sort or another have been implemented in almost every country in the world (Faguet, 2014; Parker, 1995). Decentralization has been advocated as a means of increasing citizen voice and participation, improving government accountability and responsiveness, deepening democracy, improving economic performance, reducing bureaucracy, and increasing policy stability (Faguet, 2012; Conyers, 2007; Bird, 1994). In theory, bringing government closer to the governed should facilitate the identification and targeting of needy populations (Galasso and Ravallion, 2005; Crook, 2003), and make it easier for citizens to sanction or reward poor or good behavior on the part of local officials (Faguet, 2012).

Similar rationales have been espoused with respect to education. Yamada (2014) notes that SMCs "...became popular administrative tools – often made compulsory – as an effective means of administrative and financial decentralisation and community participation. In addition, they are promoted as a means to improve both access to and quality of education, thereby contributing to achieving globally agreed Education for All (EFA) goals. By having a sense of ownership, it is assumed that local residents will contribute in improving not only the effectiveness and efficiency of school administration but also the quality of education" (pp. 162–3).

2.2 Tanzania's School Management Committees

In Tanzania, school management committees (SMCs) were established under of the 1978 Education Act (amended in 1995). The Act states that for every pre-school and primary school, a committee shall be established, which shall be "responsible for the management and maintenance of the school" (URT 1995b.S.39:1, cited in Masue (2014)). Specifically, SMCs are supposed to:

- oversee the day-to-day affairs of the school;

- maintain, operate bank account(s) and manage funds received for implementation efficiently and effectively while guaranteeing maximum accountability and transparency;

- safeguard school properties;

- work together with the Head Teacher and Teachers to prepare a Whole School Development Plan;

- approve Whole School Development Plans and budgets and submit to Mtaa[2]/Village Government for consolidation in the village plans and subsequent forwarding to Ward Development Committees (WDC) for scrutiny, consolidation and approval;

- prepare and submit accurate and timely progress reports (physical and financial) to the Village/Mtaa and Council;

- communicate effectively educational information to all parents, pupils, community, Village/Mtaa and Council and;

- sensitize and involve all pupils, village/mtaa community and school staff in respect of the roles they can play in maximizing the objectives of the school (United Republic of Tanzania, 2012, p. 133)

Each school committee is supposed to have nine to eleven members, of whom seven must be from the school community. Five members are to represent parents and two are to represent the teachers, while the remaining two to four members can be ex-officio or co-opted members. While the establishment of a school committee is a legal requirement, the process for selecting members varies (Masue, 2014).

2.3   Is Education Decentralization Fulfilling Expectations?

In Tanzania and other countries that have established school committees or embraced other reforms to decentralize education management, empirical evidence that such initiatives are fulfilling their promise (or even their institutional mandates) is mixed. Large scale evaluations from El Salvador and Nicaragua that compare experimental schools following a nationally implemented decentralization policy with a control group find a positive impact of decentralization on outcomes such as reducing teacher absenteeism and improving student

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[2]The "mtaa" (literally "neighborhood") is the urban equivalent of the village in Tanzania.

performance, particularly when more decisions are made at the school level (Winkler and Yeo, 2007). Studies that rely on time-series and cross-sectional observations to statistically isolate the impact of decentralization depict a more varied picture. In Argentina and Mexico, decentralization increased school performance but at the cost of greater inequality. Across Latin America, school autonomy is positively associated with higher test scores, but the school autonomy index varies more within countries than across countries, suggesting that government policies do not always translate into practice. Parental participation in school activities is positively associated with test scores, while parental participation in curricular activities is not. In East Asia, studies find no relationship between teacher autonomy to select textbooks or course content and student performance.

Case study evidence is also mixed. For instance, a case study of community schools in Malwi (which feature SMCs with decision-making authority over teacher employment, school fees, and day-to-day operations) find they have been effective at increasing access to basic education and raising the completion rate of primary education (Winkler and Yeo, 2007). Students from the Malian community schools perform as well as or better than students in traditional public schools as measured by language and mathematics test scores (Ibid.) On the other hand, Oyollo (2008)'s study of school management committees in Ugandan pastoral communities finds that SMCs tend not to involve themselves in day-to-day school administration, leaving head teachers to run schools on their behalf. The SMCs Oyollo studies meet irregularly, and fail to reach quorum even when meetings take place; solving cases of indiscipline in the schools also occurs infrequently.

Qualitative research on citizen engagement to improve education outcomes in Kenya found that SMCs were used primarily to secure compliance from parents with various initiatives (or to discipline parents who do not comply) rather than to represent parent interests or provide a venue for parents to voice their concerns. The fact that SMCs are popularly elected reinforces the sense among parents that they have an obligation to comply with the SMC's decisions, and that they are delegating their own responsibilities for monitoring school

performance to the committee (Lieberman, Posner, and Tsai, 2014a).

A recent doctoral dissertation on "Empowerment of School Committees and Parents in Tanzania" provides a wealth of insights about the Tanzanian experience with SMCs (Masue, 2014). Interviews with 214 SMC members and 96 non-member parents in seven districts in Tanzania reveal that SMC members are aware of many opportunities to participate in school governance, particularly when compared to non-member parents. Among the most frequently cited are: making decisions on issues related to planning and budgeting; choice and procurement of books; expenditure; pupils' discipline; construction and repair of infrastructure; and awarding tenders.

Although Tanzanian SMC members are aware of these opportunities, the extent to which they make use of them is more limited – particularly when it comes to planning and budgeting, and making decisions about expenditure, procurement, and awarding tenders. In part, this reflects a lack of information. Over half of all the SMC members that Masue interviewed reported lacking information on the school's plan and budget, its expenditure patterns, and the school's bank balance. Beyond a lack of information, SMC members' disillusionment with the institution also explains their failure to actively participate. Masue's interviewees note that some people join SMCs expecting to receive personal, material benefits, and when this fails to happen they become disinterested. Yet others have been disillusioned by the fact that so many school development plans end up as implementation failures. This suggests that perceptions of collective efficacy are low for many SMC members.

Over the past year, Tanzania's SMCs have taken on renewed responsibilities, as "capitation grants" (funds for non-salary expenses, such as books and other learning materials) have begun to be disbursed directly into school bank accounts. Capitation grants for primary education were first established in 2002, as part of the first Primary Education Development Plan (part of a drive to promote universal primary education). The policy stated that "a Capitation Grant equivalent to US$10 per enrolled child will be instituted nationwide... Of this, US $4 will initially be sent to the district to enable schools to acquire textbooks and

other teaching and learning materials. The remaining $6 will be disbursed to schools through the district council, and school committees will decide how best to use the funds" (United Republic of Tanzania, 2001, p. 11).

In practice, the capitation grant amounts actually reaching schools have been well below the policy target of US $10 per enrolled child per year, declining from $6 in 2004 to $4 in 2009 to less than $2 in 2011. The fact that the grants had to pass through district councils (local government authorities) before reaching schools has been cited as a prime culprit for such leakages (Twaweza, 2012). In December 2014, the government announced that capitation grants would be sent directly to primary and secondary schools, instead of via district councils.[3] The policy change was in part a response to an ongoing randomized control trial (the East African NGO Twaweza's *Kiufunza* initiative[4]), which demonstrated that sending funds directly to schools ensures they are received in full and on time (This Day, 2014).

Efforts to ensure implementation of the revised capitation grant policy got a boost in 2015 with the launch of a new national education policy. The new policy included a commitment that from January 2016, basic education would be compulsory and would be provided free of charge. This became a major campaign promise in the presidential campaign of the ruling party candidate, Dr. John Magufuli, who took office in November 2015. Magufuli's pledge covers both school fees and the contributions that have typically been demanded of pupils and parents towards building maintenance, desks, examinations, watchmen, and other school running costs. Such contributions can exceed school fees by as much as ten-fold (Taylor, 2016).

Given plans to disburse capitation grants to schools on a monthly basis, SMCs should be meeting more regularly. Whenever funds arrive at school level, the head teacher is supposed

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[3]Notably, official the capitation grant amount is now 10,000 Tanzanian shillings per child. While this amount was approximately the equivalent of $10 in 2002, it is now less than $5 at current exchange rates. Furthermore, the capitation grant has not been adjusted for inflation, which has ranged from 5-20% over the past decade.

[4]http://twaweza.org/go/kiufunza-launch1

to call a meeting of the SMC, and the SMC is to endorse whatever use of the funds is decided.[5] The extent to which SMC deliberations over capitation grant allocations represent a meaningful avenue for citizen participation represents a key area of focus for this study.

3   Hypotheses

The above review of the literature on SMCs suggests that a lack of information on school finances and low perceived levels of collective efficacy represent two of the main constraints on these institutions. Relaxing these constraints should thus allow SMCs to more effectively play their roles, and lead to higher levels of participation in school governance by their members. This suggests the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. *SMCs that receive relevant information on school finances will demonstrate higher levels of participation in school governance than those which lack this information.*

Hypothesis 2. *SMCs with higher perceived levels of collective efficacy will demonstrate higher levels of participation in school governance than those with lower perceived levels.*

We expect that the interaction of these two factors will have a greater impact than either one alone, suggesting the use of a 2-by-2 factorial design. However, in the interest of conserving statistical power, and heeding the finding that "information-only" treatments tend not to be effective, our treatment aims at testing the two hypotheses jointly.

The proposed research will also account for variation in SMC performance by examining different group characteristics. While it is not possible to experimentally vary the composition of SMCs, we can still investigate meaningful correlations between different group attributes and outcomes. This approach follows Kosfeld and Rustagi (2015), who look at collective action outcomes across forest user groups in Ethiopia, and show that groups whose leaders emphasize equality and efficiency (measured through their behavior in a one-short

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[5]Conversation with Varja Lipovsek, Twaweza, March 14, 2016.

third-party punishment game) have better performance with respect to commons management. Experimental work has also confirmed the importance of leader attributes in motivating collection action (Jack and Recalde, 2015; Alzua, Cárdenas, and Djebbari, 2014). This suggests:

Hypothesis 3. *SMCs with higher quality leaders will demonstrate higher levels of participation in school governance than those with lower quality leaders.*

Our measures of leader quality are discussed in further detail below.

The literature on SMCs and other institutions for collective action also suggests that the way in which these groups are formed can have an impact on their effectiveness. Masue (2014) identifies five main pathways to becoming an SMC member: hand-raising and consensus, secret ballot, appointment by head teacher, automatic membership (e.g. head teachers) and ex-officio membership. Of the five, election by fellow members of the school community was the most prominent; however, we can still expect some variation in the degree to which SMCs are composed of elected vs. appointed members. SMCs with a higher proportion of elected members seem more consistent with the ideal type described above, where a heightened "sense of ownership" is expected to promote greater effectiveness and efficiency of school administration (Yamada, 2014). This is in keeping with theories of democratic accountability, which suggest that democratization should lead to higher levels of public goods provision. Indeed, there is empirical evidence to support this view. Two studies of public goods provision in rural China, which exhibits variation in the extent to which village leaders are elected vs. appointed, finds that village leaders are elected directly, the provision of public goods rises compared to villages with appointed leadership (Luo et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2004). If we think of active participation in school governance as a public good, this suggests the following:

Hypothesis 4. *SMCs with a higher proportion of elected members will demonstrate higher levels of participation in school governance than those with more appointed members.*

On the other hand, the Kenyan case study described above found that elections served primarily to legitimize SMC decisions and limited popular participation. This suggests that elections could have a null effect.

Selection mechanisms notwithstanding, there is a risk that SMCs may be captured by local elites. Elite capture has been found to permeate participatory institutions, often reproducing local power relations and dynamics of inequality (Mansuri and Rao, 2004). As a corollary to the argument about the positive impact of elections, elite capture ought to reduce the extent to which SMCs represent the interests of the school community, and thus reduce the incentive of SMC members to act on their behalf. This suggests:

Hypothesis 5. *SMCs with higher levels of elite capture will demonstrate lower levels of participation in school governance than those that have not been captured by elites.*

The opposite might also be true. While SMCs with a larger number of elites among their membership might be less representative of the school community, local elites may have greater capacity and motivation to get involved with school affairs. SMCs lacking elites among their members might be more easily overrun by the head teacher, suggesting:

Hypothesis 6. *SMCs with higher levels of elite capture will demonstrate higher levels of participation in school governance than those that have not been captured by elites.*

Finally, SMCs whose members demonstrate higher levels of "social capital" seem more likely to play their roles effectively. Following Tsai (2007), we expect that SMCs whose members belong to local "solidary groups" that are both "encompassing" (open to everyone in the local government jurisdiction) and "embedding" (incorporating local government officials into the group as members) will be more effective than those whose members are more individualistic:

Hypothesis 7. *SMCs whose members belong to local "solidary groups" will demonstrate lower levels of participation in school governance than those with more individualistic members.*

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4 Research Strategy

The proposed research will test the hypotheses presented above by combining an experimental approach (where we vary the ways in which SMCs receive information and deliberate about it) with analysis of observational data on correlations between the characteristics of SMCs and indicators of their effectiveness. In the interest of measuring impact in a controlled and time-bound manner, the study will primarily take a "lab-in-the-field" approach, but will also track outcomes in the "real world" over a longer period of time, in order to boost external validity.

4.1 Experimental Study

We will attempt to enhance SMC participation in school governance by providing relevant information in a manner aimed at boosting SMCs' sense of *collective efficacy.* The treatment will consist of a seminar, with an external facilitator leading sessions in Swahili on SMC members' rights and responsibilities (highlighting the new capitation grant policy), and sharing relevant school-specific information. We will provide information in a manner that heeds the findings of previous research on the link between information and citizen action (Joshi, 2014; Kosack and Fung, 2014; Lieberman, Posner, and Tsai, 2014*b*). Specifically, SMCs will be provided with comparative rather than absolute information on school performance (pass rates on national examinations) and inputs (teachers and desks per student). Inspired in part by the civics course Gottlieb (2016) implements in Mali, course sessions will strike a balance between standardized audiovisual materials and interactive exercises to maximize comprehension.

Collective efficacy is likely impossible to isolate or to vary experimentally. However, psychologists have found interesting ways to get at this, from which we draw. For instance, McGarty et al. (2009) assigned participants to group discussions that took the form of planning sessions where participants are asked to reach agreement on ways to achieve the goals

of a social movement. The method was designed to energize action by giving participants the opportunity to articulate norms of action in a way that is validated both through the development of consensus within the group and because it is considered to be part of real and legitimate efforts to create that social change.

We will take a similar approach during the seminars, allowing SMCs to discuss the way in which funds are currently being used, and then deliberate about how to best allocate school resources going forward and write up a plan that outlines their approach. They will be told that their written deliberations will be included in Twaweza's website, a letter to a responsible authority, and an article to be submitted to a local newspaper. As McGarty et al. (2009) explain, "the method is designed to energize action by giving participants the opportunity to articulate norms of action in a way that is validated both through the development of consensus within the group and because it is considered to be part of real and legitimate efforts to create that social change" (p. 850).

We note that the collective efficacy "treatment" is similar to what SMCs are already supposed to be doing per the government's policy. However, case study and anecdotal evidence suggests that in many instances the SMC serves as a rubber stamp for decisions made by the head teacher, and does not represent a space for active, participatory deliberation. Furthermore, despite the fact that minutes are taken at each SMC meeting and sent to local authorities, these minutes rarely see the light of day. Hence, we expect that facilitating the meetings in such a way as to ensure meaningful participation by all members, and then telling participants that their actions will be publicized, should have an impact.

The main outcome of interest – participation in school governance – is a multifaceted concept that does not lend itself to immediate observation in the context of a field experiment. Hence, we propose having SMC members play public goods games after receiving the different "treatments." Behavior in such games often deviates from the self-interested Nash equilibrium, with variation in contribution rates providing a measure of willingness to act collectively (Barr et al., 2012). The external validity of such measures has been demonstrated

in a range of contexts (Barr, Packard, and Serra, 2014).

We will further validate the measure ourselves by tracking participants' actual behavior with respect to participation in school governance for six months following the intervention. This will take the form of a follow-up survey and/or reports from local officials regarding attendance at village meetings and school committee meetings. We will also attempt to capture the decay rate of the treatment effect.

4.2   Collection of Observational Data

A key goal of this study is to learn more about SMCs in Tanzania and identify the primary constraints they face when it comes to effectively performing their role. Hence, collecting and analyzing relevant observational data is of great importance. Such an approach is also necessary when it comes to testing hypotheses related to SMC characteristics that cannot be experimentally manipulated, and can also help us draw suggestive and complementary inferences about the outcomes that we plan to study experimentally. Ideally, the proposed study will generate information and insights that can inform future experimental work in this space.

In order to gather information on relevant SMC characteristics and test the hypotheses outlined above, we will conduct interviews with SMC members individually along with focus group discussions to observe relevant group dynamics. The individual interviews will be used to gather data on the following:

- *Perceived access to financial information.* Respondents will be asked to rank their level of access to the following types of financial information on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from very low to very high: school expenditure, school plan and budget, procurement, and the school's bank balance.

- *Perceived collective efficacy.* We will measure collective efficacy by aggregating individual members' appraisals of their group's capability operating as a whole, as recom-

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mended by Bandura (2000).

- *Leadership characteristics.* SMC members will be asked to identify the group's leader, and rate his or her effectiveness on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "very ineffective" to "very effective." An open-ended question will then ask respondents to identify the characteristics they associate with "very effective" leadership. In addition, we will gather information on characteristics that other scholars have shown to be associated with effective leadership (e.g., gender, education, assets, and community participation (Jack and Recalde, 2015)) to see if the leaders identified share these characteristics and can thus be expected to be "objectively" more effective. This information, and that related to the respondent's professions and political affiliates, can also be used to determine whether the SMC has been captured by elites.

- *Method of selection to SMC.* We will ask each member how they came to be selected to the SMC, and will also ask them to explain how each of the other members were selected.

- *Membership in solidary groups.* As noted above, Tsai (2007) defines solidary groups as both "encompassing" (open to everyone in the local government jurisdiction) and "embedding" (incorporating local government officials into the group as members). In the context of rural Tanzania, these would include: religious groups, sports clubs, funeral societies, and savings groups. For each group we will ask if the respondent is a member, and also ask whether the group incorporates any local government officials as members.

- *SMC effectiveness.* Respondents will be asked about the frequency with which they and/or other group members perform each of the following mandated tasks: overseeing the day-to-day affairs of the school; maintaining and operating the school's bank account(s); safeguarding school properties; preparing and/or approving a Whole School Development Plan; preparing and submitting progress reports (physical and finan-

cial) to the Village/Mtaa and Council; communicating educational information to all parents, pupils, community, Village/Mtaa and Council and; sensitizing and involving pupils, school officials, and community members with respect to their roles in maximizing the objectives of the school. We will then construct an index of SMC effectiveness that aggregates these responses.

We will also hold focus groups to gain further insights into group dynamics – particularly the nature of leadership and the presence of elite capture – and SMC effectiveness. Following Prinsen and Titeca (2008) we will record the number of persons who make at least a twice above average (that is total effective interview time, divided by the number of participants) verbal contribution to the interview. This will allow us to determine whether the meetings were dominated by one person, or whether time was shared more equally. We will also observe who assumes effective leadership during the discussions.

Finally, we will engage research assistants to observe actual SMC meetings and record information on effective leadership and group dynamics. We recognize the risk of a Hawthorne effect by taking this tactic, and so will conduct exit interviews with individual participants to ask whether the meetings we observe reflect the usual state of affairs.

The individual interviews, focus group discussions, and observation of SMC meetings will all be conducted prior to the administration of any experimental treatment.

4.3   Sampling

We will randomly select 80 SMCs in four districts; 40 SMCs will be assigned to treatment while the remaining 40 will serve as a control. Implementing blocked randomization (by district) to select the SMCs will improve the precision of our estimates and minimize the potential for 'rogue' randomizations. Relevant blocking variables are those that are plausibly related to the outcome variable of interest – participation in school governance. These include poverty rates, urban vs. rural location, and dominant economic activity.

Given the pilot nature of the proposed study, the sample size is based on logistical considerations and financial constraints. Figure 1 shows that we will need to demonstrate a fairly large effect in order to achieve statistical power. The figure, based on 500 simulated experiments, plots effect sizes (in terms of Cohen's d, the difference between the means of the treated and control groups divided by a standard deviation for the data) against statistical power (the proportion of
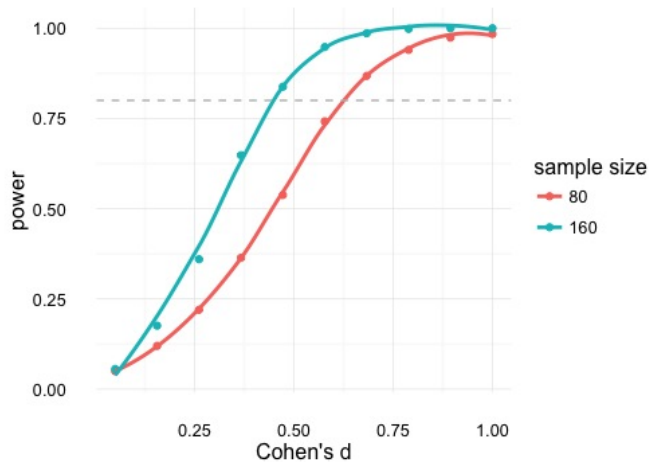

Figure 1: Effect Size and Power

experiments that will return statistically significant results).[6] We see that in order to achieve 80% power (the standard cut-off), we would need our treatment to have a fairly large effect.[7] Even doubling the sample size would still require an effect size of nearly 0.5. We note that such effect sizes are not out of line with similar studies of institutions for collective action.[8] Moreover, the power calculations depicted here represent a lower bound, since blocking and gathering information on covariates will generate efficiency gains. That being said, we recognize the risk of being underpowered. Should that come to pass, we still expect to glean relevant insights to inform future iterations at scale.

5   Study Logistics

This research design serves to inform a proposal for joint collaboration pursuant to the EASST Collaborative Research Grant. The grant competition invites pairs of researchers from East Africa and the CEGA faculty network to submit grant applications for the eval-

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[6]Thanks to Luke Sonnet for the R code to run the simulations.

[7]Generally speaking, a Cohen's d value of 0.2 if considered to be small, 0.5 to be medium, and 0.8 to be large.

[8]Kosfeld and Rustagi (2015) demonstrate an effect of 0.77 standard deviations, while Travers et al. (2011) show an effect of 0.6 standard deviations.

uation of innovative interventions in health, education, economic development, energy, and other sectors. I am proposing to conduct a study in partnership with the East African NGO Twaweza.[9] The maximum request for the grant is $50,000. I submitted the grant proposal on April 13, 2016, and should hear back by May 13, 2016.

The proposed research will build on Twaweza's *Uwezo* initiative, a series of annual citizen-led assessments of children's basic literacy and numeracy competency in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. The main purpose of the initiative is "to inspire citizens to focus on improving learning outcomes by taking action themselves or holding those responsible accountable" (Twaweza, 2015, 18). Evaluations of the initiative to date have found limited evidence that *Uwezo* is achieving this goal (Carlitz and Lipovsek, 2015), leading to calls for research to better understand the barriers to citizen action. The proposed study responds to this call, and will attempt to identify concrete strategies for making *Uwezo* more effective going forward.

In 2016, Twaweza will not be carrying out the regular *Uwezo* assessment, instead focusing on 10 districts in the three countries, and expanding the assessment function to what they call "public agency." This will entail working closely with *Uwezo* partners (local civil society organizations and Uwezo volunteers) in the 10 districts to enable them to not only collect data (which has been their main role so far), but to much more actively engage local authorities along accountability questions. The proposed research will therefore be conducted in districts where the 2016 *Uwezo* intervention is *not* taking place. Twaweza has a number of partners in these districts who regularly participate in *Uwezo* activities, and thus familiar with relevant research protocols and able to assist with study logistics.

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[9]http://www.twaweza.org/

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