

Observations of Curriculum Implementation and Fee-Free Education Policy

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Abstract – The system of education has been introducing philosophy and policies to guide the educational provision. The philosophy and policies enable the system of education to facilitate the implementation processes and achieve quality education. This article describes some educational aspects which have been established in Tanzania to support the provision of education at various levels. It discusses the progress of implementation of the philosophy of education for self-reliance, learner centered approach, and fee-free education policy. The observation indicates the implementation processes and the challenges encountered during the process of implementation. The article ends by presenting suggestions for improving the implementation processes and the fee-free education policy as well as the quality of education.

Keywords – Challenges, Curriculum implementation, Fee-Free education, Learner centered, Policy, Teacher centered.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tanzania has been adopting the educational philosophy and policies to guide the provision of education at various levels of education. The philosophy and policies are implemented to help, motivate, and improve the teaching and learning processes. These initiatives were intended to facilitate the achievement of goals and objectives of quality education. This article is explaining educational philosophy and policies that had been guiding the provision of education. It describes the development and progress regarding the implementation of philosophy and policies in Tanzania education system. The observation shows how the implementation of education for self-reliance, learner centered approach and fee-free education policy have been going on in the primary and secondary schools. It indicates the real execution, successes, and challenges encountered. The article suggests the means of improving the implementation of educational philosophy and policies. It recommends the research process to be conducted so as to

learn and understand the situation and take appropriate actions for improving the provision of education.

II. EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND POLICIES GUIDING THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION IN TANZANIA

The word education intended to conceptualize the way knowledge is inserted to people to make them capable to live in society by controlling the social, economic, and cultural values of the society. In a broad sense, education is referred to as the way a certain society transmits its valuable knowledge, skills, attitudes, and competences from one generation to another either formally or informally. The educational experiences that have to be transmitted involve the socio-economic activities, norms, beliefs, customs, values, thoughts, and actions of the society. Education becomes meaningful when it is constructed according to the accepted philosophy of the community. This is to advocate that, the education meaning, purpose, ways of providing it to the community should be made under a reasonable and acceptable philosophical idea.

The process of education provision in the early years after Tanganyika's (now Tanzania) independence was still rooted in the colonial education system. Mushi (2009) characterizes the nature of postcolonial education immediately after independence to include more theory than practical and provision of education based on racial and socioeconomic stratification. The curriculum presented many features and characteristics of colonial influence. The education system in Tanzania challenged the limitations of the education system that was established by the colonial legacy. Due to the challenges of the post-colonial education immediately after independence, the former President of Tanganyika the late Julius Nyerere founded the Education for Self-Reliance in 1967 as a philosophy that would guide the provision of education. The Education for Self-Reliance has been acting as the backbone for the education systems in Tanzania. The philosophy proposed the provision of education that promoted students' critical and independent thinking, inquiring mind, confidence, and mental liberation. It developed the knowledge and skills to learn from others and make relevant judgments on what to adopt and develop in the student a sense of love and respect for one another. It enhanced effective participation and commitment to productive activities and national development (Nyerere, 1967; Osaki, 2006).

The realization of Education for Self-Reliance presented the need for curriculum transformation in both contents and pedagogical approaches. This means that there was a need for a curriculum to be modified on the teachers and students daily life. The classroom practices needed to connect student's real-life what Nyerere called "praxis". The change of curriculum and instructional methods were meant to transform the long-lived theoretical based education and teacher-students relation with the aim of enhancing students' critical, creative, and independent thinking in the knowledge construction and life in general (URT, 1995). The education in the Tanzanian context is geared towards ensuring the capability of future citizens to develop and utilize resources for their own development and that of the nation. The promotion of national culture is mentioned among the aims of education in Tanzania. Another aim is the students' acquisition of literacy in various fields, such as vocational, technical, scientific (MoEVT, 2005).

Another step to revamp the provision of education in Tanzania was the launching of a Presidential Commission in Education (Makweta Commission) in 1982. The commission focused on the links between the curriculum and the national development agenda as well as the worldwide educational movement. It included the quality of

pedagogy in achieving educational objectives and the best ways in which educational achievement and performance could be measured. The report produced by the commission was then used to initiate reforms/programs in educational provision (URT, 1982; Pantic & Wubbels, 2012). Subsequently, the ministry of education prepared the Education and Training Policy (ETP) in 1995. It outlined a vision of education that enables learners to develop self-confidence, an inquiring mind, and the skills necessary for improving the quality of their life; it also emphasized the creation of partnership and cooperation between the state and other providers of education and training (URT, 1995). The ETP policy was later updated and elaborated in a new phase of government policy represented in the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) of 1997. Among others, it aimed at the transformation of the education system into the output/outcome based sector to enhance goals stated by the world declaration on Education for All (EFA) (URT, 1997). In order to achieve the aims of ETP and ESDP, there were two programs initiated at primary and secondary school levels. The Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) in the year 2001 and the Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) in the year 2003 were aimed to improve the aspects such as access, equity, quality education, management system and making reforms on the management and devolution of authority (HakiElimu, 2005, 2007).

To achieve the international goals of educational reforms/programs, the government of Tanzania initiated the Development Vision 2025. The objective of Development Vision was to awaken, coordinate and direct the people's efforts, minds, and national resources towards those sectors that will enable us attain development goals and withstand the expected intensive economic competition ahead of us. This vision intended to equip peoples with knowledge, skills, attitudes of improving productivity and competitiveness. The program proposes to have people with higher and better levels of knowledge and expertise who can respond and adjust well to the challenges and opportunities of the world of work (URT, 1999). It is focused on five important areas of concern namely: high-quality livelihood; peace, stability and unity; good governance; a well-educated and learning society, and finally a strong and competitive economy. The vision accords high priority to the education sector, so as to impact positively on the social and economic development of the country. The document is stating that:

Education should be treated as a strategic agent for mindset transformation and for the creation of a well-educated nation, sufficiently equipped with

the knowledge needed to competently and competitively solve the development challenges which face the Nation.

For that reason, the education system should be restructured and transformed qualitatively with a focus on promoting creativity and problem solving. To accomplish that, the Ministry of Education had to review the curriculum to ensure that it addresses the broad national vision. Ministry had to consider external changes in educational theories, policies, and approaches that were taking place all over the world (URT, 1999; MoEVT, 2005).

The major curriculum review was intended to make a shift from the content based curriculum to the competence based curriculum. Some of the reasons for this paradigm shift include Social problems like HIV/AIDS; Students' lack of crucial competences; Changes in the pedagogy and teaching-learning methods; and Scientific-technological changes. The teaching approach under the content based curriculum makes students learn passively by receiving information transmitted from teachers as well as textbooks. Teachers consider themselves as subjects matter experts who employ traditional methods during the teaching and learning process. Teacher centered approach gives power to teachers in such a way that they dominate most of the classroom activities (Marwan, 2017). Subsequently, the growing need for the education system to produce graduates with capabilities has received significant attention in the education reforms carried out in Tanzania (URT, 1999). To accomplish the preceding initiative Tanzania introduced a competence based curriculum in the year 2005. This curriculum is characterized by the following: It emphasizes on competence development than the acquisition of content knowledge; The curriculum accentuates on the use of learner centred approach during the teaching and learning process; It emphasizes on the use of formative assessment focused on the prescribed competences; It accentuates on the application of knowledge to integrate theory and practice in real or analogous life situation. The teaching approach facilitating this curriculum is instrumental in helping students to increase the mastery of skills, knowledge, and developing self-confidence in problem solving. It is seen as an approach that improves students' academic achievement. It is aimed at equipping school graduates with sufficient knowledge and life skills for them to survive academically and socially in the modern world (Kitta & Tilya, 2010).

The Development Vision 2025 insisted on the learner centered approach to produce a well-educated and learning society. People who have knowledge and skills that enable

them to respond to development challenges and thus compete well in the global economy. Teachers are needed to actively engage learners in their teaching and learning processes. Programs such as Education and Training Policy, Education Sector Development Program, Primary Education Development Program, and Secondary Education Development Program planned to establish the quality of education and applied the learner centered approach (URT, 1999; MoEVT, 2005). This approach places students at the heart of education practices. The scholar argued, active-learning, learner centered pedagogies are advocated by researchers and policymakers around the world (Ginsburg, 2006). The approach emphasizes the role of the learner in the process of learning and changes the role of teacher to a guide, to engage students with active learning and discovery learning or problem solving, and frequent student questions and discussion. As well, Lea *et al.*, (2003) presented some important points regarding learner centered approach. These include: Emphasis on deep learning and understanding; Increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student; Increased sense of autonomy in the student; Interdependence between teacher and student; Mutual respect between the teacher and student; A reflective approach to the teaching and learning process on both teacher and student. Learner centered is advocated by constructivist psychologists such as Vygotsky and Bruner as learning by discovery and problem solving which requires pupils to hypothesize, ask questions, and discuss lines of inquiry (Bruner, 1967).

III. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM AND FEE-FREE EDUCATION POLICY IN TANZANIA

A number of research studies in Tanzania primary and secondary schools have shown that although teachers have been trained using the new teacher education curriculum which emphasizes the use of learner centered approach, many still use traditional/teacher centered approach in teaching (HakiElimu, 2005). Studies have shown that while the teacher acknowledges the learner centered approach is important, they rarely use it in their teaching (Meena, 2004). Failure to implement a learner centered approach was largely due to several constraints in teaching and learning. These constraints, according to studies by Msonde (2009) and Mtahabwa (2007), include inadequate teachers to implement learner centered approach, innovation, knowledge, and skills because of limitations of In-service and Pre-service training programs for teachers. Other limitations include large class sizes, insufficient teaching, and learning materials/resources available to teachers and students, as well as cultural values. Nihuka and Ambrosi

(2012) discovered that teachers normally like to apply a learner centered approach. They agreed to ask questions, employ jigsaw and discussion methods. However, real classroom observation showed teaching is mostly chalk and talk methods.

In addition to the same perspective, Hardman (2009) proved challenges happened and how they affected the implementation of the curriculum. The scholar advocated on the new pedagogic approaches as learner centered, group work, role-play, project, and debate. However, there was little evidence on the real application of these practices in the classrooms. Likewise, Schweisfurth (2019) described problems and barriers to learner centered education that have occurred in various countries. They include: Unrealistic expectations for change from policy; Lack of information dissemination on policy changes; Minimal preparation, for example, expecting teachers to change their longstanding practice through a short intervention or workshop; Low teacher capacity, for example, in terms of initial training, pedagogical or subject knowledge, or motivation; Teacher preparation which teaches about learner centered education but does not model it; Resource shortage in terms of teaching materials; Large classes and crowded conditions; High-stakes assessments which remain based on content which promotes rote learning and teaching to the test; Management and inspection regimes which were unsupportive of learner centered education; Language of instruction (usually English) being uncomfortable for teachers and making them prefer text-based or scripted lessons. So there are problems and barriers beyond teachers that are affecting the implementation of learner centered education in the classrooms.

Therefore the learning environment was difficult for students to be engaged in critical thinking skills such as problem solving, open-mindedness, backing claims with evidence, and asking questions for clarification due to contextual cultural challenges. With the various research and efforts, scholars have confirmed that teaching in Tanzania has generally characterized by a didactic and teacher centered approach that uses rote memorization as the main method (Vavrus, 2009; Kawishe, 2016). Various educators have described the characteristics accompanied by the teacher centered instruction. They have listed as follows: The teacher is the center of knowledge and in charge of learning; The teachers role is to be primary information giver and primary evaluator; Teachers act as the sole supplier of knowledge, and under the direct instruction model teachers often utilize systematic, scripted lesson plans; The teacher monitors and corrects every student

utterance-the focus is on the teacher; Teacher centered instruction is fairly low-tech, often relying on the use of textbooks and workbooks; Students are viewed as “empty vessels” who passively receive knowledge from their teachers; Assessments are in many cases only carried out as summative and not formative assessments and they rarely address qualitative issues of the students progress; Instructor evaluates students learning; Instructor talks and students listen; Students work alone and the classroom is quiet.

As part of its industrialization and development goals, the Government of Tanzania on November 27, 2015 issued circular 5 which implements the Education and Training Policy 2014 that introduced the fee-free basic education policy which provides free basic education from primary up to secondary school level. Fee-free education refers to education that is funded through taxation or charitable organizations rather than tuition funding. The circular is stating that:

Provision of free education means pupils or students will not pay any fee or other contributions that were being provided by parents or guardians before the release of a new circular.

Tanzania is one of the countries in East Africa, which have succeeded in the implementation of the free education that is viewed as the first step toward achieving Education for All. This was viewed from the 1990 Jomtien world conference on Education for All conducted in Thailand. Whereby universal basic education achievements were named as the top priority by the development community this was reconfirmed in 2000 at the World education forum in Dakar, Senegal (Inter-agency Commission, 1990). The conferences pronounced all participating nations to achieve quality education for all children. It is one that provides all students with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies, and enhance individual well-being.

The fee-free education policy is an effective way to support the government to achieve its objective of ensuring all school-going age children are in school and learning. It has been providing teaching and learning resources and provides a supportive environment for teaching and learning. The provision of fee-free education means students will not pay any fee or other contributions that were being provided by parents or guardians. The government of Tanzania declared that parents should not incur costs for their children including fees and other costs, but allowed to incur costs of clothes and books. The government is

expected to meet the tuition fees in schools while the parents are required to meet other requirements like lunch, transport, and boarding fees for those in boarding schools. The fee-free secondary education policy has recorded some improvements in secondary schools. It includes increased enrolment rate, increased number of teachers, and provision of all necessary support, funds and ensures conducive learning environments for students (ETP, 2014; Mashala, 2019).

IV. THE CHALLENGES FOR FEE-FREE EDUCATION POLICY CAN BE SUMMARIZED FROM VARIOUS SCHOLARS

(Davén, 2008; Global Campaign for Education, 2004; HakiElimu, 2017; Lindsjö, 2018; Mashala, 2019; Matete, 2016; Mbawala, 2017; Muindi, 2011; Null *et al.*, 2017; World Bank, 2004):

- The large groups of people are poor, so they fail to send their children to schools which causes many children to fail to get an education.
- High teacher-student ratios, insufficient numbers of classrooms, unqualified teachers, lack of supplies and textbooks, and a decline in teacher-student contact hours.
- Payments and fees are an essential source of funds for primary and secondary schools and that without payments and fees these schools would be unable to function well due to a lack of sufficient government budget.
- Rigorous evaluations of alterations to curricula or pedagogies intended to better equip students for the labor market or civic participation are lacking.
- Primary education is not free in Tanzania, as there are significant costs involved to send a child to primary schools, such as school uniforms, materials, and various contributions to the running costs of the school. Many poor households have difficulties affording such costs.
- Drop-out and repetition rates continue to be high in some countries and the students' pass rate is still very low in public schools.
- Shortage of science teachers, lack of in-service teacher training, poor engagement of parents in the education of their children, insufficient funding in schools, limited school facilities and infrastructure, and poor social services such as dispensary, water supply, food, electricity, and transport for pupils and teachers.
- The majority of research participants' demonstrated limited knowledge of the concept of fee-free education. They were not fully involved in the initiation of the fee-free education program.
- Lack of education to parents and guardians concerning the provision of fee-free education and the existence of some school based contributions for paying school's guard and cook, buying food, hoes, and printing test.
- Many students in developing countries are not equipped to succeed because of poor nutrition, infection, and insufficient cognitive stimulation early in life.
- The government should specify, in detail, how much and for what purpose the received funds are to be spent to ensure there is no misuse of funds at the school level. The required specifications on the use of funds are problematic for headteachers.
- In the past, members of the school committees and the school board were given allowances for meeting transport and lunch expenses. Under the guidelines, there is no provision for giving such allowances to the committee and board members.
- The secondary schools are facing the problem of hiring temporary teachers. They were paid from parental contributions. As schools cannot ask parents to contribute and as schools have not been provided with funds for that purpose, schools are unable to hire teachers.
- Primary education is not equally accessible to all, as children from households that cannot afford some costs, are sent home from school on a regular basis. These have damaging effects on children's school performance and self-esteem. In addition, the equity gap between urban and rural areas has often not actually closed.
- Most teachers complained that teaching has been a very difficult activity in recent years due to increased enrolment leading to a huge number of pupils in the classrooms. The crowded classrooms make teaching and learning process a big challenge.
- The shortage of teachers, teachers' houses, toilets, desks, tables, chairs, classrooms, and a shortage of teaching and learning materials affected the whole process of teaching and learning.
- Parents are asked to contribute to various items and services like examination fees, desks, electricity, and lunch on an irregular basis throughout the year. These costs come on top of the expenses tied to obligatory school uniforms and necessary school supplies. Sometimes teachers ask parents for the contribution and let the child stay at school.
- Education must be invested to avoid problems. If we will not send our children to school they will face so many problems like diseases, pregnancies'. Without

primary education it is impossible to move out of poverty and to make any changes in society.

- Governments are expanding access to education without providing the necessary funds and support for improving or maintaining the quality of education. The poor quality of education results in gaps in basic learning outcomes.
- In general, the implementation of free education in primary and secondary schools is creating some damages that have not expected in its establishment. Some years after the decision of fee-free education in primary and secondary schools it seems that this goal is yet to be fulfilled. The support from the government does not satisfy enough.

V. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Various circumstances occurring on the implementation of fee-free education policy cause challenges to students, teachers, parents, and other education stakeholders. Scholars have provided suggestions that could help to improve the educational philosophy and fee-free education policy. The government should undertake important steps to ensure no child is excluded from schooling because of inability to pay finance for various expenses; The government should improve the modality and amount of funds allocated to run schools; There is need to ensure that information regarding fee-free education policy is shared and debated by various stakeholders; For the purpose of improving community participation in the activities of implementing fee-free education policy, there is a need to introduce programs to educate parents, teachers, students and community in general; The issues of equity and quality should be maintained for successful implementation of fee-free education policy in schools; In order to ensure commitment of teachers and heads of schools in implementing fee-free education, it needs all the working conditions to be improved accordingly; In order to eliminate the big teacher-students ratio and shortage of teachers in schools, the government and other organizations should strive to train and employ new teachers in schools. All the quality indicator problems need to be addressed and controlled accordingly; Communities should play crucial roles in sustaining effective and quality schools.

In addition, the above challenges cause the necessities of conducting research on the impacts of fee-free education on the provision of education and the quality of education in Tanzania. The research will enable both government and education stakeholders to learn and assess the general performance of fee-free education policy. Also, to identify

what is necessarily needed in the fee-free education program to enable students of primary and secondary schools to gain knowledge, skills, and competences and become more successful in their lessons as well as after completing their studies. All the possible difficulties caused by fee abolition need to be identified and worked on effectively to ensure fee-free education policy delivers successfully what it promises. The research will inform the society and community to understand what is specifically needed to improve the performance of the students in primary and secondary schools. Likewise, the research will help curriculum developers to formulate an education plan and increase knowledge and skills on how to utilize the available materials and resources and to assist education evaluators to establish ongoing education quality monitoring and improvement processes. It will guide teachers to improve the application of instructional approaches for the appropriate delivery of the curriculum and fee-free education policy.

In concluding this article, it should be summarized that the observations of the implementation of the philosophy of education for self-reliance, learner centered approach, and fee-free education policy shows some weaknesses. The educators and other stakeholders do not carry out these educational aspects appropriately. With regard to these challenges, this article suggests that the education system and all educational stakeholders should organize and adjust well to improve the implementation processes as accurately as possible.

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