

Education Reforms in Tanzania and the Lessons Educationist in Kenya Can Draw

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Background of Education in Tanzania

The structure of the Formal Education and Training System in Tanzania constitutes 2 years of pre-primary education, 7 years of primary education, 4 years of Junior Secondary (ordinary Level), 2 years of Senior Secondary (Advanced Level) and up to 3 or more years of Tertiary Education. Specifically, the education system has three levels, namely: Basic, Secondary and Tertiary Levels. Basic or first level education includes pre-primary, primary and non-formal adult education. Secondary or second level education has Ordinary and Advanced level of secondary schooling while Tertiary or third level includes programmes and courses offered by non-higher and higher education institutions (MOEST, 2010).

Educational Reforms in Tanzania and Lessons Learnt

Since 1970, Tanzania has had great experiences in education sector. This section explores the background of education in Tanzania, reforms and lessons that an educator can learn.

Education Reforms

Sequence of Reforms in education sector

The Great Steps Forward of the 1970s

One of the key objectives of President Nyerere's development strategy for Tanzania, as reflected in the 1967 Arusha Declaration, was ensuring that basic social services were available equitably to all members of society. In the education sector, this goal was translated into the 1974 Universal Primary Education Movement, whose goal was to make primary education universally available, compulsory, and provided free of cost to users to ensure it reached the poorest.

As the strategy was implemented, large-scale increases in the numbers of primary schools and teachers were brought about through campaign-style programs with the help of donor financing. By the beginning of the 1980s, each village in Tanzania had a primary school and gross primary

school enrollment reached nearly 100 percent, although the quality of education provided was not very high.

The Crisis of the 1980s

In the 1980s, however, the Tanzanian government encountered serious difficulties in financing the social services it had deployed in the 1970s. As the country's terms of trade declined, economic growth and tax revenues declined accordingly. Moreover, whereas donors had been willing to finance much of the capital costs in the social sectors, the recurrent costs of running the resulting infrastructure fell on the government, which, in turn, depended on a declining tax base. Finally, a 3 percent annual population growth during the 1980s led to increased demand for education, placing an additional strain on the sector.

As a result of all these tensions, the quality of most social services declined significantly. In the education sector, government resources were barely enough to pay teachers' wages, textbooks and other teaching material were scarce and school buildings and other education infrastructure decayed. As a result, educational outcomes deteriorated. By 1993, gross enrollment in primary education had declined from the 100 percent of 1980 to 82 percent while, between 1986 and 1992, illiteracy increased from 10 to 16 percent.

The Introduction of User Fees

Contributions by local communities to the running of schools were gradually introduced due to declining resources, the national ethos of self-reliance, and the push by international financial institutions towards "cost-sharing." The number and amount of the contributions increased progressively throughout the 1980s and, in 1995, a primary school enrollment fee was formally introduced. Simultaneously, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, school enrollment declined due to a combination of rising costs with declining quality of schooling and, possibly, declining returns to education. (Arvidson and Nordström 2006).

Reforms through Government Intervention

Due to the challenges faced by education sector, further reforms had to come by. The overall objectives of introducing education reforms together with other policy initiatives was to ensure growing and equitable access to high quality formal education and adult literacy through

facilities expansion, efficiency gains and quality improvement, accompanied with efficient supply and use of resources. Therefore in early 1997 the Tanzania Government developed a Basic Education Master Plan (BEMP) to guide development in basic education provision.

In response to the local Government reforms agenda, an action plan for transferring responsibility to local school committees was prepared (as provided for in local Government Reform Act of 1998). Less developed regions/districts were given preferences in opening new secondary schools or receiving assistance to do so (GoT, 2000).

Reforms through Participative Approach

Further reforms came through the elimination of user fees through participative approach. The process leading to the elimination of user fees on primary education in Tanzania was the result of, as one interviewee put it, “the coming together of many streams to form a river.” These streams were increasing social discontent, the PRSP process, civil society organizations’ activism in Tanzania as well as in the North, and the turn-around of the Tanzanian government and the donor community in support of the measure.

Lessons for Educationist in Kenya

Some lessons are learnt through hard way. Tanzania experience in education sector has a number of lessons to offer based on the following

Very low levels of education participation inherited at independence (1961) followed by massive enrolment increases in the 1970s (UPE)

Decline through the 1980s and 90s (enrolment, funding, political/program focus) reaching crisis point and consensus that education was priority one (HIPC/PRSP) and

Civil society pressure (in Tanzania/internationally). The following steps were taken:

- Coming together 1999-2001, led by WB, leading to the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP).
- Abolished user fees and mandatory contributions, increasing enrolment by 2 million
- Recruited 50% more teachers in 5 years
- Built over 40,000 new classrooms
- Introduced annual capitation grant of \$10/pupil sent to the school level

- Emphasized governance, especially at school level, in the ‘spirit of decentralization by devolution’

The timeline of different experiences that Tanzania has had in education can serve to enlighten educators in Kenya. Reforms in education do not need to come through coercion from external forces. Government and other stakeholders should be able to come together and work towards achievement of educational goals.

Real change in education can only be realized if there is support from all stakeholders. Education in Kenya should reflect on the need to have more facilities to cater for the high rates of enrolment and employ more teachers.

Conclusion

Reforms in education in Tanzania were basically stakeholders driven. Thus the real lessons learnt from reforms in education should not be seen as government principal role. For Kenya education, government should assume the role of a facilitator in the provision of education. This new role of the government should be able to provide a more conducive environment for the all the stakeholders to increase their investment in education. This participative approach has potentials to establish a more learning environment that will allow imparting both knowledge and technology to the youth for a more active participation in the country’s economic growth.

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