People Speak Out on What is a Good School?

Essays and Drawings
What is a good school? It is different things to different people. Some people emphasize buildings and the environment. Others think relationships and governance are more important.

Over one thousand people of different ages and backgrounds across Tanzania responded to a competition on “What is a Good School?” organized by HakiElimu. The aim was to stimulate debate on the meaning of quality education. The variety and depth of the response demonstrates that people across Tanzania are thinking about education and have ideas to share.

This booklet summarizes the issues raised and publishes 17 of the best essays and drawings received. We hope they will inspire students, parents, teachers and policy makers to pay greater attention to the quality of education, and to implement creative ideas that will make a real difference.

HakiElimu is an independent civil society organization which seeks to realize equity, quality, human rights and democracy in education and society. We facilitate communities to access information, transform schools and influence policy-making; stimulate imaginative public dialogue and organizing for change; promote critical research, analysis and advocacy; and collaborate with partners to advance social justice.
People Speak Out on

What is a Good School?

Essays and Drawings from a competition organized by HakiElimu
Acknowledgements
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Introduction

What is a good school? A good or bad school is different things to different people. Some people emphasize buildings and the environment. Others think relationships and governance are more important.

In 2002 HakiElimu organized a countrywide essay and drawing competition on quality education. The topic of the competition was “What is a Good School?” and “What is a Bad School?” The competition aimed at stimulating the public, particularly children and young people, to debate the meaning of quality education and contribute to the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP).

Over one thousand people of different ages and backgrounds across Tanzania sent in entries. The variety and depth of the response demonstrates that people across the country are thinking about education and have ideas to share.

This booklet summarizes the issues raised by the participants, and publishes 17 of the best entries received. These are not exhaustive, but give an indication of the sorts of things that matter to the public. The responses provide an opportunity to learn from how people are thinking, and point to areas where public information and debate need to be deepened. We hope this booklet will contribute to fostering this debate.
What do people think

Almost all of the entries touched on the importance of good infrastructure for schools. These include classrooms, the school environment and resources that a school requires to provide quality education. While many concentrated on the fact that a school cannot be good without proper classrooms, others argued that a good school is made up of much more than its infrastructure.

A good number of entries stressed that schools should be fun! Both for teachers and students! Everyone involved in schools should feel welcome and enjoy the time they spend there. Many of the entries highlighted that corporal punishment makes school an unsafe and unhappy place, and that this interferes with learning. They said that good schools have alternative forms of discipline which help students learn rather than scare them through beatings.

Many of the entries highlighted that schools should teach real life skills and provide an all-round education. This included the provision of sports facilities and libraries as well as curriculum which focuses on the development of the whole child. This means not just teaching by rote but teaching children to think for themselves and respect one another.

Good schools also place an emphasis on the importance of good relationships at different levels. These include relationships between:
- pupils which value equal rights
- pupils and teachers that reflect mutual respect and understanding
- schools and communities which are accountable and transparent
- school management and Government which are supportive and where information is shared.

“A good school is the one that has responsible teachers who are committed to their job. They encourage their students to work hard for good performance. In a good school, teachers aim at preparing their students to be good citizens in future.”

Xaveria Hyera (17) female

“Good governance was seen as equally important in many of the entries. Some talked about the value of involving the wider community in decision making about schools. Others discussed how schools should be more transparent in sharing information with both pupils and parents.”

Bethseba E. Mjema (18) female
In contrast bad schools were characterised as those schools which did not have good infrastructure or were poorly located. Bad schools had overcrowded classrooms and teachers who did not attend to classes. Poor management, the lack of involvement by the community and poor relationships between pupils and teachers were all features of bad schools. In many of the entries corporal punishment was seen as contributing towards a bad school.

But this is only a summary. The 17 best entries are published in this booklet. Read and see what the authors themselves had to say. Think for yourself. Discuss what you think makes a good or bad school. Talk to your friends and neighbours. Write to the Government and to the newspapers. Contact the radio stations. And tell us what you think! Your views matter! You can make a difference!

“A good school has a school committee which closely supervises different development activities of the school.”

Habibu Hasan Surumbu (50) male

“A bad school is one where teachers do not enter the classroom, and where students are rampantly beaten such that it causes conflict between students, teachers and parents.”

Jacqueline Ngowi (25) female
The best entries
1. Tuelimishane Youth Group, Group Entry
PO Box 11348, Mwanza

This group entry emphasizes ‘good governance’ in schools. It also says that students should not be expelled from school just because they have no uniforms.
What is a good school?
2. Amirah Naushad Baliram, (13) Female
Al-Muntazir Islamic Seminary, Dar es Salaam
Amirah focuses on the importance of relationships. She argues that teachers should act as equal with pupils in the classroom. She makes her points clearly and backs them up with good examples.

A GOOD SCHOOL

If I was to be asked by the minister of Education, what is a good school, what would I say?
A good school is a school which has students who are hardworking, obedient, sincere. Students who are disciplined and punctual. And understanding. In order for a student to develop an open-minded approach to education, a teacher should encourage the students; a sense of curiosity, a desire to discover, an inquiring mind, a sense of responsibility, initiative, Resilience. This will allow the student to develop the willingness and ability to gain knowledge and be interested in studying.

A good school should also have good teachers. Teachers need to take part in a group or class discussion as an equal member, converse with the pupils as they do it with other adult friends. They should offer genuine interest and real sharing of knowledge and value. In my view, Studies are really important. They help you a lot, but just one needs to succeed in Studies. So, one needs to benefit from it.

Most good schools today have regular Parent-teacher meet meetings. Give special time for discussing about the student, so they can encourage the children to clean any doubts with the teacher in class.
Home and school are the two sides of the same coin. Remember that a child spends the greater part of his day in school and a good teacher observes not only her academic performance but also her behavioral aspects and manners as well.

Environment is also a part of the school. So a good school should have clean environment. Never pluck a flower or plant - leave it grow. Which may destroy the beauty of school. It is very important to switch off lights and fans when not needed. Only turn on lights when you really need them.
Never throw litter in your surroundings - dispose it properly. Make sure you use only so much water as you need while washing. Think about all this and keep your environment clean.

Too often we don’t realise what we have until it’s gone. Too often we wait to say “I’m sorry” or “I was wrong.” Sometimes it seems we hurt the ones we hold closest to our heart. And we allow foolish things to tear us and our lives apart. Good language is also a good aspect of a good school. Say Good Morning to teachers, student (Meet Classmate, and others), say Sorry, Please and thank you when necessary. As we know there are magical words and sure you will get respect as you give respect.

At last, this is all I need to say for a good school.
Amirah Naushad Baliram, (13) Female
Al-Muntazir Islamic Seminary, Dar es Salaam

A BAD SCHOOL

A bad school is a school with no clean environment, the classrooms are dirty, the floor is untidy, the students are not in整洁的 uniform, with long and unclean nails. The student wear shoes and don't care whether they fall or not because the shoe lace is untied. The books are not in good condition, torn and stained books. Do not not bring according to the timetable, careless about their work, don't do homework on time. Not punctual that is come late to school. As soon as they enter the school if they see a teacher, they immediately run away. Never mind to say sorry, please and thank you always want something by force. Students are not co-operative with their fellowmates and teachers, no respect, they are not responsible and abuse each other with harsh language. And so many other things to mention.

We never ask ourselves this question that why does this happen? What is the cause of this? Don't we? This is maybe because the students are bored, careless or not interested. I mean if the students don't have in them the desire of learning then they don't care whatever happens. So if you want to get rid of a bad school and try to make it into a good one you should not give up struggling hard to get education. If you respect your parents, respect your teachers. Don't look at them as if they are just preachers, listen to them with great pleasure. Patience is the key, which is very long. If you can take the patience as a challenge then you can meet with confidence. If you can listen to those who would advise you and then judge yourself what is right. Never give up hope for achieving the best. Choose your goal carefully. Be honest with yourself. Help those least fortunate than you. An ignorant student is a brute, green which no water flowers. True white branches are never verdant. Soil in which plants that never grow but do not need try to make our school the best of all.
Amirah Naushad Baliram, (13) Female
Al-Muntazir Islamic Seminary, Dar es Salaam

What is a good school?
3. Bethseba E. Mjema (18) Female  
St. Mary's Mazinde Juu Secondary School PO Box 90, Lushoto

Bethseba's essay concentrates on the fact that a good school should involve the whole community in running school affairs. These include parents, students and all other members of the community. She also highlights the importance of following up on teacher's performance and making sure they have good attendance.

A Good School

It is agreed that a good school should involve the whole community in running school affairs. These include parents, students and all other members of the community. She also highlights the importance of following up on teacher's performance and making sure they have good attendance.
What is a good school?

For a good school, good educational facilities and resources are not lacking. Good schools are not paid to have a well-developed teaching and learning environment that the school has to offer.

A good school is where there is no lack of participation of parents, students, and teachers in the running of the school.

A good school provides free education to students by employing qualified teachers, who are in most cases fairly paid in terms of salary and other related benefits. In most cases, such schools do not provide extracurricular activities to the students, hence making the students unable to socialize freely in organized settings and to a larger extent to the general public.

In a good school, the rights of students are respected.

Punishment of students in the form of the day and punishment awarded by the teachers is quite uncommon. This means students have the opportunity to advance the school and the whole process of getting educated becomes something much to an end of sorts.

A good school means getting good results in academic assessments.

When it comes to national examinations results, if the school is good, students and the principal have always been among the best performers in many sporting and cultural events that are held competitively between schools.

Absolutely by summarizing it, one can therefore conclude that the government in particular, the head teacher or the manager of a school, teachers, and the education authorities should strictly act on this so as to bring up development in schools or in education at large.

Bethseba E. Mjema (18) Female
St. Mary’s Mazinde Juu Secondary School, PO Box 90, Lushoto
Deosdeiditi states in his essay how important good schools are in developing who we are as adults. Good schools should help to develop a person and teach real life skills for us and our families to benefit in the future.
Deosdediti Mayagilo (12) Male
Isike Primary School, PO Box 433, Tabora

What is a good school?

Shule mbaya ni mapokezo mbaya ambayo ni matokeo au pita yeyote huiga kwa kupunguza wakazi au witu wengi wa tanzania.

Yapo matendo mbaya ambayo hayafai kuwepa wala kuwakiliana na kuigwara. Matendo yenyewe ni kama vile wakafanya wajumla, wakakazi wajumla, wakafanya wajambo, wakafanya wajulushi wa mabaya, wakafanya wakafanya mabaya, wakafanya mabaya nafunzo kendani, mabaya hufunguwa tutu hadiki na mabaya lake. Vitendo viongo hufunguwa kutoka umasikini.


Shule mbagizo matendo, mafunzo yoyote yasiyoza ambayo huonyeshwa na kuigwara na witu.
5. Marco P. Malima (23) Male
Shule ya Msingi Kafunjo, PO Box 308, Sengerema
Marco’s essay explains the importance of infrastructure, and emphasizes the importance of good leadership and the relationships between parents, teachers and pupils.
What is a good school?
Marco P. Malima (23) Male
Shule ya Msingi Kafunjo, PO Box 308, Sengerema

What is a good school?

Marco P. Malima (23) Male
Shule ya Msingi Kafunjo, PO Box 308, Sengerema
6. Halima Shaban Senkukus (17) Female
Al-Haramain Seminary Secondary School, P.O. Box 19961, Dar es Salaam

Halima makes the case that a good school is not something which comes only from the buildings, because it is the pupils and teachers that make up the heart of a school.

What is a good school?
Halima Shaban Senkukus (17) Female
Al-Haramain Seminary Secondary School, P.O. Box 19961, Dar es Salaam

What is a good school?
7. Victor Simon & Goodluck Mashalla
Drawing Group, PO Box 2940, Mwanza

Simon and Goodluck concentrated on the importance of equal rights and respect for the views of pupils in the running of their schools. They also express the impact that poor infrastructure can have on the quality of education.
What is a good school?
8. Henry Peter (15) Male
PO Box 79505, Dar es Salaam
Henry uses artwork to express his ideas. He highlights the impact that lack of infrastructure has on pupils. He also illustrated the importance of sports and libraries in education.

What is a good school?
Henry Peter (15) Male
PO Box 79505, Dar es Salaam
9. Pauline Barnabas (16) Female
Pamba Secondary School, PO Box 632, Mwanza
Pauline uses her excellent drawing skills to communicate important issues facing schools today. In addition she uses humor to express difficult subjects.
Pauline Barnabas (16) Female
Pamba Secondary School, PO Box 632, Mwanza

What is a good school?
10. Ernest W. Biseko (28) Male  
c/o Ramadham Mwendwa, PO Box 240, Mwanza  
Ernest shows problems pupils face in a poor schooling environment. His good school drawing highlights how a good learning environment can encourage pupils to be open and free to share their ideas.
Ernest W. Biseko (28) Male
C/o Ramadhame Mwendwa, PO Box 240, Mwanza
A GOOD SCHOOL

I am proud to have joined this school. It does not have luxurious buildings, furniture and playgrounds but still it is the best to me. Buildings do not give high or low standard to a school. It is the organization and system which makes it productive and popular. I can tell you that it is not an International School. It is purely Tanzanian and it reflects Tanzanian culture and values.

The Assembly starts on time and there are hardly any late comers. All students are in proper uniform. There is no stress and pressure. We do it out of habit. We know what is good or bad. The school has educated us to be so.

In the classroom there is no fear as our teachers foresee our problems and solve them. Our classes are full of life. We put questions and freely discuss things with the teachers who are sincere and committed. There is no bullying inside or outside the classroom. Anybody who behaves abnormally is looked down upon by the school community. There is perfect understanding between teachers and the pupils because their objects are the same. The monitors take charge of the class during change of periods, and outside the classrooms, prefects look after interests of the students. We have a good self-management system and believe in “first obey, then command.”

In examinations we do well because we work hard and regularly throughout the whole year. On the playground we show sporting spirit and don’t quarrel. We keep ourselves physically fit by playing hard. We make full use of the library. We have a well-managed canteen where we have refreshment during breaks.

When I enter the gate of my school, my heart is filled with joy every morning and on holidays, I feel sad because I don’t go to my school.
A BAD SCHOOL

I want admission and so I am in a school to see if it is good. The buildings are nice, the playgrounds big. The morning Assembly starts late but teachers and students are still coming leisurely. Many students are not in proper uniform. The National Anthem is on but pupils are moving and nobody is telling them to stand still and pay respect.

Half of the first period is wasted and now studies start. The teacher has given some notes to a boy with a good hand to copy down on the black board and the class is asked to write in their exercise books from the black board. No explanation, no questions, no answers and no homework. The period is over. I saw the same thing in some other periods also.

Then I went to see the labs. Everything is there: Physical balance, beakers and tables are full of dust and cob webs as if nobody has used the lab for a long time. The school library has the same situation. I saw the librarian dozing. Students never think of entering the library because perhaps the librarian prefers to be alone inside and she does not like any disturbance.

The playgrounds have long grass and bushes. If some students bring a football there, it is bound to be lost. So they prefer playing in corridors of the school.

I was told when examinations are near, teachers get my tuitions and make a lot of money. In the examination hall, the helpless pupils try unfair means. Some of them are caught and punished. The greatest tragedy is that the Headmaster doesn’t know anything about what is described above. I have decided never to join such a school.
Mary writes about the fact that both teachers and pupils should be enthusiastic about being in school and the work that they are doing. School should be fun!
What is a good school?
Mary Mrope (40) Female
P.O. Box 289, Songea

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What is a good school?

Mary Mrope (40) Female
P.O. Box 289, Songea
13. Charlene Pownall (12) Female
Jaffery Academy, Arusha
Charlene has shown a good representation of how outside influences affect the performance of pupils within schools. She also shows a good focus on how recreation can help children to learn better.
Charlene Pownall (12) Female
Jaffery Academy, Arusha

What is a good school?
What is a good school?

M Poki Mwakitalu (12) Male
PO Box 36, Arusha

M Poki has used his creativity to detail a bad school, in which buildings are falling apart and students are bored. As a viewer you can see the confusion of having teachers teaching more than one class at a time.
15. Asimwe Ruganyoisà (12) Female
P.O. Box 2650, Dar es Salaam
Asimwe expresses well the challenges facing teachers and the impact that their role has on pupils. She also talks about the impact of HIV/AIDS and the importance of educating young people on this subject.

What is a good school?

If the Minister of Education and Culture were to ask me what is a good school, I would tell him that first of all, a good school should have enough well-trained and satisfied teachers who like their work and love their pupils. The teachers should love their pupils not only for what they do but also for what they are, i.e. children. They should want the best for their pupils, show them best examples, listen well to their questions and always help them. The teachers should be serious with lessons but should not unnecessarily punish the pupils who are not good in class. They should treat the pupils equally no matter what sex, age, religion, or colour. The school should not ask for high fees or select expensive uniforms for pupils, otherwise, it will teach children only from rich families.

Secondly, I would tell the Hon. Minister that a good school should have a good environment. An environment which will not affect the pupils’ health, i.e., not affect them physically, mentally, or even emotionally. The school should have strong buildings, enough classes and offices, desks and toilets, and sufficient books for both the teachers and pupils. Clean water must be available either at school or very nearby. The school should have a playing field and sports facilities because playing is an important right for children. The teachers should be able to teach games and sports. The school should be reasonably near homes so that the pupils are not late in the morning and can get to their homes soon after classes. Then the pupils can rest, help the parents, and have time to study or do their homework. Also, a good school should have houses for the teachers to live in.

A good school should also teach vocational skills so that the pupils who may not pass examinations will continue with further studies in colleges and universities may be able to start working to earn a living right after school.

Lastly, I think a good school should arrange meetings between parents and teachers. At the meetings, the parents will be informed how their children are doing and will be able to give good ideas for running the school.

The above things make a good school. At this good school, there will be discipline. The teachers will have discipline, and they will pass the same discipline to their pupils. And as a result, the pupils will not only pass examinations but also they will be good citizens.

THANK YOU!
WHAT IS A BAD SCHOOL?

If the Minister of Education and Culture were to ask me what is a bad school I would tell him that a bad school is the complete opposite of a good school. A bad school has teachers who are not well trained and are always complaining almost about everything. The teachers are not paid well or on time and they spend a lot of time on their private businesses to help earn a better living, for example teachers force pupils to buy sweets, chewing gum or whatever they are selling in the classroom. A pupil who does not have money to buy the sweets is forced to take the sweets and then pay the following day. And if the pupil does not pay on the following day he/she gets beaten and if he/she refuses to buy or borrow the sweets he/she is beaten. The result is the pupils end up stealing money from their friends, relatives or parents so that they can pay the debts. Other teachers do business outside the school and the result is either they are very tired when it is class time or they are rarely come to school. Or the teacher enters a class and asks the pupil with good handwriting to write something on the blackboard for the other pupils to copy in their exercise books, just sits down waiting for the bell to ring, takes his/her things and gets out of the classroom without at least explaining to the pupils what is written on the blackboard. A bad school has careless teachers who do not love their pupils.

A bad school has dirty environment and is surrounded by things that are not proper for children. There are people who do drugs nearby the school or people who seduce especially the girls to do things that would affect their future. As a result the pupils may take drugs, or sell drugs or even steal money from parents in order to buy drugs. The girls may get pregnant and stop school or the pupils may get STDs or even AIDS.

A bad school does not have enough facilities. For example if the school has few classrooms and the pupils have to learn in the open under a tree. This is not good because staying under the sun for too long is not healthy. Or if there are not enough desks the pupils have to fight for the few desks available, usually the strong boys win and mostly girls sit on the floor. The girls do not concentrate in class because they spend most of the time making sure that they sit properly and they may fail the examinations. A bad school does not have enough separate toilets for the boys and for the girls. Also there is no clean water at the school or nearby. This may affect the health of the pupils.

A bad school is one that is built far from homes and the pupils have to walk long distances. When they reach school the pupils are already too tired to concentrate on lessons, the result is that pupils sleep in class. Or the pupils are very tired in the evening and cannot do homework or revision. Therefore the pupils cannot pass the examinations.

A bad school does not arrange meetings between parents and teachers. The parents are not told about the school and they do not get reports on their children.

Finally, there is no discipline at a bad school. The teachers and pupils do whatever they please and nobody cares! A bad school shows bad examples to the pupils who later on become bad citizens in our country.

THANK YOU!
Ismail’s drawing powerfully shows problems in school. The colors and layout are bright, exciting and eye catching.
Deogratis writes about the mental, spiritual, physical and social role that schools need to play in developing a child. Schools should teach children how to know their rights and encourage them to be curious and courageous, and to learn without fear.

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helpless pupils try unfair means. Some of them are caught and
punished. The greatest tragedy is that the Headmaster doesn’t
know anything about what is described above. I have decided
never to join such a school.
Annex: The Competition Process

Who Entered?
The response to the advert competition was enormous. A total of 1,074 essays and drawings were received from across Tanzania. Entries were received from children as young as five years old and adults aged 72 years. We also received group entries from established youth organisations and friends who came together to send us their views.

How was the Competition Assessed?
It was stressed that there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers to the questions raised. We were looking for essays and drawings that were:
- creative
- well-written
- addressed issues relevant to the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP)
- paid attention to issues of quality in education
- original in their ideas – had something different to say
- visually stimulating
- provoked discussion

Two external assessors with a background in education assessed the entries on the basis of these criteria. They assessed all the entries on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest mark), awarding points for relevance to the above categories.

Entries were divided into the following age group categories to ensure equal levels of assessment. In addition entries were also divided by gender and whether the entry was an essay or drawing.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Drawing</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 12 or below</td>
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<td>Age 13 – 16</td>
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<td>Age 17 – 24</td>
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<td>Age 25 and above</td>
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<td>Group Entries (mixed age)</td>
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This made a total of 17 categories (N.B. There were no entries in the Female 25 and above, drawing category). Once the entries had been assessed they were reviewed by HakiElimu staff to make sure that the assessment was consistent and fair.

Out of the 1074 entries the top five from each category were then selected. This identified 85 potential winning entries. HakiElimu staff then selected 2-3 entries in each category. This reduced the final shortlist to 39. A team of assessors from the Ministry of Education and Culture, teachers and HakiElimu then met to select the top ten winners. Each of these assessors individually reviewed the 39 short-listed finalists and nominated one from each category that they thought was the best. All the judges then met as a group to reach a consensus as to the single best entry for each category.
This then left a total of 17 finalists, from which the assessors selected the best 10 taking into account age, gender and type of entry. These were considered so that a broad range of winners were selected. The remaining 7 entries were nominated as ‘Highly Commended’.

**What Did the Winners Receive?**

Each of the 10 winners received Tshs. 100,000/- for themselves and 100,000/- for a school of their choice. Each of the 7 highly commended entries received a HakiElimu T-shirt. All competition entrants (including winners and highly-commended) received one copy of the HakiElimu booklet ‘Hii Ndio Elimu?/Is This Education?’

HakiElimu did not direct the way in which prize monies should be used. We did however, stress that prizes awarded to schools should be used in the spirit of the competition, i.e. that decisions on spending involve community participation and in particular pupil participation.