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**Strategies for Improving Competence Based Education in
Tanzania:**

Experiences, Insights, and Possibilities

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Strategies for Improving Competence Based Education in Tanzania: Experiences, Insights, and Possibilities

From my previous paper on “Challenges in Implementing Competence Based Curriculum in Tanzania”, I put a lot of emphasis to elaborate the challenges that were hindering competence-based education in our schools, especially secondary schools, my field of work as a school inspector. In this paper, I address the same issues but now I put emphasis on the strategies which could be used to solve / alleviate some of the challenges put forward in my previous papers. In most of my papers, the idea was the same, i.e. the teaching/learning process in Tanzania is affected by many things summarized in the following highlights:

- The teacher
- The student
- Teaching/learning environment
- Course content
- School culture

Teacher

When we talk of the teacher, what we have in mind is his/her qualifications, motivation level, subject mastery, expertise, creativity, etc. This is on the side of quality. On the other hand, the quantity of teachers is also a huge factor in education provision.

The student

Here we talk about his/her readiness to learn and cooperate with the teacher, interaction with the content, the teacher and among themselves, work within given time, relaxed with the teacher, follow instructions, spending much time on learning tasks, and his/her health status.

The teaching /learning environment

Here what we have in mind is as follows:

- Proper and adequate buildings
- Adequate furniture
- Adequate, relevant, and approved learning materials
- Easily reachable schools
- Attractive school environment
- Adequate number of teachers in the school
- Effective administration at all levels e.g. school, village, ward, district etc
- Qualified, committed and able school inspectors
- Committed and able school committee

- Parents' level of education and support to schools, students and teachers
- Political will and support to
 - schools
 - LGAs, ward, village, etc
 - Attractive scheme of service for teachers
 - Availability of avenues for continuous professional development of teachers

Course content

This includes

- Curriculum
- Quality books
- Quality examinations and tests
- Flexibility
- Relevancy
- Linkage between current and previous

1. School culture includes the following;

- Vision, mission, goals, objectives, targets
- Organizational structure
- School Improvement plans
- Staff involvement and development
- Parent involvement
- Regular reporting of learners' progress to parents and guardians
- Effective timetable
- Learners' involvement
- Level of shared governance
- School conditions and resources (support)
- Administration quality

From my field experience, these touch almost every area of education provision. However, the main actors here are the student and the teacher. Although they are the key actors, they cannot bring the desired results alone. That is where other education stakeholders come in i.e. parents, local community, education officers, and the ministry at large. Every one of these has a great role to play in the provision of education.

As it has been discussed in the previous conferences, there are challenges in the provision of education in each of the above-mentioned categories. It is good that the ministry and its organs are aware of those challenges. In trying to solve them, the following is being done:

Teachers

To solve the problem of shortage of teachers the Government has made tremendous efforts to train more teachers by increasing enrolment in the available teachers colleges as well as encouraging the opening of more private teachers colleges at different levels i.e. certificate, diploma and degree levels. The students who wished to study education were given priority in loan allocations as a way to motivate more students to join the education sector. Those who have graduated have been directly employed and posted to schools, which had a shortage of teachers.

The only problem now remaining is the motivation that teachers need in order to stay at their allocated work posts. This touches our number-three factor, that is, the teaching/learning environment. Although the Government has started the construction of staff houses, administration blocks, laboratories, classrooms and other important school facilities to equip our schools adequately, the shortage is still huge. Teachers are forced to rent and stay in houses far from schools and sometimes they stay in houses, which given an alternative they would not do so. Lack of proper offices while at school is also a problem.

Possibility:

In the process of building the community schools, the district authorities were able to construct basic structures i.e. 4 classrooms, temporary offices, toilets, 2 staff houses and in some schools a library and laboratory structures within a given time. I witnessed school committees and other district authorities work overnight to ensure that they finish their target in time. All this was done mainly because of the fear to lose their jobs. This means, if the process had continued as planned i.e. to continue the construction in every financial year until all the necessary structures are built, under close supervision and follow by the Government, many schools now would be in good shape environmentally at least.

However, this has not been done at the same speed as at the beginning. The political pressure has changed its direction and people have relaxed and laid down their tools until, maybe, next season. This attitude has adverse effects in our nation not only in education sector. Therefore, it is my suggestion that the Government turn its constant attention to its schools because it is clear that when it does so things take place. It should make sure that its plan to provide quality education is seriously and sustainably implemented at all levels until all the schools are fully equipped with all the required buildings, furniture and other teaching/learning materials for smooth running of the schools.

Regarding teacher quality, the Government through its district authorities should plan for in-service seminars in order to keep the long serving teachers up to date with the changes in curriculum. Education officers should motivate teachers/schools to revive subject unions to allow subject teachers to meet regionally or district wise and share experiences on new

teaching methods, new topics, or even innovations made by their fellows in their subject. This will improve teachers' confidence in teaching.

Students

In a competence based curriculum it is required that students be provided with experiences that give them a chance to apply their skills and knowledge to solve challenging problems. This will help them build self-concepts which will influence their learning and behaviour. In school situations, this can best be accomplished through involving students in projects, subject clubs, field trips, and surveys. In addition, giving students tasks that require them to read different books will help in making them interact with sources of knowledge by themselves. Performing real practical in science subjects also enforces students' understanding of the subjects. This calls for equipped libraries with current books and equipped laboratories.

Suggestions:

The teacher, therefore, needs to be equipped with teaching guides, syllabuses, textbooks, and relevant teaching/learning materials in order to effectively facilitate learning. In order to accomplish this, the provision of capitation grant to schools for buying teaching/learning materials should be of constant flow. In addition, the government through its relevant authorities should make sure that the correct amount for each student is given to schools at the beginning of every first term. Proper use of the money should be ensured. This will reduce the shortage of T/L materials in our schools.

Hostels around schools could solve the problem of students renting houses and living in risky environments, especially for girls, where students are exposed to all sorts of temptations. Stories of girls being raped and couplings between students and between students and villagers are common in those areas. The government, therefore, can invite investors from the communities who can build hostels in these remote areas where most community schools are located. It is true that in some areas very well constructed hostels remain unoccupied due to either, high rents or witchcraft beliefs. In such areas, education to parents and community needs to be given. By investors, I mean people with good intentions who are able to build hostels and furnish them in order to rent rooms to students at affordable prices but at the same time in conjunction with the community provide security to the students. This will also solve the issue of students travelling long distances to reach their schools daily.

Course content

It is good that the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training have made some efforts to provide current syllabuses to schools. It is also good that some NGOs through the government have donated science books i.e. physics, biology, chemistry and basic mathematics for Form 1 and 2 in many schools in Shinyanga, especially in Meatu District where certain secondary schools were given 160 copies of books for each of the mentioned subjects. However, since the schools are many, more NGOs could be approached to support the provision of teaching/learning materials like books, chemicals, and apparatus to our schools.

School

This needs to be built by the whole school community under the leadership and supervision of the head of school and his/her staff. The school head, therefore, needs to be chosen based on leadership skills and must be well trained before being given schools to lead.

Conclusion

Challenges facing Tanzanian schools can be solved by committed Tanzanian leaders who take quality education provision to be their first and uppermost priority. Such leaders backed up by various education stakeholders inside and outside the country can make a difference in our education system.