The Bottleneck in Engaging Pupils in Primary School Governance in Tanzania

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This study attempts to provide answers to two research questions: (1) in practice, how are pupils engaged in public primary school governance; and (2) what challenges are faced by pupil councils in fostering school governance? The study employed a multiple case study design with a qualitative research methodology framework. The purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 130 respondents. Data were collected through interviews and documentary review. The data were analysed using Miles and Huberman's model (1994) of qualitative data analysis. The study found the following. Firstly, the law explicitly states that pupils should be involved in school governance through pupil councils and indicates how this should be done. Secondly, pupil councils exist in schools, but they do not conform to the guidelines for their development and play only a peripheral role in schools' governance. In addition, pupil councils face challenges associated with the failure to implement decisions, the hatred of teachers and fellow pupils, inadequate time for meetings and irresponsibility on the part of the school management in responding to pupil councils' suggestions. Based on these findings, the study provides a number of recommendations, one being that, since the government is committed to promoting and protecting children's rights, it is now high time to implement this commitment and ensure that pupils are provided with an opportunity to engage fully in school governance as a means of expressing their opinions about all matters that affect their school life.