

## **Master-Thesis (Lizentiatsarbeit)**

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### **Parental and Community Participation in Primary Schools in Southern and Eastern Africa: A Strategy to Improve Local Educational Institutions and Student Achievement.**

Even though in contemporary international educational agreements and strategy papers parental and community involvement in local primary school affairs is declared as a vital and indispensable initiative in guaranteeing quality «education for all», profound and representative empirical evidence on the different modes of operation of this concept is, so far, scarce for developing countries in general, but for sub-Sahara-Africa in particular. To help fill this gap, this paper examines the effects of parental and community participation on the quality of education received by the students in primary schools in Anglophone Southern and Eastern Africa. Initially, this paper analyzes whether schools with a more regular and a higher degree of participation produce better student achievements, as evidenced by test scores in Mathematics. Additionally and predominantly, the focus is placed on the effects of different manifestations of participation on the institutional settings of the school environment, which regulate the production of education – a so far poorly researched «black box» in the region. More precisely, the thesis investigates to what extent the institutional conditions of primary schools can be optimized through parental and community participation in such a way that school resources are being managed more efficiently, the job motivation and morality of teachers and school heads are being increased, and the teaching methods and contents are being more associated and aligned with the local living conditions, all of which are ultimately expected to raise test scores. Building upon the principal-agent-theory of the new institutional economics and the social capital theory, several multilevel and multiple regressions on the data obtained from the second survey of the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ II) are applied to evaluate the relations between different forms of participation, the behavior of the school personnel, and student achievements.

The results of the research and models show overall significant positive effects of parental and community participation on Mathematic test scores. Moreover, it is shown that to a notable degree, these effects can be attributed to a more efficient management of school resources, but only to an inconsiderable extent to a higher teacher motivation and morality and a more local-context-oriented curriculum. While the contribution of financial or material resources from parents and the community has a negative influence on teacher behaviors, more interactive forms of participation, especially parents-teacher-meetings and a regular exchange on school matters between the family and the child, are more conducive to an efficient and confident job routine. The latter correlation applies only for schools with a higher mean of socio-economic student background. Lastly, it is shown that out of the diverse forms of participation, parents-teacher-meetings can enhance the relevance of the local curriculum exclusively.

*Keywords:* accountability – community participation – control mechanisms – education for all – educational institutions – good governance – incentives – local curriculum – Mathematics – new institutional economics – parental involvement – principal-agent-theory – resource management – social capital – student achievement – sub-Saharan Africa – teacher morality – teacher motivation