



**The UNESCO Teacher Training Initiative  
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**United Republic of Tanzania**  
A Note on the Teacher Status in Tanzania

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**FIRST MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COORDINATORS  
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**A Note on the Teacher Status in Tanzania**

**by Enea Mhando**

**IDENTIFICATION**

The teachers in Tanzania are officially described as individuals that are trained and then registered to perform instructional duties in schools and other related institutions. The Teacher Education Division of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training has the responsibility to train and develop teachers to meet the big demand that exists in Tanzania's expanding basic education. In this context basic education is considered to have levels from pre-primary, primary schools as well as lower secondary. The cadre of teachers meant for basic education is trained at teachers colleges whose highest award is a diploma in education.

Graduate teachers are trained at universities where they qualify with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. It can be mentioned here that the kind of teacher training that we have is still conventional in the sense that student teachers train first and then come out to practice in the schools. The training is not yet school-based. It can also be mentioned here that the teachers that serve at basic education level are the most disadvantaged educationally, for their education is still very much underdeveloped. For example, we do not have degrees in elementary education. Teachers with university training are mostly found in upper secondary education classes and as tutors in teacher training colleges.

According to the Education and Training Policy (1995) and other related documents, Teachers are trained in the following areas:

- The teaching /learning process (through specific subjects, curriculum studies, psychology and guidance and counseling)
- Pedagogical knowledge (understanding the learner and the theories of learning)
- Classroom management
- Preparation and use of teaching/learning materials
- Basic knowledge in ICT

The mere fact that teachers in basic education are trained at a low level shows that it is not easy to engage them in serious research. It is also not possible for them to deal with complicated educational debates that inform teaching in the present world of changing paradigms of knowledge. , Most of them join the teacher training course after finishing only primary education or the ordinary level secondary education Teachers are trained like they were in a craft, managing the basic principles that guide their practices. Very few of them have the ability to question or even adapt the principles in real situations. My concern here is in their ability to deal with the proposed new syllabuses that are competence-based. The new syllabuses need them to have knowledge about developing rubrics to work with. The teachers

will also need to interpret and localize many of the current educational theories that lean towards postmodern propositions on conceptual change and situated cognition

### TEACHERS' CONDITION

During the Primary Education Plan (PEDP) and the Secondary Education Plan (SEDP) expansion in education has led to the Teacher Education Division to reexamine its role. Experience shows that when there is an increase in the registration of primary or secondary school students, and at the same time adhering to quality education, then necessarily there has to be innovations in preparing the teachers for the changes. The expansion suggests an increase in the number of teachers to be trained. This being the case, Teacher Education in Tanzania is faced with a crisis that demands innovation in making the required number of teachers, especially for the mushrooming secondary schools. It is not easy to succeed with only one way of recruiting and developing secondary school teachers. Among the many possibilities available, choices could be found in employing the following:

- University graduates with a degree in education
- University graduates with specific subjects, but without the education component. (Mathematics, statistics, English, Geography, ICT etc.)
- Those who qualify from teachers colleges that are not at university level
- Holders of the Advanced Level Secondary Education Certificate who are given a short crash course in pedagogy.
- Expert teachers from outside the country.
- Retired teachers who are strong enough to give service.

The condition seen above shows that there is a crisis in teacher education. It is a crisis because it is not possible to maintain quality education with the kind of teachers we have listed above. The expanded employment of teachers and the terms that are set for their selection and training makes the career lose its status. Generally teaching has been considered as the field that absorbs candidates who would not have access into other careers. With that kind of public attitude the government pays the teachers a humble salary that would not compare the teachers with their former schoolmates that walked into other career.

The posting of teachers also counts in assessing their social status. Teachers can be posted wherever there are people. That is, they can be sent to very remote areas where the standard of living is very low. In that way teachers themselves think of being a vulnerable group, as they have to live the lives of the villagers whose children they teach. These villagers are usually underdeveloped in many ways. The teachers posted to remote areas have to accept poor housing, poor water and fuel services, exclusion from the modern marketing system and many other benefits that are available to town dwellers and professionals of other fields..

Teachers in remote areas are also excluded from information. They cannot access newspapers and television.-The most that could link them to the world is the radio. Unfortunately the teachers are not motivated to stay in the hard-life areas. Suggestions have been given to pay these teachers a hardship allowance, but the government has been slow at reacting to the idea. In this way we find our teachers being paid very little salaries and also getting it late as it is difficult for them to come to town to collect it.

### TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL STANDING

It has not been possible for teachers to be regarded as professionals with equal standing with the lawyers, doctors or architects and engineers. If we had to use a classical yardstick to assess the teachers as professionals we would employ categories like knowledge base,

authority, autonomy, accountability for the results of work, collegiality and professional ethics. These standards have been in use for quite a long time and if adhered to they might disqualify the teacher as a professional. However, current standards of identifying professionalism can be used and these are based on intentions and reflection. It is in the framework of these two classifications that we can discuss the position of the Tanzanian teacher as a professional.

### **Classical Standards**

#### *Knowledge base*

Judging from the kind of training that the teachers in Tanzania go through it would be difficult to establish that they have a sound knowledge base compared to the doctors, lawyers and architects. The teacher training courses do not guarantee enough knowledge to make the teacher confident in what s/he is doing. Even for the teachers that hold a university degree they do not have the professional competence and authority.

#### *Authority*

On the question of authority we find that the teachers work with centralized curricula that do not trust them with the ability to choose the content and even the strategies to teach. The syllabuses are very prescriptive and the teachers guides are so instructive that it is not easy for the teacher to find a margin for options. Worse still the curricula are so much examination driven that the teacher spends most of the time speculating for model answers than engaging in enquiry with the learners. There is a tuition syndrome that is motivated by the fear for examinations. And the examinations are not based on how the learners learn, but on what they learn. That means the examinations encourage banking and drilling rather than reasoning and showing a higher order of thinking. The slavery to examinations removes teachers' authority and autonomy in deciding how to teach. Teachers in Tanzania do not enjoy the power to decide that is availed to the doctors, lawyers and architects/engineers.

#### *Autonomy*

Teachers being not well trained, they are not trusted by the system that employs them. There are evaluators who constantly check the teachers' work and many of these overseers are so much adamant on procedures, so much so that they might not accommodate the teachers' creativity. Teachers usually seek normality in order not to conflict with the inspectors. Sometimes there are inspectors that are less developed in pedagogical knowledge than the teachers, but they still have the authority to bend the teacher to the procedures that look outdated. This situation became vivid when teachers were exposed to active learning strategies earlier than the inspectors.

#### *Accountability*

Another aspect of professionalism is that of accepting responsibility over the results of work. When students fail the teachers seem not to accept it as their failure. They tend to blame it on the learners. They do not want to take the direct responsibility that a surgeon would take when a patient dies on the operation table. They might not get the same pain and embarrassment that an engineer or architect suffers when their building collapses. The distance that the teacher takes can affect the quality of education and definitely EFA goals might not be reached with the kind of attitude built in the teachers either by training or by teacher traditions.

### *Collegiality*

The Tanzanian Teachers' Trade Union (TTU) works hard to put the teachers together for a professional identity. It arbitrates for their wages and also reminds the teachers of their responsibilities. According to the EFA the students have the right to learn and the teachers have the right to teach. But teachers are not very comfortable with the reminders on the right to teach. May be it is because they are under-paid. But it is also difficult to justify higher wages without quality work. This becomes a critical condition since the teachers are poorly trained, poorly furnished and poorly motivated. It needs much collective consciousness on both sides, teachers and their employers, to overcome this snag. The teachers union is not a professional body that protects the quality of their members work as it is with the doctors and engineers/architects. Teachers do not contribute knowledge through their union by research or publications. They do not have collegial responsibility in keeping the high standards of their profession.

### *Professional ethics*

Even the professional ethics that are emphasized in the teaching profession in Tanzania do not incline to quality of learning. They seem to be moral and disciplinary rather than aspiring to standards of performance. For example, the nature of promotions in the teaching profession hardly focuses on how the teacher works. Teachers are regularly promoted every three years, and if that does not happen they have the right to remind the authorities about it. In that way teachers seem to be promoted by season and not for reasons of excellence in performance.

### **Current Standards**

If we have to judge the professionalism of the teachers by current standards we would be tempted to look at the nature of the intentions in the work and then judge teachers practices in the way they perform as reflective practitioners. That kind of discussion could lead us to clues on the fulfillment of EFA goals.

### *Intentions*

The traditional taxonomy of professionalism that has been discussed above might dispel teachers from professionalism. However, if we look at the uniqueness of the teachers work then we would find a justification for their being professionals. Teachers like doctors, lawyers architects and engineers work with defined intentions. What becomes complex is the nature of intentions that exist in the professions. While lawyers, doctors and engineers/architects have control over their intention, the teacher finds himself or herself working with a more complicated situation. A lawyer defends his client the way he chooses as an expert and he might not have to negotiate with the clients' knowledge. The same could be with the surgeon. S/he does not have to reconcile with the knowledge or intentions of the patient. The same goes for the architect/engineer. The map or the construction does not depend on the client's knowledge in order to happen.

The teachers' work is different in the sense that s/he has to negotiate her or his intentions with that of the learner and of the curriculum. Learning happens in the teacher's client by the clients will. And there is no way the teacher can transfer her/his own meanings to the client. Worse still, the teacher has to reconcile the intentions of many students in the same classroom. Teachers teach individuals who have their own ways of constructing meanings, depending on what makes sense in their individual and shared worlds. The negotiations of intentions need a lot of planning before teaching and a lot of readjustment of the plans while teaching. That kind of planning and preplanning seems not to be noticed by people who

judge the teachers from a distance. May be that is why the planners and policy makers do not see this aspect of teaching to pay it a sound salary.

### *Reflection*

The tension of planning and preplanning needs skills in reflecting. Teachers need to reflect on their plans before teaching and then reflect on them again while teaching. This back and forth reflection needs a lot of inquiry and flexibility in adapting to situations and change. The ability to reflect at a high level is a good enough criterion to measure the quality of professionalism.

The major challenge is in how we train our teachers. Our teacher training has not developed enough to produce teachers that can clarify intentions and then work reflectively. Most of the teaching is procedural and the examinations are based on recall and not on inquiry. We still have a long way to go in order to produce a quality teaching that is reflective and sense making.

### NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

There is a strategy to review the shape of Teacher Education in the country. In this new effort a consultant has been identified to develop a Teacher Development and Management Strategy (TDMS). The Faculty of Education, University of Dar es Salaam, has been appointed for the task of working out the TDMS. The strategy intends to achieve the following:

- Emphasizing on capacity building in teaching and learning.
- Improving teachers' working environment, motivation and recognition for awards.
- Using teachers' resource centers for teacher development and for networking with the teachers colleges and universities

Stakeholders involved in this strategy are the Tanzania Institute of Education, The National Examination Council of Tanzania, The Primary and Secondary Departments of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, the Inspectorate, Private Teachers' colleges, Universities (UDSM and OUT), government teachers colleges and foreign development agencies. It is important for the stakeholders to work together in order to avoid unnecessary contradictions in their intentions. It has happened many times that there was little common understanding between the curriculum developers who design the syllabuses and the college tutors who train the teachers. Then there was yet another gap between the two and the examination council that sets and marks the teacher education examinations as well as school examinations. This segmentation of intentions and action contributes to poor quality of education in the country..

Another development that might develop teacher education is the establishment of an ICT network for the teachers colleges. In the first place ICT will be used as a facility in teaching in the colleges. Teachers coming out of the colleges will have developed capacity to select information, process it and then communicate it among themselves and to others. It will be possible for teachers colleges to exchange experiences in learning. This move has a lot of promises if the teacher educators and their student teachers use the facility appropriately. The same facility can also be used for professional development of teachers in the field.

There are also preparations going on for creating a sound career path for the teachers by distance education. Plans are set to develop a diploma course by distance and this shall accommodate early childhood education as well as primary education. The previous diploma in education that was offered had been based on secondary education. That previous experience with the

diploma was removing good teachers from primary schools, as they would shift to secondary education if they upgraded themselves by that diploma. The new plan is that teachers can develop in their areas and climb up the professional ladder educationally without shifting to a different level of school.

#### SPECIFIC ISSUES THAT POSE AS CHALLENGES

In the primary schools there is lack of guidelines to direct pre-primary teachers growth and development. Programs have yet to be developed to meet this need. Worse still there scarce funds to foster professional development in this area. There is also minimal support for developing private pre-primary teachers colleges.

In primary schools there is insufficient data to help in planning for the development of primary school teachers. The same applies to secondary schools. But the secondary education sector finds itself now with a lot of pressure because of community demand and political intentions of the leaders.

Teacher education faces a lot of tension in that it lacks linkage of the various institutions that pertain to its growth and development. There is also another problem in that it has not been easy to support the development of private teachers colleges.

#### RESTATING QUALITY LEARNING

Maintaining quality education according to EFA goals needs an approach that explores into the kinds of capital that can be developed in a school as a community of learners. Schools need to be conscious of developing academic capital. This could be the capacity to produce knowledge in the school. Teachers and learners could work together to make their own teaching and learning materials and then value them as assets for learning.

Then the school would also develop a consciousness that intellectually binds the school community together. Even the rules and administrative deliberations would specifically focus on enhancing learning. That kind of commitment would be an intellectual capital shared by all the members and developed for the intellectual growth of all.

There could also be considered the opportunities to develop social capital. A learner-friendly environment that unites the teachers and their learners as well as teachers, learners and the administration and parents is necessary. All the members of the community of learners could contribute to the togetherness of their relationships. Fear and obedience should not dominate, but respect and support for productive thinking at all levels.

#### WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

The opportunity that has to be seized by the new developments in Tanzania's teacher education can be found in taking a more active role in its own development. This generalization needs to be qualified by looking at the kinds of changes that happen in our educational system. Most of the time, if not all the time, teacher education has been changing in order to adjust to changes outside it. That is, it had to reorganize itself to suit the intentions of PEDP and SEDP. It is only now that teacher education intends to be inward looking in order to reflect on its own growth.

Teacher education has to be discussed in its totality. The way it is now there is very little link between what the universities do in their teacher education and what happens in the teachers' colleges. It will need special effort to create a dialogue between the stakeholders of all the

levels. May be it might be necessary to form study circles that include the concerned people from university to pre-primary level. This becomes important because university lecturers produce tutors who in turn teach student teachers in the teachers colleges. Then the student teachers finally become teachers in the schools. These people have a common ground to share and they need to understand each other through some kind of dialogue. It is by that kind of sharing that EFA goals regarding quality of teaching and learning can be achieved. Apart from study letters there could be other forums to link teacher education thinking.

Many initiatives have been attempted and they need to be strengthened. A good example is the Tutors Education Programme (TEP) at the Morogoro Teachers' College. TEP pioneered the introduction of participatory teaching strategies and co-operative learning. Philosophically they started with constructivist theories as a means to explain the shift of thinking. The programme brought a wind of change in the teachers colleges and this swept across the country in bringing about a change of paradigm. This marked a shift of emphasis from teaching to learning.

TEP had a newsletter, a radio programme, an initiative in texts development for teacher education and action research. action research in selected schools. The program has also engaged in mentoring activities between primary school teachers in introducing active learning approaches. Mentoring makes change among the teachers more sustainable than the commonly known one-hit seminars.

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