What is the Point of Schooling? The Politics of Education Policy in Tanzania Since 1961

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Abstract

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Key Words: Education Policy, Ujamaa, Political Settlements, Schooling, Learning

1 Introduction

The world is experiencing a "learning crisis" (Languille, 2014; World Bank Group, 2018). While the last five decades have seen tremendous improvements in school enrollment rates in middle and low-income countries, the gains have been accompanied by a glaring stagnation or decline in school quality (Sifuna, 2007; Nestour, Moscovix and Sandefur, 2021). In other words, increases in *schooling* have not always translated into targeted levels of *learning*. Given the political importance of the education sector in most states (Jensen, 2011; Ansell and Lindvall, 2021) and presumed impacts on economic development (Knight and Sabot, 1990; Krueger and Lindhal, 2001; Benos and Zotou, 2014), why did politicians in different countries preside over stagnating or declining education quality over the last 50 years?

With evidence from Tanzania, this article argues that historical official policy objectives of schooling partially explain the stagnation or decline of learning outcomes around the world. My point of departure is that *learning* is not always the goal of *schooling*. I then show that politicians are not always incentivized to maximize either schooling or learning and, under certain conditions, can ration supply. Therefore, to understand politicians' inability to stem declining learning outcomes, one must first understand government's historical intentions behind schooling and the lasting legacies of prior policy choices.

In Tanzania, policy prescriptions arising from ideological and developmentalist motivations explain historical patterns in attainment and stagnation in quality. The government's ideological and political hegemony enabled it to ration access to schooling for decades; constrain the emergence of private schools even in the face of government under-investment; prioritize primary education and adult literacy over higher levels; adopt a vocational (as opposed to an academic) curriculum; institute a language policy that was disruptive to learning in secondary schools; and implement bureaucratic-administrative reforms that turned basic education into primarily an administrative function. These choices had lasting effects, and continue to constrain policymakers' ability to translate schooling into learning.

Tanzania is an ideal case study because its experience mirrors that of other African states.[1] At independence, these states inherited education sectors plagued by deliberate colonial under-investment in access and substandard curricula (wa Thiong'o, 1986). Like Tanzania, these countries had to make critical policy choices regarding curriculum content (academic vs vocational), languages of instruction, financing (e.g. taxes, user fees or private schools), and the distributive effects of public investments (basic education vs tertiary education). Each country's specific choices reflected prevailing elite political consensus and fiscal-administrative capacities. Similarly, the choices made had lasting effects. Therefore, a detailed historical study of Tanzania's education policy is an important contribution to our understanding of the politics of postcolonial eduction policy in Africa.

The thick description herein of Tanzania's education policy and associated impacts relies on evidence from multiple sources – including the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Afrobarometer Surveys; administrative data on school enrollment, government spending, and economic indicators; and content analysis of legislation, party manifestos, and important policy documents. Importantly, I document the temporal variation in education policy in response to shifts in both elite ideas (top down change) and mass demand (bottom up change). While most studies emphasize bottom up electoral incentives faced by politicians, it is equally important to understand how elites influence public perceptions of the legitimacy of specific policy goals in the education sector.

Using a political settlements approach (Khan, 1995, 2017), I describe four phases of education policy, each with its own predominant logic of schooling and associated outcomes. The first phase (1961-1967) focused on producing a limited skilled workforce to Africanize the bureaucracy and economy. Thereafter ideological/political objectives drove policy – first under the socialist Education for Self Reliance era (1967-1985) followed by a reformist era (1985-1995). The competing goals of increasing access and improving learning outcomes amidst a heightened political salience of education define the current phase (1995-present).

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[1]See Figure A.1 in the Appendix.

Notably, attention to learning outcomes has only recently acquired political salience (Nzima, 2016). Historical official inattention to learning outcomes is exemplified by the fact that to address heightened teacher demand in the 1970s and 2000s, the government simply lowered the standards of teacher training.[2] On both occasions government policy went decidedly against well-understood impacts of teacher quality to learning outcomes (Bold et al., 2017).

This paper advances our understanding of the politics of education policy in low-income states by examining how political settlements and associated policy coalitions shape education policy. In doing so it builds on works that highlight the impact of administrative structures on performance (Hecock, 2006; Garritzmann, Roth and Kleider, 2021); how partisanship shapes education expenditures and outcomes (Boix, 1997; Busemeyer, 2014); and the politics of education expansion (Weber, 1976; Sifuna, 2007; Languille, 2014; Stasavage and Harding, 2014; Paglayan, 2021). The thick description herein introduces a more nuanced understanding of the politics of education. I show how Tanzanian elites' ideological and political hegemony enabled them to ration access to primary (1961-1974) and secondary (1961-2006) education while paying scant attention to learning for decades. This finding contradicts received wisdom that governments, in response to political incentives, maximize the provision of public goods and services.

2 The Politics of Schooling vs Learning

Education serves important social, political, and economic functions. As a result, it is deeply political. On the demand side, households are incentivized to be stakeholders – whether due to concerns about education's social and political functions or the perceived promise of economic returns to schooling. On the supply side, ruling elites are typically vested in education as a means of molding national identities, socializing loyal citizens, or creating

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[2]See Meena (2009); Habyarimana, Opalo and Schipper (2021).

knowledgeable and productive workers.[3] Several works find positive correlations between increased electoral competition and investments in mass education (Stasavage, 2005; D'Arcy, 2013; Harding, 2020). At the same time, historical evidence suggests that elites often shape public demand for both access and content of schooling (Alesina, Giuliano and Reich, 2021; Paglayan, forthcoming). Learning is seldom a top priority. Instead, elite-level ideas matter in defining the contours of public demands in the education sector. Below I synthesize these two features of education by unbundling the politics of education. The scope condition of my analysis is limited to contexts with weak institutions and low state capacity. I also relax the assumption that politicians are always incentivized to maximize the supply of education.

2.1 Unbundling Education

The bundled nature of education complicates politicians' effort and attribution. The sector's components include physical infrastructure, teachers, curriculum content, quality control, school management, parent or community contributions, and government fiscal-administrative inputs. These components differentially contribute to schooling and learning. Having enough space in classrooms, regardless of the quality of teachers, content of the curriculum, or level of parental/community involvement, can increase access to schooling. However, translating schooling into learning requires investments in the latter components that are often not readily tangible – and which come with significant costs and added complexity.

Given the divisibility of education into multiple components, politicians are likely to make differential investments conditional on prevailing incentive schemes. Specifically, as multi-task agents with varied effort visibility (Holmstrom and Milgrom, 1991; Mani and Mukand, 2007), politicians are incentivized to invest in aspects of education that are easily visible and attributable from voters' perspective (Stasavage and Harding, 2014; Habyarimana, Opalo and Schipper, 2021). Supplying schooling (e.g., building physical schools) is

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[3]See Nyerere (1968b), Weber (1976), and Pritchett and Viarengo (2015).

ordinarily more visible and attributable than investments in learning (e.g., through curriculum reform, teacher training, and pedagogical interventions). Furthermore, parents may attribute their children's academic successes to innate intelligence or parental investment and not politicians' effort.

Administrative and fiscal capacity may further complicate these attribution dynamics. In most low-income countries the education sector attracts the largest share of government spending and is the largest employer.[4] Given the scale and complexity of operations involved, proper management of the education sector demands administrative and fiscal capacities that are lacking in many (developing) countries. Consequently, even intrinsically motivated politicians may fail in the education sector. Under the circumstances, politicians are wont to spend limited fiscal-administrative capacity supplying easily visible and attributable elements of schooling, often at the expense of learning.[5]

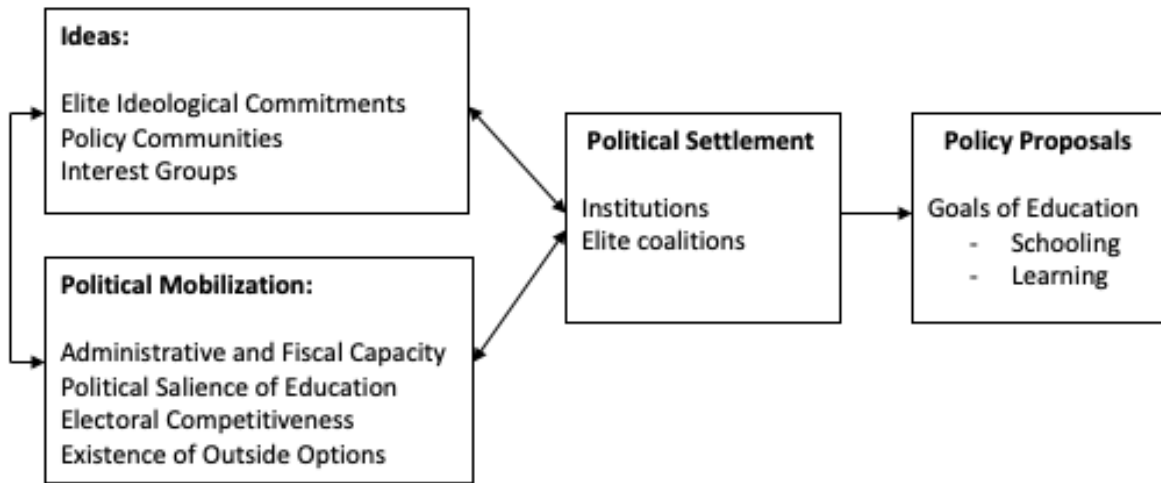## 2.2 Political Settlements and Education Policy

Coalitions matter for education policy formulation and implementation. Policy persistence is predicated on continued support from pivotal actors throughout the administrative apparatus – typically referred to as dominant "advocacy coalitions" (Schlager, 1995). Such coalitions may coalesce around specific interests or ideas and influence policy in ways that are independent of electoral, fiscal-administrative, or institutional variables. Stated differently, politicians and policymakers do not simply react or anticipate societal demands, but can also impose their vision on society (Skocpol, 1980; Skowronek, 1982). This is especially true in contexts where institutions such as legislatures and bureaucracies are weak and unable to constrain the behavior of pivotal policy actors in predictable ways. To explore these dynamics in the context of education policy, this section applies a political settlements approach.

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[4]Many low-income countries struggle to reach the recommended optimal fiscal investments of 4-6% of GDP in spending (World Bank, 2021).

[5]See Opalo (2022b) on how low state and institutional capacity weakens the political incentives for implementing programmatic policies, instead reinforcing easily-attributable clientelism.

Figure 1: Ideas, Politics, and Political Settlements

Notes: Figure shows a schema of how political settlements shape the influence of ideas and politics on education policy in states with weak institutions. In such contexts, the nature of political settlements have greater explanatory power than formal institutional structures and processes.

The political settlements approach is a useful framework for evaluating the impact of coalitions on education policy in weak states. Conceptually, it provides an analytical middle ground between institutionalist and personalist models of policymaking. The framework posits that the distribution of power among administrative/policy coalitions determines the impacts of institutions and policies (Khan, 1995, 2017). Therefore, understanding how institutions and policies shape outcomes requires knowing the coalition politics that underpin successful policy formulation and implementation. This is especially true in contexts with weak institutions. In such polities, what matters for outcomes are not formal rules or institutions but "the distribution of organizational power and mobilization capabilities" (Khan, 2017, p. 646). Overall, a political settlement is a particular distribution of organizational power (e.g., manifested as a policy coalition) that is capable of reproducing itself over time.[6]

A sector as complex as education readily lends itself to a political settlements analysis. Managing the sector involves balancing policy ideas and fiscal-administrative capacity against

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[6]I do not consider transaction cost institutional analysis and the political settlement approach to be in tension. Their respective explanatory powers is dependent on the strength of institutions. The political settlements approach, which does not imply stasis, has greater explanatory power in contexts with weak institutions. This conceptualization is consistent with the general idea that institutions are only as strong as the dominant coalitions within them (Stasavage, 2003; Opalo, 2022a).

the realities of mass politics. Under these conditions, institutions' ability to aggregate ideas and interests depends on the prevailing balance of power across pivotal policy coalitions. In particular, if institutions are weak, dominant policy coalitions are able to shape both ideas about what education ought to be about and the manner in which such ideas are implemented – regardless of the formal institutional channels of policy formulation and implementation. This is in contrast to situations where there is greater predictability of policy lifecycles – e.g., the passing of legislation, budget appropriation, and policy implementation by a competent state bureaucracy subject to legislative oversight.

Figure 1 summarizes these dynamics. The dominant *ideas* about the point of schooling reflect an aggregation of elite ideological commitments, input from policy communities, and interest groups invested in the education sector. In the political realm, administrative and fiscal capacity in interaction with mass politics define contours of achievable policy goals. With the bounds understood, realized influence of *political mobilization* depends on the level of political salience of education, electoral competitiveness, and the availability of options outside the public education system. The prevailing *political settlement* structures the realized policy impacts of ideas and political mobilization. Notably, elite coalitions within the political settlement can also shape both ideas and forms of political mobilization directed at state institutions, albeit imperfectly.

This simple schema structures emerging *policy proposals* within a given polity, with straightforward predictions: Elite-level ideas regarding the goals of education drive policy choices; conditional on regime type, elites can calibrate the political salience of education; and structural factors like fiscal-administrative capacity shape the feasible set of policy outcomes. These observations are an important corrective against assuming a dominant influence of electoral incentives in driving education policy and realized outcomes. They are also an invitation to interrogate the historical evolution of education policy in developing countries without presuming a fixity of the goals of schooling. The rest of this paper uses the schema in Figure 1 to describe the evolution of Tanzania's education policy since 1961.

3   Politics of Education Policy in Tanzania

This section describes the broad outlines of Tanzania's four phases of political settlements and their implications for education policy. I begin by highlighting how ideological and political motivations shaped policy, often in ways that contradict standard political economy expectations. Section 4 describes education outcomes in more detail. While the four phases of political settlements lack discrete boundaries, they broadly align with important shifts in Tanzania's politics and economy.[7]

Like most postcolonial states, Tanzania faced important questions regarding education policy at independence. The specific choices it made reflected prevailing political settlements and had lasting consequences. Applying the schema in Figure 1, the discussion below explains Tanzania's approach to manpower planning, emphasis of primary education and a practical (vs academic) curriculum while rationing secondary education, choice of Swahili as the language of instruction at primary and English at secondary levels, bureaucratic-administrative structure of the education system, and why increasing access to schooling continues to eclipse concerns about learning.

3.1   Data and Methods

This article relies on multiple data sources. To provide structure to the descriptive exercise, I use a political settlements approach to construct four phases of education policymaking, associated education policies, and outcomes. Major policy documents provide a general understanding of the government's formal policy objectives. These include the Education Act (1969, 1978), TANU Guidelines (Mwongozo) of 1971, the Decentralization of Government Administration (Interim Provisions) Act (1972), the Local Government and Authorities Act (1982, 1999), the Arusha Declaration (1967), Musoma Declaration (1974), the Presidential Commission on Education Report (1982), Education and Training Policy (1995, 2014), Ba-

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[7]The political settlements analysis herein builds on Kelsall (2018).

sic Education Master Plan (1997), Local Government Reform Program (1998), successive Five Year Development Plans, and Education Sector Development Plans (various publications). These documents, together with government budget data, donor assistance project documents, and other secondary materials provide a clear picture of shifts in the logics of education policy in Tanzania.[8]

I also rely on various data sources on enrollment and quality of schooling. Publications of the official Basic Education Statistics (BEST) and the Electronic Information Management System (EMIS) provide information on enrollment and school construction. To construct trend lines on both access and the quality of education, I rely on evidence from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Afrobarometer Surveys. I use these data to construct measures of education attainment and literacy across cohorts spanning Tanzania's four phases of political settlements.

The analysis herein is descriptive. The principal aim is to show how political settlements occasioned shifts in the predominant official goal of education and link those shifts to specific outcomes. The claim is not that the dominant ideas in each phase were unchallenged or that political settlements were static. Political, economic, and policy conditions certainly overlapped and it many cases outcomes lagged policy. Politicians and technocrats often competed over education policy. Furthermore, despite its hegemonic status, the ruling party was not always able to ignore public opinion.

3.2 Political Settlements and Schooling Objectives

In making education policy, Tanzanian policy elites balanced a number of competing goals. The public demanded access, while the government lacked the fiscal-administrative capacity to meet the demand. Ruling elites preferred centralization, which often conflicted with the practicalities of effective localized implementation. On language policy, nation-building

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[8]Table B.1 in the Appendix summarizes Tanzania's major education policy pronouncements since 1961.

goals elevated Swahili as the medium of instruction, despite the disruption for pupils who abruptly shifted to English in secondary school. Ideology also mattered. Despite a shortage of public schools, president Julius Nyerere's socialist inclination militated against private schools and promoted an agrarian curriculum instead of academic learning. Each phase of political settlement (summarized in Table 1) yielded its own set of policy choices on these questions. Below I describe each political settlement phase in turn.

3.2.1 Party-Based Pragmatism and Manpower Planning

The first political settlement (1961-1967) was marked by the hegemony of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). During this period, the government resisted public demand for rapid increases in access and instead focused on manpower planning as the driving logic of education policy (Hunter, 1966; Resnick, 1967). Manpower planning targeted a sliver of the school-age population as future members of the managerial class in both the private and public sectors. The government "[restricted] firmly the further expansion of recurrent expenditure on education until it [could] be better matched (and paid for) by economic advance" (Hunter, 1966, p. 13). Less than a third of children were able to attend primary school. Secondary enrollment was a paltry 3 percent. As part of the decolonization process, the curriculum was Africanized and infused with civic education. Swahili became the language of instruction in primary schools in 1965, with the stated goal (yet to be achieved) of gradual expansion into secondary and beyond.[9] While the administration of education was decentralized, TANU's rapidly growing political hegemony enabled it to suppress mass expectations of a rapid expansion of schooling.

Within TANU, different factions jostled for power and influence along two main cleavages. A national/local cleavage pitted national leaders against local elites (including bureaucrats) who dominated the productive sectors of the economy and the architecture of local govern-

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[9]The language policy succeeded at nation-building (Miguel, 2004). However, the linguistic discontinuity between primary and secondary school has negatively impacted learning outcomes (Brock-Utne, 2010).

Table 1: Political Settlements and Education Policy in Tanzania

Nature of Political Settlement	Key Features of the Education System	Predominant Objectives of Schooling
Party-based pragmatism **(1961-1967)**	**Modernization:** • Technocratic manpower planning • Limited expansion of primary and secondary schooling • De-racialization of the curriculum • Swahili as the language of instruction in primary schools	• Limited skills development to Africanize bureaucracy and economy • Identity formation and molding of loyal citizens • Universal adult literacy
Nyerere-dominated (*Ujamaa*) socialist developmentalism **(1967-1985)**	**Education for Self-Reliance (ESR):** • TANU policy dominance • UPE and primary education as terminal; Secondary school rationing • Reduction of subnational disparities in enrollment • Administrative decongestion • School self-sufficiency and integration into host rural communities • Emphasis on practical skills	• Agrarian self-reliance and technical training • Universal literacy for participatory socialist development • Prevention of rural-urban migration • Political education of loyal citizens
Early Reformist Era **(1985-1995)**	**Structural Adjustment of Education:** • Ascendance of technocratic management and budget cuts • Introduction of school fees • Acceptance of private secondary schools • Reforms towards scientific education and technical skills	• Skills development for a liberalizing economy • Preparation for higher levels of education
Mass Education for a Modern Economy and Pluralist Politics **(1995-Present)**	**Unrestricted Mass Education:** • Electoral salience of education • Universal primary and secondary education • Competency-based curriculum • Basic education as preparation for higher levels of education • Salience of the "learning crisis" and global policy diffusion	• Skills development for an open economy • Emphasis on both schooling and learning • Universal primary and secondary education

Notes: For much of the period under study the government focused on either increasing access to schooling or the quality of education for a limited share of students needed to supply high-skilled manpower. It is only between 2005 and 2013 that a policy consensus emerged in favor of mass learning as a core goal of education policy.

ment (Picard, 1980). National leaders wanted to subordinate education to nation-building and centrally planned developmentalism. Local elites saw education as means of training competent workers and administrators. The ideological cleavage pitted pragmatic modernizing nationalists against ideologue socialists (Samoff, 1994). Both wanted to Africanize the upper echelons of the economic and political realms, albeit for divergent ends. The nationalists included upwardly mobile capitalist-leaning economic elites and the small bureaucratic cohort inherited from the colonial era. The socialists, inspired by Nyerere, envisaged rapid economic modernization via central planning (Nyerere, 1968b; Molony, 2014).

The factional balance of power and the subnational administrative structure facilitated a pragmatic approach to education policy. Rural authorities and urban municipalities retained significant policy influence – including school construction – as was the case under colonialism. The 1962 Education Ordinance granted Local Education Authorities fiscal and administrative powers in the education sector.[10] This policy reflected the government's desire to deflect responsibility over education access to local authorities, and to limit the financial burden on the national government.[11] Significant regional inequalities in education access and outcomes followed. Eventually, the national/local and ideological contestations were decisively settled by the late 1960s on the back of a systematic dismantling of alternative centers of power that may have posed a challenge to TANU and Nyerere's authority.

The policy impact of these changes was to attenuate the ability of both citizens and subnational elites to influence education policy. The centralization of education policy reflected broader political developments. In 1964 the umbrella trade union organization was reconstituted as an affiliate of TANU (Chambua, 2002). Opposition parties were abolished in 1965 (Hyden and Leys, 1972), essentially obviating parliamentary checks on executive power (Tordoff, 1977; Opalo, 2019). Except for a brief military mutiny in 1964, throughout his tenure (1961-1985) Nyerere never faced any real threat to his authority. Adherence to

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[10]GOT, Education Ordinance, 1962
[11]Education quickly became a major expense item of local governments. (Samoff, 1974, p. 41) finds that in Kilimanjaro, 60-70 percent of the district council budget went to education and culture.

consensus politics became the norm (van Donge and Liviga, 1986). However, as noted above, the national consensus was pragmatically balanced against subnational policy variation.

Rationing of access was official policy. While unveiling Tanzania's First Development Plan in 1964, Nyerere argued for a "carefully planned expansion of education," with the goal of education being to "equip Tanganyika with the skills and the knowledge which is needed if the Development of [Tanganyika] is to be achieved."[12] Priority was to be given to adult education since, in his view, the returns to educating children would take long to materialize. In the same speech, Nyerere emphasized the importance of efficiently utilizing Tanzania's meagre resources, observing that "Children entering university this year will still be at university in 15 years time!" As such, there was need to prioritize teacher training, educating an optimal number of secondary and university students, while at the same time rationing overall access in recognition of Tanzania's fiscal-administrative constraints.

3.2.2 Education for Agrarian Self-Reliance

The Arusha Declaration (1967) inaugurating *Ujamaa* defined the second political settlement (1967-1985). If the first political settlement was characterized by pragmatism in the face of intra-TANU factional competition and subnational variation, the second was dominated by *Ujamaa* and increasing (albeit not total) centralization and politicization of education policy in service to socialist developmentalism. Following Nyerere's proclamation of the Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) policy in 1967 (Nyerere, 1968a), TANU dominated education policy at the expense of technocrats. Mirroring ongoing economic reforms, the expansion of private schools was curtailed (Carnoy and Samoff, 1990; Temu and Due, 2000). In 1969 Local Education Authorities were created to manage schools at the local level, but following central policy direction.[13] The elimination of council elections further diluted localized political incentives to build schools. *Ujamaa* villagization filled some of the gap as agglomeration effects

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[12]URT, Address by the President, Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, The Tanganyika Five Year Plan and Review of the Plan (1964)

[13]URT, The Education Act (1969)

facilitated the expansion of access to primary education (Maro, 1990). Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced in conjunction with adult literacy campaigns. Secondary education was rationed, and limited to less than 10 percent.

The overriding goal was to cultivate loyal agrarian citizens through mass primary education focused on contextual practical skills.[14] The post-Arusha plan envisioned the achievement of UPE in 1989 and gradual expansion of secondary and tertiary education in tandem with labor demands and resource availability.[15] However, due to pressure from the TANU ranks, the Third Five Year Development Plan (1976-1981) moved the UPE deadline forward to 1977.[16] The rationing of secondary education persisted until 2006.[17]

The 1971 TANU guidelines (*Mwongozo*) eroded technocratic influence over education policy by subordinating the government to the party (Hartmann, 1983).[18] In 1972 the system of local government was abolished (including elected local councils) to check lingering subnational particularistic interests and opposition to national development policies. Until 1972 local governments controlled basic education, had elected officials, and raised their own revenue through taxation (Hyden, 1980; Picard, 1980; Semboja and Terkildsen, 1994).[19] Compulsory villagization soon followed (von Freyhold, 1979) and with it the abolition of cooperatives in 1975 (Eckert, 2007). These changes reinforced the centralization of education policymaking and attenuation of localized political responsiveness in the sector. They also stunted the development of Tanzania's fiscal-administrative capacity. TANU's dominance produced the Musoma Resolutions (1974) which, among other things, accelerated the realization of UPE by moving the deadline forward to 1977. Importantly, the Musoma Resolutions caught the technocratic education bureaucracy by surprise (Omari et al., 1983).

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[14]Figures A.5, A.6, and A.7 puts Tanzania's rationing of schooling in comparative perspective against data from Kenya and Uganda.

[15]URT, First Five-Year Development Plan, 1969-1974

[16]URT, Second Five-Year Development Plan, 1976-1981

[17]The government appreciated the economy's inability to absorb secondary graduates (Mbilinyi, 1976).

[18]URT, Mwongozo Wa TANU, Dar es Salaam, 1971

[19]URT, Decentralization of Government Administration (Interim Provisions) Act, 1972. The new system of decentralization (de-congestion) sought to replicate national level line ministries at the local level in order to equalize the provision of essential public goods and services.

Despite TANU's hegemony, residual tension existed between the party's ideological policy aims and their practical implementation through the state bureaucracy (Kiondo, 1989). In particular, Nyerere had to balance TANU's (and later CCM's) impulses for poorly planned rapid reforms against the stated policy objective of rationing access to education in line with the country's fiscal-administrative capacity.[20] He also had to contend with the problem of subnational variation in policy implementation. Administrative reforms in 1974 (dubbed "decentralization") decongested the central bureaucracy, replicating ministerial presence at the subnational level. Yet these changes only exacerbated the central government's principal-agent problems with adverse consequences for policy implementation (Hyden, 1980). TANU's influence on subnational administrative organs eroded their technocratic capacities.[21] More broadly, TANU's hegemony decoupled planning from fiscal-administrative considerations. Ineluctably, failure followed.

3.2.3 Structural Adjustment of Education

Economic crises and policy failures under *Ujamaa* precipitated a new political settlement (1985-1995) focused on policy reforms and fiscal retrenchment (see Figures 2 and 6). Unlike the past two periods, this era lacked a coherent policy goal of education. Avoiding collapse was the goal. The salience of economic reforms elevated technocrats at the expense of CCM officials. Local governments were reintroduced in 1982 to relieve a beleaguered central government. Finally, severe budget cuts forced the reintroduction of user fees in primary and secondary schools and removal of restrictions on private schools. Real government spending on education declined precipitously (Figure 6).[22]

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[20]Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) succeeded TANU in 1977.

[21]See Figure D.10 summarizing party-state relations in the Appendix.

[22]For example, by 1974 only 11.4% of primary school graduates transitioned to secondary school – with 28.6% of them attending private schools. Just over a decade later in 1986 and following the implementation of UPE, the transition rate had dropped to 7.2% with 51% of students attending private secondary schools. The privatization of education exacerbated regional inequalities. For example, Cooksey (1986) notes that in 1986 "Kilimanjaro Region [had] only 11% of all government schools in the country, but no less than 34% of all registered private schools" (p. 185).

Figure 2: Political and Economic Trends in Tanzania
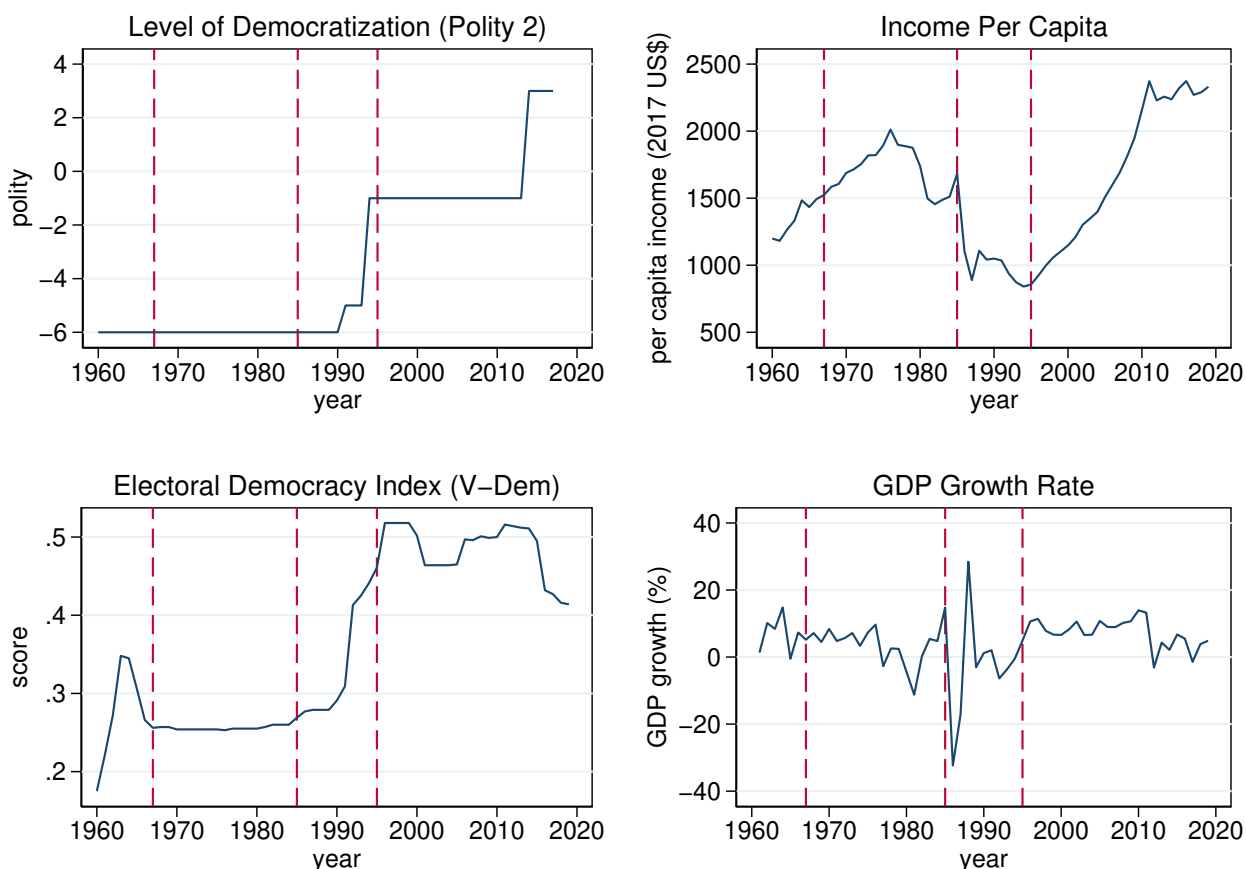
Notes: Graphs show trends in political and economic trends in Tanzania. Vertical dotted lines separate different phases of political settlements. Data are from Marshall, Gurr and Jaggers (2019), Coppedge et al. (2019), and Feenstra, Inklaar and Timmer (2015).

This transition period yielded both economic and political reforms (Figure 2). On the economic front, *Ujamaa* policy missteps, droughts in the 1970s, the war with Uganda in 1979, and a global economic crisis jointly precipitated a severe recession. Consequently, the government was forced to implement structural adjustment programs which included budget cuts in the education sector. On the political front, Nyerere resigned in 1985, further diminishing CCM's policy influence. While Nyerere's successor, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, favored unwinding many *Ujamaa* policies, intra-CCM factional politics moderated the pace of reforms (Kjaer, 2004). This meant that it was not until the late 1990s, after the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1992, that the fiscal situation permitted the government to contemplate

Figure 3: The Fall and Rise of Education Spending
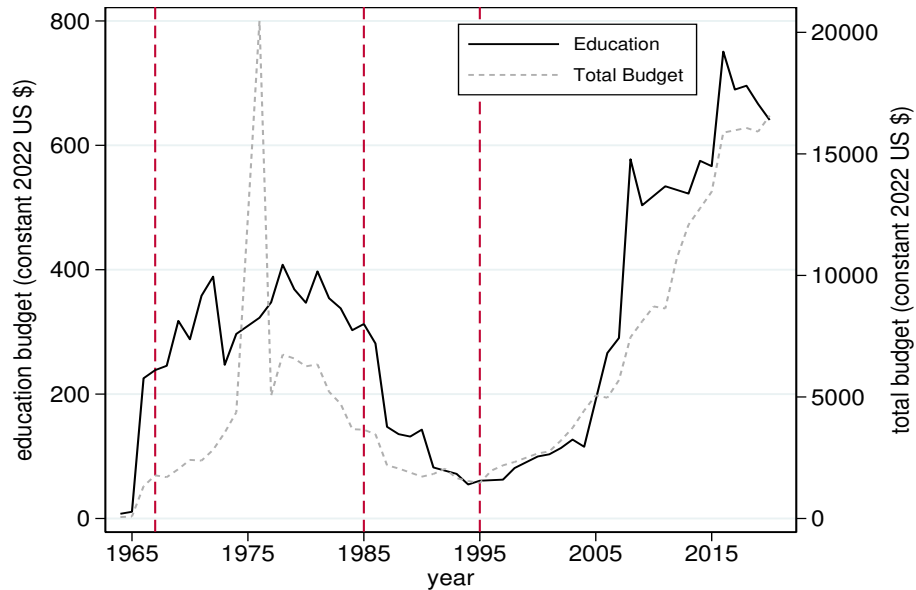
Notes: Graph shows total education spending in 2022 constant dollars. Notice the long decline in education spending beginning in the late 1970s through the mid 1990s.

a new ambitious agenda of mass education.

As early as 1982 the government appointed a Presidential Commission on Education to review the sector and provide recommendations for reforms.[23] However, economic crises delayed implementation of the recommendations. An important legacy of this era was the reorganization of the administrative structure for implementing education policy. In 1982 the government re-introduced local government authorities with elected assemblies and appointed executives.[24] In 1983, these units took charge of basic education, including planning and budgeting, payment of teachers, and supervision of school management. The Ministry of Education retained control over general education policy and higher education. This arrangement persists. The Ministry in the President's Office for Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG) oversees basic education, while the Ministry of Education controls policy and higher education.[25]

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[23]URT, *Ripoti na Mapendekezo ya Tume ya Rais ya Elimu,* 1982
[24]URT, Local Government And Authorities Act, 1982
[25]See Appendix C.

3.2.4 Mass Education for a Modern Economy

The present political settlement (1995-present) is defined by the need to produce patriotic high-skilled workers for a modernizing economy. In practice, this means a balancing of the competing goals of increasing access to basic education while also improving learning outcomes. The government re-introduced UPE in 2001. The runaway success of UPE forced the government to launch a massive expansion of secondary schooling in 2006, culminating in the Fee-Free Basic Education Policy introduced in 2015. In a departure from the policy of rationing access to secondary schooling, all Tanzania children are now guaranteed free education through lower secondary school (O-Levels). Overall, education policy – especially with regard to access – has acquired greater political salience. This is no small part because of the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1992. The re-introduction of UPE, initiation of the competence based curriculum (CBC) in 2005, the 2006 expansion of secondary schooling, the Big Results Now! (BRN) policy response to deteriorating learning outcomes in 2013, and the 2015 universal basic education policy were all partially motivated by electoral concerns (D'Arcy, 2013; Languille, 2014; Habyarimana, Opalo and Schipper, 2021).[26]

The liberalization of the economy and the demise of *Ujama* necessitated curriculum reforms. Furthermore, despite CCM's dominance, electoral competition shortened the shelf life of access rationing for ideological and fiscal purposes. Symbolically, pro-CCM Political Studies was scrapped as a subject. While CCM remains a hegemonic party (Morse, 2014; Collord, 2021), since 1995 it has faced strong electoral incentives to increase access to schooling and signal commitment to improving learning outcomes. In line with trends that began in the early 1980s, technocrats at MoEST, PO-RALG, and LGAs as well as global education policy experts fronted by donors have significantly greater influence on education policy.

The increased urgency in education policymaking is reflected in the series of policy documents released in this phase. These include the Education and Training Policies (ETP)

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[26]Global compacts such as the Millennium Development Goals and the current salience of the "global learning crisis" undoubtedly helped focus policymakers' attention.

published in 1995 and 2014; the 1997 Education Sector Development Program and associated Primary and Secondary Education Development Programs; administrative changes to strengthen LGAs; and curriculum reforms since 2005, among others. Acknowledging the realities of the first three phases, the 1995 ETP observed that "[d]espite the rapid expansion of the education system over the last three decades in Tanzania, human resources remain seriously underdeveloped."[27]

Increased enrollment has raised concerns about quality. The yawning gap in access at the secondary level and the continuing need for physical infrastructure and financing still dominate political discourse.[28] Since 2005 the government has invested in improving learning outcomes. However, such efforts have been moderated by the reality of fiscal-administrative capacity and the weight of historical under-investments. For instance, at the height of the most recent expansion of access to secondary education (2006-2015), the government resorted to the old tactics of lowering the standards for teacher qualification – with disastrous consequences for quality (Habyarimana, Opalo and Schipper, 2021). In the same vein, efforts to improve learning outcomes started in 2013 through the Big Results Now! initiative were promptly scrapped after a change of administration in 2015. While education policy– especially on the question of access – has become marginally more sensitive to electoral politics, there is yet to emerge a dominant policy coalition within CCM that is motivated to focus on improving learning outcomes.

In sum, the primary goal of schooling in the current era is to satisfy the need for both universal access and quality of education within a global policy environment defined by the salience of the "learning crisis." Yet given the enduring gaps in access caused by past policies, the political incentives remain decidedly in favor of greater investments in access to schooling and only limited attention to learning outcomes. The next section provides evidence of the impacts of Tanzania's four phases of political settlement on education attainment and

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[27]URT, Education and Training Policy,1995.
[28]See, for example, "School desks to be used in performance ratings," *The Citizen*, June 12, 2016

learning. It also provides suggestive evidence of the lack of strong political incentives for investments in learning amidst the prevailing gaps in access.

4   Implications for Schooling and Learning

How did policy prescriptions under different political settlements impact actual outcomes? I answer this question from three perspectives. First, I use survey data on reported levels of education attainment and literacy rates to construct trends in education attainment. Second, I show parallel trends from official government statistics. Both sets of data broadly align with the phases of political settlements described above. Finally, I provide suggestive evidence using survey data on the politics of education. These data show that respondents' preference for access dominates concerns about quality. Individual-level concern about quality is not correlated with disaffection with government performance in the education sector, or the overall rating of the president, members of parliament, or members of the Local Government Authority (LGA) assemblies.

4.1   Survey Data on Attainment and Literacy

I begin by analyzing trends in education attainment with data from seven rounds of Afrobarometer Surveys (N=13,119) and six rounds of Demographic and Health Surveys (N =55,121).[29] To describe the policy impacts of each phase of political settlement, I code the year in which each respondent graduated from primary school. During the period under study, the primary education extended to Standard Seven or Eight with pupils enrolling in Standard One at six or seven years of age.[30] For simplicity, I assume that pupils graduated primary school at the age of 14 years. The choice of primary graduation age is informed by

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[29]The Afrobarometer Surveys were conducted in 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2017. The DHS Surveys are from 1992, 1996, 1999, 2005, 2010, and 2016.

[30]Standard 8 was abolished in 1966

Tanzania's historical rationing of secondary education, which presumably structured households' investments in education beyond primary school.

Figure 4: Trends in Education Attainment
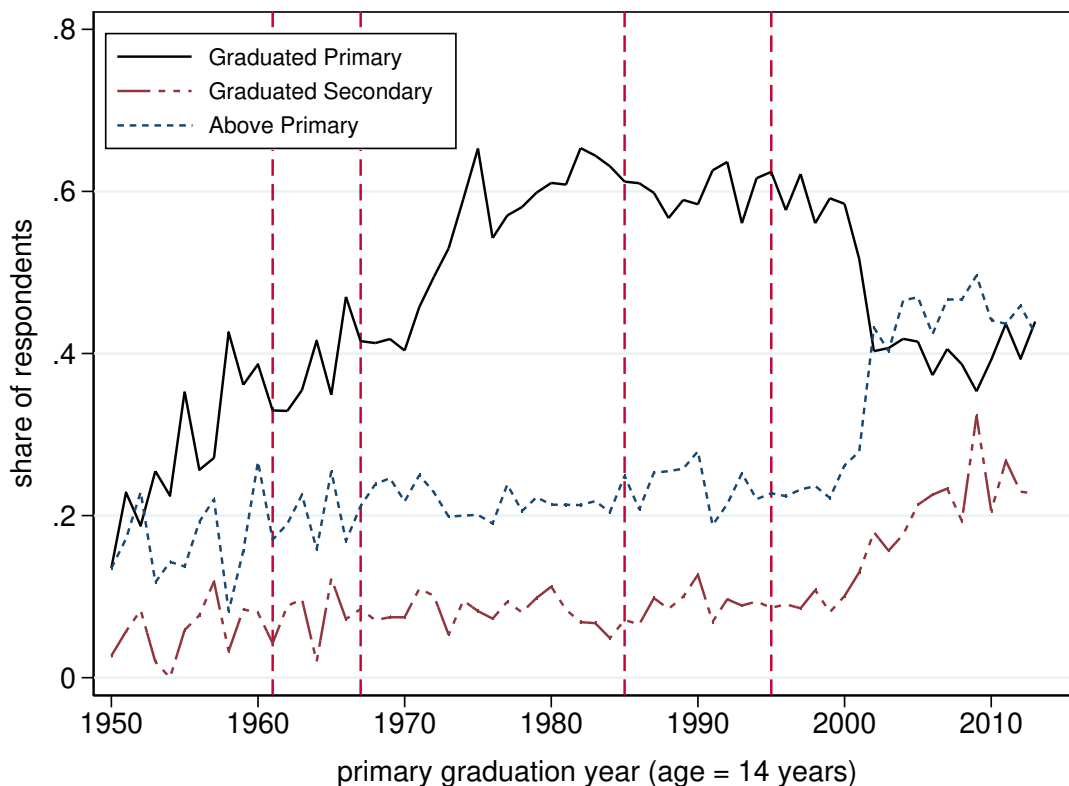
Notes: Figure shows trends in education attainment. Notice the clear rationing of post-secondary education until after 2000. Data from Afrobarometer (various rounds).

I then code if the respondent only graduated from primary school, secondary school, or attended any institutions of learning higher than secondary (i.e. any institution above primary school). Figure 4, with data from 7 rounds of the Afrobarometer Surveys, shows trends in the share of respondents who have graduated from primary and secondary school, or have attended any schooling beyond primary. This latter category includes those that attended secondary school. The trends indicate a clear increase in primary enrollment and completion throughout the 1950s, a brief deceleration of the expansion in the 1960s, before the massive increase with the introduction of UPE in the 1970s. Reflecting cuts on social spending during the economic crises of the 1980s, the share of respondents reporting having

Figure 5: Trends in Female School Attainment

Notes: Figure shows trends in the share of respondents who attended school beyond primary school by year of primary graduation. Notice the stagnation in attainment rates beyond primary from the late 1970s through the late 1990s. Data are from DHS surveys (various years).

Figure 6: Trends in Literacy Rates
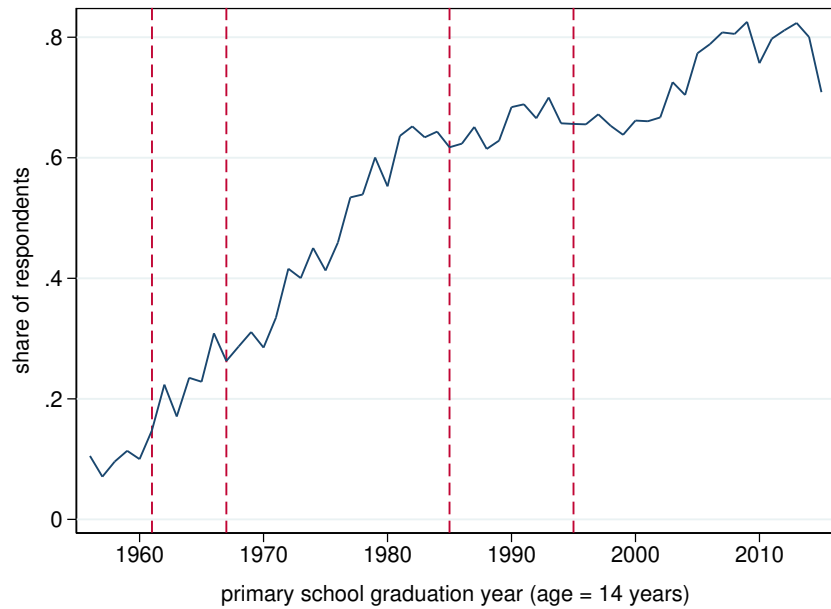
Notes: Figure shows trends in the share of respondents who are able to comfortably read an entire sentence by primary school graduation year. Notice the stall in literacy rates for two decades between 1980 and 2000. Data are from DHS surveys (various years).

graduated from primary school stagnated from the early 1980s through the 1990s. The same is true for those reporting to have attained schooling beyond primary school.

Government policy of rationing access to post-primary education is illustrated by the 40-year (1961-2000) stagnation in the proportion of respondents reporting education attainment beyond primary. The early 2000s shift in policy is also captured in the data, with the share of respondents reporting post-primary enrollment increasing after 2000. The evidence from the Afrobarometer Surveys is corroborated by data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which only include female respondents. Figure 5 shows trends in in the share of (female) respondents who graduated from primary school (coded as those that attended up to Standard 7 in the data). There is a increase in enrollment between the late 1960s and the late 1970s, followed by a stagnation through the mid 1990s. The trends also show that girls benefitted from the 2001 UPE policy than they did in the 1970s, with the share of respondents reporting having attended up to Standard 7 jumping significantly after 2000.

To evaluate the impact of schooling on learning, I rely on actual information on respondents' ability to read simple sentences - a marker of literacy – from the DSH data. The data are only available for female respondents.[31] I follow the same coding rule above, and place respondents to the year when they are supposed to have graduated primary school (age = 14 years). The assumption is that literacy upon graduation from primary school is critical for further education attainment. Figure 6 shows the trends in the share of respondents who are coded as being able to easily read a simple sentence in the DHS data. Notice that between 1961 though the 1970s the share of respondents able to easily read a simple sentence steadily increased with the gradual expansion of primary education. Then followed more than two decades of stagnation beginning in the late 1970s.

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[31]The similarities of trends in attainment between boys and girls in the Afrobarometer (See Figures A.3 and A.4 in the Appendix is indicative that these data are informative on boys' learning as well.

4.2 Official Statistics on Attainment

Government administrative data corroborate the survey data presented above.[32] Figure 7 shows trends in access to primary and secondary education. Primary school enrollment increased dramatically under the UPE policy in the late 1970s. This was followed by a two-decade stagnation due to economic crises and government disinvestment in the education sector. The rationing of secondary education is vividly illustrated in the data, with barely any increases in enrollment and the number of schools until after 2000. Indeed, the share of primary graduates transitioning to secondary schools decline before the loosening of the policy against private secondary schools in the mid 1980s and then stagnated for two decades.

Figure 7: Trends in Access to Primary and Secondary Education
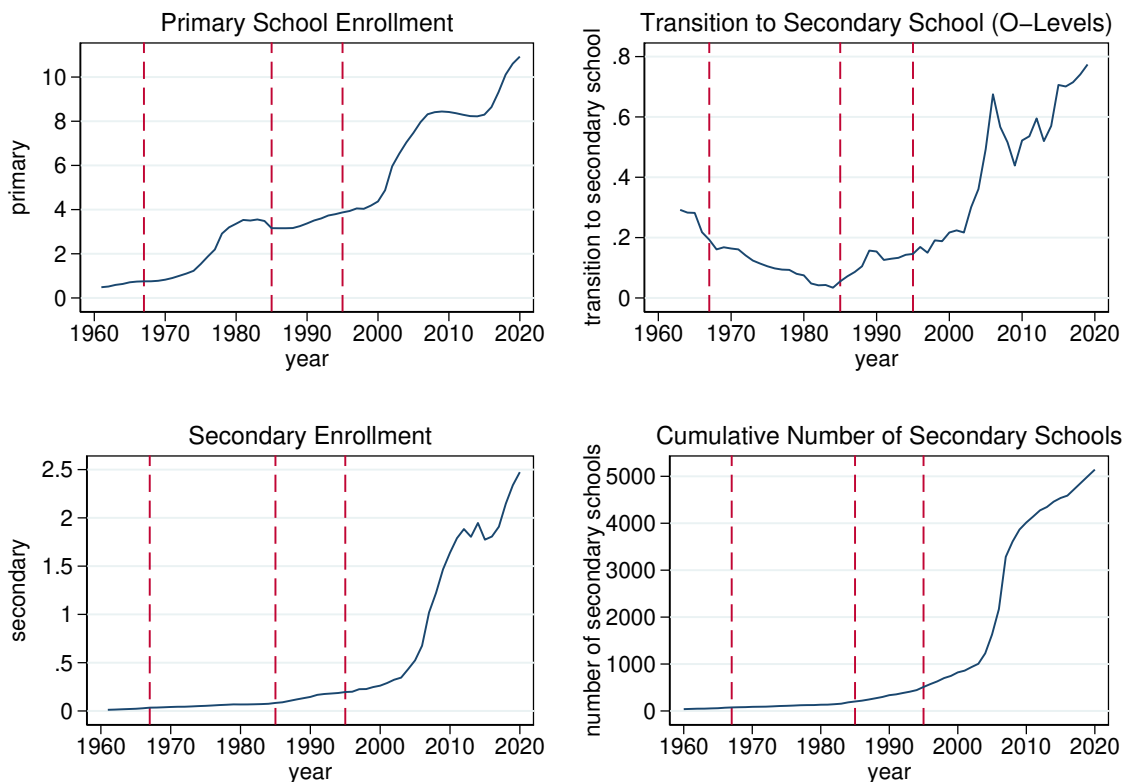
Notes: Graphs show trends in access to primary and secondary education. Notice the drastic change in the secondary school enrollment after the mid 2000s, effectively marking the end of Tanzania's extreme rationing of secondary education.

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[32]The data are from various issues of the Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (BEST) and the Electronic Management Information System (EMIS).

Figure 8: Share of Form One Students Entering Private Schools
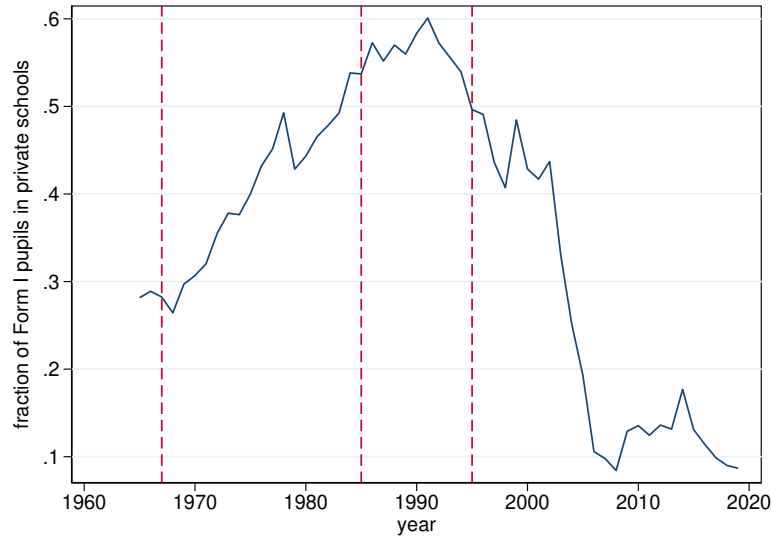
Notes: Graph shows the important role of private secondary schools for much of the period in which the government was effectively rationing access to secondary education. By 1990 nearly 60% of all pupils entering high school (O-Levels) attended private secondary schools.

Figure 9: Did Education for Self-Reliance Achieve its Objectives?
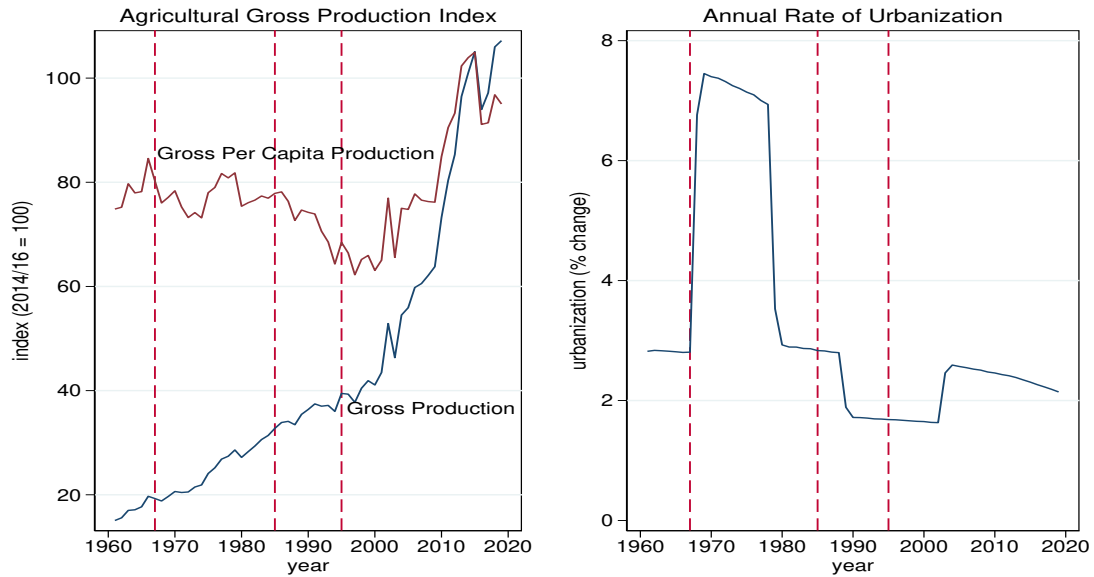
Notes: Figures show trends in agricultural production and urbanization rates. Notice that while agricultural production increased over time, per capita production stagnated or declined before 2000. Growth in urbanization was highest in the 1970s, at the height of the Education for Self Reliance policy.

Figure 8 presents more evidence of the rationing of access to secondary schools. Recall that in 1969 Tanzania explicitly set about nationalizing the education sector. Virtually no private primary schools existed then and the share of pupils attending private schools remains very low. However, the situation was different in secondary schools. As early a 1967 more than a quarter of students entering secondary school attended private institutions. With the announcement of the UPE policy in 1970s, this figure steadily increased such that by the early 1990s about 60 percent of students entering secondary school enrolled in private institutions. This was the result of the government's deliberate policy in the early 1980s to relax restrictions on private secondary schools in order to absorb the rising numbers of primary school leavers on account of UPE. The share of students enrolling in secondary schools has since dramatically fallen with the government's massive investments in secondary school access beginning in 2006. Presently, less than 10 percent of students entering secondary school enroll in private institutions.

Finally, it is worth asking if ESR achieved its objectives of boosting agrarian production and preventing uncontrolled (jobless) urbanization. Figure 9 shows trend in agricultural productivity and the growth in urbanization in Tanzania. Between 1961 and 2000, the per capita agricultural production remained steady or declined. Growth in urbanization was highest during the ESR decade in the 1970s. In other words, ESR does not appear to have worked as intended, which suggests that its longevity can be attributed to CCM's political and policy hegemony and the supporting political settlement.

4.3 Public Opinion on Education Performance

As noted in Section 2, the political salience of education varies and is likely to be biased in favor of access. This section examines public opinion on the education sector using data from Afrobarometer Surveys. Remarkably, despite the historical low enrollment rates shown above, all the seven surveys, the share of respondents deeming the government's performance

in the education sector to have been "very well or fairly well" was consistently more than 50 percent.[33] This is despite the fact during this period the country saw a significant deterioration in the quality of learning as measured by pass rates in primary and secondary school examinations (Habyarimana, Opalo and Schipper, 2021).

Figure 10: Correlates of Ratings on Education Performance
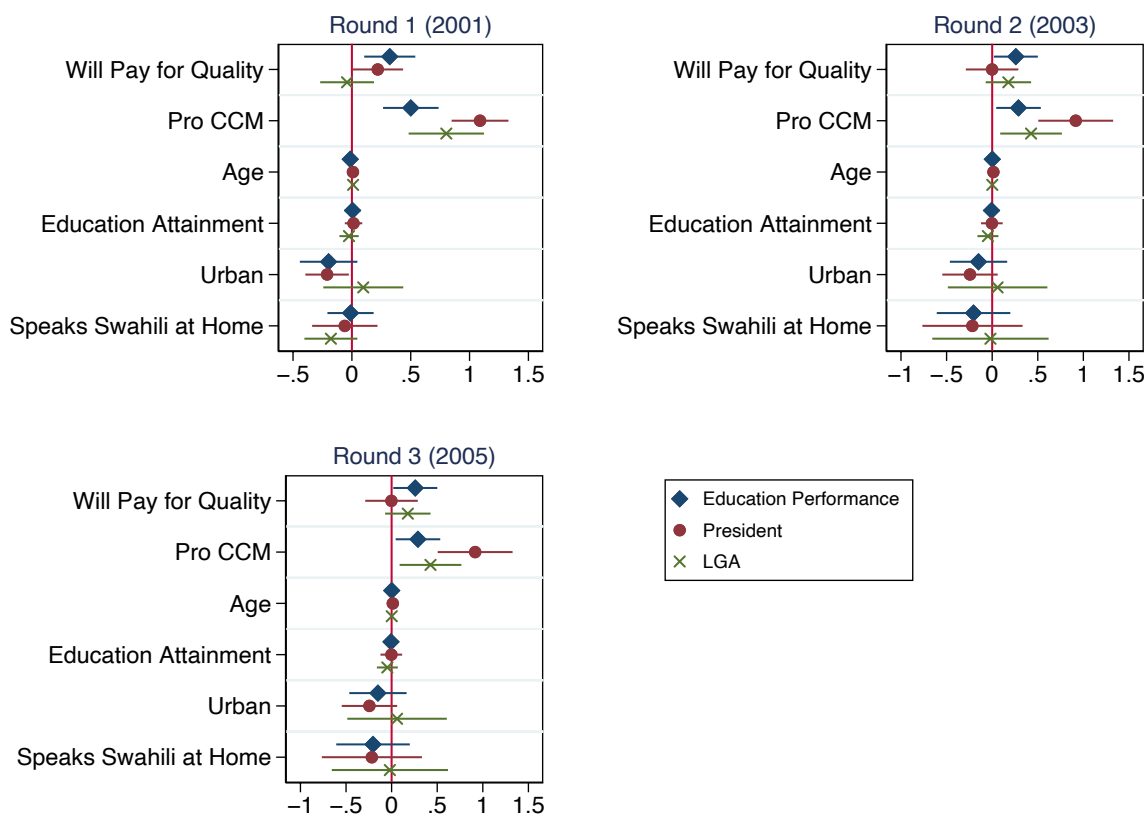
Notes: Figures show results from OLS estimates of approval of overall performance in the education sector and specific evaluations of the national government/president and local government authorities.

Given the overall positive perception of the government's performance in the education sector, how do Tanzanian voters balance the demands of access against concerns about the quality of education? The same Afrobarometer data allows me to interrogate this question. In Rounds 1 through 3, the survey asked respondents to explicitly consider the tradeoff between access and quality. The two surveys coincided with Tanzania's expansion of primary

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[33]See Figure D.11 in the Appendix.

and secondary enrollment in the early 2000s. Respondents were asked if they supported increasing access regardless of impact on quality, or if they were willing to pay fees in order to improve the quality of education provided by the government.[34]

To explore the correlation between concerns about quality and perceptions of government performance, I regress ratings of overall government performance on education, presidential approval, and ratings of local government authorities (LGAs) on a binary indicator of willingness to pay for quality. Figure 10 shows the results across multiple survey rounds. As is evident, willingness to pay is actually positively correlated with ratings of government performance on education. It is also not negatively correlated with presidential and LGA performance rating. Overall, the survey results suggest that electoral incentives for politicians are biased in favor of access, even if it means at the cost of compromising on quality.

5 Conclusion

Using evidence from Tanzania, this article has show that, from the perspective of governments, learning is not always the goal of schooling and that choices informed by this fact can have last historical impacts. Besides learning, states may view education as a means of nation-building, ideological indoctrination, or narrow skills development for the labor market. In addition, fiscal and bureaucratic constraints may limit governments' ability or willingness to provide access to schooling, or to invest in improving learning outcomes. Finally, the specific policy choices made by governments are likely to have lasting impacts. This means that contemporary analyses of the politics of education are incomplete without an understanding of the historical goals of education from the perspective of governments.

This paper advances our understanding of the politics of education in postcolonial states. Building on existing works on the electoral drivers of government supply of education, it

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[34]Figure D.12 in the Appendix shows the distribution of views on the tradeoff between access and quality across the 3 rounds of surveys.

shows that under certain conditions governments can deliberately ration access to education for ideological reasons. Furthermore, elite ideological hegemony may facilitate effective public acceptance of such rationing. This finding calls for more research on how political elites shape the intensity of public demand for specific policies in education as well as other sectors like health, water, agriculture, and infrastructure. Such works should relax the assumption that ruling elites always maximize the supply of public goods and services for political gain. As the case of education policy in Tanzania shows, at times rationing access may be the politically optimal strategy.

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