

Education Reforms in South Africa and Tanzania: Lessons for Kenya

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Educational Reforms in South Africa

In order to gain a full understanding of where South Africa as a nation and specifically the education system is today, it is necessary to understand the history of the country, in particular the history of apartheid and how it still affects the country.

From the 1950s up to the early 1990s the education system in South Africa mirrored its apartheid policy. The Bantu Education Act (No. 47) of 1953 widened the gaps in educational opportunities for the different racial groups in South Africa. The act stated that students of different races were not allowed to study in the same schools. It also prohibited mathematics and science from being included in the curriculum of the Black education system. The act was created in the belief that maths and sciences were not necessary in the preparation of the young Black South Africans for the low-wage labour they were being groomed to perform. At the same time it protected the privileged White minority from competition in the skilled work force. The White education system received the highest amount of funding and resources, while the funding and resources allocated to the Black education system were minimal in comparison. Black schools had inferior facilities, were often without text books, and teachers with no, or poor, professional qualifications, (Crouch, 2004).

In 1991, a multiracial forum³ led by FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela began working on a new constitution. An interim constitution was passed in 1993, which dismantled apartheid, and a multiracial democracy with majority rule began. The transition of South Africa from apartheid into democracy occurred peacefully and is one of the 20th century's most remarkable success stories. The country's first multiracial election took place in 1994. The victor in this election was the African National Congress (ANC), led by Nelson Mandela. The new government included six ministers from the NP and three from the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Work on a new national constitution began immediately, which was approved and adopted in May 1996 (Infoplease, 2007)

1.2 Teacher Training

Teacher training in apartheid South Africa reflected the policy that ruled the country. Teachers were trained according to their classified race. Conditions which teachers faced within schools were also reflective of the attitude of the government of the time towards the different race groups. The conditions varied greatly, from the well resourced White schools to the under resourced Black schools which were used as a base for resistance against the National Party (NP) government. Certain resistant behavior and attitudes developed (amongst learners and teachers) during this time and are still evident in the schools today. Many of the teachers still operate under the same conditions that they experienced during the apartheid era, so one has to wonder how they are able to suitably implement new policy and practices, (Jansen, 2002). By the early 1990s shortages of teachers, classrooms, and equipment in the black schools were great. The policies of apartheid had taken their toll on education, (Crouch, 2004 & OECD, 2008).

The differences in all stages of education that were provided to the different racial groups were vast. According to Byrnes (1996), the disparity in teacher-pupil ratios and teacher qualifications in the various school types were particularly significant. Byrnes indicates that in a White primary school there was an average of one teacher to eighteen students, contrasting with the Black primary schools where it was as high as one to thirty nine. Up to ninety six percent of all teachers in White schools had professional teaching qualifications while only fifteen percent of teachers in Black schools were qualified.

Addressing the injustices of the past education system was one of the most daunting tasks the government faced in the early 1990s. Since 1996, every South African has had the right to a basic education, as well as to a further education. This was laid out in the 1996 Bill of Rights contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (infoplease, 2007). The State is required to make education available and accessible to all South Africans. Educational policies have been rewritten with the intention of ensuring equality, and quality of education, for all South Africans (Crouch, 2004).

2.1 Education Post Apartheid

Rectifying inequalities within the education system was one of the largest issues that the ANC government faced in 1994. In the early 1990s the new government set about reducing the differences which existed between the schools. Many policies were created, a new innovative curriculum was revised and there was a restructuring of the education departments. Many international specialists were brought in to advise and oversee the creation of the new system. South African policies were linked to developments that were taking place in the international educational environment, (Jansen, 2002).

One of the first changes made in the education system was in the early 1990s. Traditionally White schools were re-classified as Model B schools, which allowed limited access to children of other races. However, preference was given to children living within the area of the school. The Group Areas Act was abolished as late as 1991. As many Black children lived out of Model B schools' districts, only a few were admitted into the schools (Lemon, 1995). In the last days of Apartheid, most White public schools were granted the right to appoint teachers, to decide on admission policies and to impose fees. Through this procedure Model B schools were transformed into what became known as Model C schools. The reason for the reform was the semi-privatization of the White public educational system, shifting the financing and control of White schools to White parents. When Apartheid ended, all restrictions on racial mixing in schools were officially abolished, and the 1996 South African Schools Act extended most of the financing and governance provisions of Model C schools to all public schools, (Selod & Zenou, 2002).

In 1998 the National Norms and Standards for School Funding was published as policy (DOE, 1996b). This complex policy effectively made the move from the previous categorization of Model B and C schools and renewed efforts to reallocate funds equitably. In essence after a complex calculation, as laid out in the policy, the funding for schools was reorganized based on a number of factors pertaining to all schools. The result was that the poorest and neediest schools received a higher per learner funding allocation. Schools that fell into the Section 21 category of the South African Schools Act were to receive funding from the government in a lump sum and are to then allocate the resources as they see fit. This in essence made them semi-independent from the department, (DOE, 1996).

This distribution of the funding provided by the state is left in the charge of a school's governing body. Schools falling under the Section 21 category are able to charge school fees and in doing so generate funding for the schools, allowing them to employ more teachers, take care of buildings and covering costs that are not able to be covered by the government funding. The majority of these schools are the previously White Model C schools. These schools are able to employ more teachers who are commonly known as governing body paid staff. This helps these particular schools keep the teacher: student ratio low. Schools not on the Section 21 list, now Section 20 schools, receive their funding from the government who in turn determines how these funds are to be spent. They are not allowed to charge school fees. They are therefore unable to employ teachers over and above the allocation provided to them by the government, based on the pre-determined teacher: student ratios. The aim of this policy was to ensure that the poorer students were able to access schools, regardless of their parents' financial situation. The majority of these schools were the previous Black, poorer schools operating in the rural areas.

The policy allows the Section 20 schools the opportunity to apply for Section 21 status, (DOE, 1996b). South Africa now has a single national education system which is organized and managed largely on the basis of the nine provincial subsystems. Under Apartheid up to 18 independent educational departments⁴ had existed (Crouch, 2004). The South African Qualifications Authority Act (SAQA) established a South African qualifications authority (DOE, 1995b). SAQA oversaw the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) covering standard setting and quality assurance. One of the main objectives of the NQF was to create an integrated national framework for learning. Rectifying the past discriminations in education, training and employment are other objectives of the NQF. Table 2 shows the various levels in the South African Education System as laid out by the NQF. (SAinfo, 2006).

2.3 Reform Context

The 1994 elections in South Africa marked a transition in the country's history. This policy of governance up to 1994 involved the segregation of races and a large degree of bureaucracy. No institute reflected the policy of the government as clearly as the education system did during those years. The system consisted of four education systems, based on the racial classification of

apartheid, each having their own schools and training colleges. The administration of these four systems was shared by some 18 education departments. This system ensured that schooling was racially separated and reflected the apartheid beliefs about race, (Brook, 1996).

Resources and funding provided for the different schools was based on race (Crouch, 2004). This affected many areas of the schools. To name but a few of the obvious ones: the resources available, the schools' basic infrastructures, the teacher: student ratios, students' future employment opportunities. The curricula covered in the different systems were also not equal. Hence many essential elements of a basic education were left out of many South African students' education. The official languages of instruction were English and Afrikaans, with no African languages officially recognized (Johnson, 2007). By the time 1994 came around Apartheid had managed to create an institutionalized system of educational inequality characterized by "a large degraded black sector on the one hand and an administratively and pedagogically privileged white sector on the other hand," (Johnson, 2007, p. 185).

2.4 Conclusion

As has been shown in this paper, education reforms have taken place in South Africa with the intention of redressing the inequalities that resulted from the apartheid education system. The reforms were generated by policy makers who were intent on ensuring these inequalities are eradicated. The policy makers over the years have generated a large number of policies designed to address different problems that have been recognized in the years since the dismantling of apartheid.

However, the policy makers in their attempts to turn around an entire education system as quickly as possible appear to have ignored many factors which affect the performance of the reforms. The damage left by the apartheid education system was deep and the policy makers in their attempts to create the changes they desire appear to have overlooked these problems. In effect, they simply applied band-aid and hoped the wounds would heal. These wounds have not healed. In fact, it appears that they are now festering and are not going to go away until they are addressed. Facing the reality of what is going on in the schools in South Africa is needed. No

amount of policy is going to remove what has been done, but working with what has been left behind would be a start. Many of these lingering problems have been pointed out by both the research performed by the Department of Education itself, and numerous agencies employed to investigate the situation. It appears that all these investigations so far have simply resulted in more generation of policy which continually fails to address the issues reported. I believe it is time the policy makers acknowledge these problems and face them head on.

2.0 Lessons Learnt by Kenyan Educationists from Reform Experiences Attempts in Tanzania

2.1 Introduction

The history of tertiary education in Tanzania is a short but not without highlights and interesting moments. Under the Germany and British colonial system, Tanzania did not have much tertiary educational activities. Most of the people who went past a few years of primary schooling went into clerical positions or served as primary school teachers, catechists and missionary assistants.

The positions that required higher educational qualifications were comfortably filled by colonial expatriates. Thus after independence, with the drive to Africanize, i.e. to have Africans take-over the posts which had hitherto been occupied by the colonial civil servants, a need for an increased enrolment for higher education was found imperative. The University of East Africa (UEA) became the rallying point for the development of the needed high level manpower in the country until 1970 when the first national university - the University of Dar es Salaam, was established. The students though predominantly national, were also predominantly middle class in values and disposition. There were many points of disagreements between them and the government which led to the head-on collision in 1966, after the establishment of the compulsory national service scheme, whereby university graduates were to enlist for para-military service for 6 months. This culminated into the first of many closures of the university when students have found themselves confronted with the coercive instruments of the state.

Tanzanian educational reforms have regarded the devolution boundaries as a great factor and to some extent ushering in an unbalanced education system which has affected the education sector both positively and negatively. Kenyan educationists should learn the following aspects that have

acted against and for the Tanzanian educational reforms and borrow positive measures while at the same time learning from the negatives.

Reforms and Positive Societal Attitude towards Teachers and the Profession

Teacher status is heavily influenced by the attitudes of the community towards the overall value of education and the relationship between schools and the community. Traditionally, teachers in Tanzania have had a strong sense of moral accountability. 'Teaching is far more than a job in a school. It is a role and position in society and, as such, is associated with honor and responsibility' (Barrett, 2004 p.13). But, as a consequence, teachers are vulnerable to parental and community opinion. 'If the parent values the teacher and the teacher values the parent, you find that the work goes well'. In the past, most concerns about this relationship have focused on rural areas.

In early 1990s, the TADREG Survey found that three-quarters of primary school teachers regarded teaching as a 'respected profession'. The situation has however changed with time due to reforms that have been done in the education sector. According to the Hakie Elimu Survey 'this situation seems to have changed drastically over the last 14 years' (p.15). However, the survey results are not consistent on this issue; Over 70 percent of teacher questionnaire respondents agreed that teachers are respected (76 percent rural, 60 percent urban), but 'the majority of interviewees' said that teaching is not a respected profession anymore.

Educationists in Kenya should ensure that teacher reforms that will follow soon after the implementation of the new constitution do not in any way worsen the current attitudinal state towards teaching. The state is not different from that in Tanzania today considering that Kenya has now adopted a devolved government system.

2.2 Reforms vs. Learner Results

Professional status is closely linked to client perceptions of the quality and overall value of the service that is being provided. It is frequently asserted that the perceived value of education is falling in most households in Tanzania. This is due to three factors namely, declining education

quality, increased household expenditure on education, and deteriorating employment prospects for school leavers.

Reforms in Tanzania have made obtaining good quality data on trends in learning outcomes very difficult. Examination results are notoriously unreliable except where they are criterion referenced in a rigorous manner. Primary school leaving examination results have been improving quite appreciably since the late 1990s. However, the results of independent tests administered to large samples of primary school pupils show that learning outcomes are both low and declining.

The reforms in Tanzania considered opening more chances for primary school as an urgent need. However, the demand for primary education is also heavily dependent on the proportion of primary school completers who are able to progress to secondary schooling, since it is this level of education that provides access to 'good jobs'. The transition rate from primary to secondary education has doubled since the mid 1990s - from 15 to 30 percent. While poorer learning outcomes have been counteracted to some extent by increased access to secondary education, wage employment opportunities for male secondary school leavers deteriorated appreciably during the 1990s. Interestingly, though, these opportunities have remained relatively constant for female Form IV leavers (Mukyanuzi, 2003).

2.3 Erosion of Economic Base

With the erosion of the economic base in the country and the end of the cold war, the strong leftist scholarship was increasingly replaced by the new right drift, heralded by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund strategists who, in tandem argued that, given the limited resources and unlimited demand, Tanzania's public funding priority should go to basic, rather than higher education.

A "steady decline of real wages, severe shortage of books, journals, paper, laboratory equipment, research facilities, and support for high level overseas training as well as domestic post-graduate programmes", (Mbilinyi 1990, p. 17) have all contributed to the manifest erosion of scholarship

and intellectual production. Mbilinyi (1990, p. 17) further notes that “in 1988, Tanzanian university teachers could only feed their families for about three days on the monthly wages, meaning that their labor during the other working days of the month was not supported by wages at all, but by ‘out of classroom’ activities”.

2.4 Reforms Vs. Employment in Educational Sector

Teaching in Tanzania is widely perceived as employment of the last resort. As one NGO respondent put it ‘no one wants to be a teacher so why should they be respected’. However, among primary school teachers at least, this contention is not supported by any of the school surveys. Only 12 percent of the teacher respondents in the TADREG Survey in 1990 said they joined the teaching profession because ‘I couldn’t get the job I wanted’ and only 5 percent said that ‘there was no alternative to teaching’. Over ten years later in 2003, the Haki Elimu Survey found that ‘most of the primary school teachers stated that they became a teacher through choice, because teaching appealed to them’ (p.15). Similarly, among the survey schools in Muleba and Temeke, fewer than one in five teacher interviewees stated that they became a teacher because of a lack of alternative employment opportunities. In contrast, however, the results of the Swai Survey suggest that most secondary school teachers opted for teaching as very much a last resort.

3.0 Conclusion

These converging trends have put tremendous stress on educational and other social systems responsible for preparing society for the future and moderating the adverse impact of social and economic change. In the face of these trends, countries are confronted with the need to rethink their educational systems to prepare students for the global economy, maintain economic progress, and assure that their citizens will benefit equitably from these developments. And Kenya is no exception. While Tanzania has invested her hopes for better education in many educational reform attempts, her minimal success can give direction to Kenya while her failures remain crucial lessons for Kenya. This is important considering that Kenya is in the wake of a new constitution.

To participate in this global economy and to improve their standard of living, students will need to leave school with a deeper understanding of school subjects, particularly science, mathematics, and technology. They will need skills necessary to respond to an unbounded but uncertain 21st century—skills to apply their knowledge to real-world situations, to think critically, to collaborate, to communicate, to solve problems, to create, and continue to learn.

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Suggested Citation in APA

Wanjohi, A.M. (2011). *Education Reforms in South Africa and Tanzania: Lessons for Kenya*. KENPRO Online publications. Available online at <http://www.kenpro.org/papers/education-reforms-south-africa-tanzania-lessons-kenya.htm>

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