Tanzania Textbooks, Curriculum and Politics: A Documentary Analysis

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/mussa_muneja/13/
Handbook of Research on Enhancing Teacher Education with Advanced Instructional Technologies

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A volume in the Advances in Higher Education and Professional Development (AHEPD) Book Series
Chapter 16
Tanzania Textbooks, Curriculum and Politics: A Documentary Analysis

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ABSTRACT
The chapter explored the importance of textbook authorship in the context of Tanzania’s competence based curriculum. The study utilized a documentary analysis where literatures from local and global perspective were scrutinized. In order to enhance the findings, five teachers with a long experience in teaching were purposively sampled and interviewed. The findings indicate most teachers are not empowered in the art and science of writing textbooks; teachers are largely excluded in textbook evaluation; gender imbalance in textbooks is a widespread global issue; corruption is widespread in textbook industry. The study recommends a constructive way forward according to the findings.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND
Tanzania, like Nigeria and Rwanda, has embarked on an ambitious developmental initiative that has been borrowed from Malaysia. This initiative is called Big Results Now (BRN). The United Kingdom UK will provide the Government of Tanzania with £4.95 million for a duration of 10 years (Business Case, 2013).

The aim of BRN program is to make a transition of the country from low to middle-income economy by 2025. The program was launched by President Dr. Mrisho J. Kikwete in February 2013 (PMORALG, 2013). Furthermore, BRN has six priority areas of the economy namely,(i). Energy and natural gas (ii). Agriculture (iii). Water (iv) Education (v). Transport (vi). Mobilization of resources.

Six months later, the Minister of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), Dr. Shukuru Kawambwa presented a keynote speech in Dar es Salaam, (PMORALG, 2013). The speech was presented to various educational stakeholders to jumpstart BRN in the education sector. It is interesting that the speech was presented in about 90 days before the commencement of the National Form Four Examinations. Within this short time span National Form Four results were expected

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8162-0.ch016
to mount from 40% to 60%! (MoEVT, 2013). The speech began with an introduction that invited the stakeholders to buy and own the initiative.

After that the speech outlined educational achievements in primary schools such as increase of enrollment from 2005 to 2011 by 10%; increase of 1744 primary schools in the last five years; increase of students who finish primary schools from 493,636 in 2005 to 16,001 in 2011; increase of teachers from 135,013 in 2005 to 175,449 in 2011, and the improvement of the ratio between teacher and student at 1:56 in 2005 to 1:48. These improvements however appear to be more quantitative than qualitative as the challenges revealed later.

Furthermore there was a discussion on improvements done in Secondary and Teachers Training Colleges; this follows more or less similar patterns to the above. The speech continues to salute the government for what has been done; nevertheless what remains ahead is more critical than what has been done. Thereafter the speech turned to outline the challenges that face the Education sector in the wake of BRN. The challenges outlined were i) inadequate enrollment of kindergarten pupils, ii) students overcrowding in schools, iii) shortage of teachers for science subjects, iv) shortage of teachers’ houses, vi) shortage of desks, vi) depreciation of infrastructures, vii) fewer toilets, viii) lack of teaching and learning materials, ix) poor performance in examinations, and x) Increase of learners who do not know how to read and write.

After that the speech began to address how the challenges are going to be met by BRN. There are 10 challenges but eight of them were addressed. Within these eight, about three of them on infrastructure were combined. A plain reading indicates some aspects are simply mentioned as challenges but are not addressed at all. For example, on the addressed challenges, the aspect of the shortage of teachers for science subjects is seen as a problem of awareness, and not lack of adequate salaries and other fringe benefits, or working environments.

Another example is on aspects that were not addressed at all, teaching materials inadequacy in terms of quality. Also there was no indication in the speech that teachers were going to have better salaries; instead they were told that the delayed benefits shall be given. In the speech there was no indication to answer the question as to why illiteracy is currently at 31% while during era of the first president, Mwl. Julius. K. Nyerere, it was almost made a history. Moreover the issues of textbooks and curriculum are not discussed at all while this matter caused Education Materials Approval Committee to be dissolved almost two months before the speech was given. In addition to that the speech does not tell how education programs that were established in 2002 in the reign of President William Mkapa will intersect with BRN. What will be the continuities and discontinuities or the former programs are discarded. These programs were the Primary Educational Development program/plan (MMEM) and Secondary education Development program/plan (MMES) (United Republic of Tanzania, 2006).1

At the end, the speech outlined roles of education supervisors from the regional education supervisors, district education supervisors, to school inspectors and college principals. One may wonder, did these officers have no job description? Or what were the added job descriptions in the context of BRN. Also it was surprising to note that, from the beginning of the speech to the end, there was no slight mention that BRN has been borrowed from Malaysia. Furthermore the speech did not indicate what had been adopted according to Tanzania’s context and what has been discarded for the same reasons. In retrospect, all of these send a message that if we argue that BRN is not an adequate program, it may not be seen as an overstatement.

In summary, according to the speech, it appears BRN strategies are overly ambitious and unrealistic. In the context of these emerging and contradicting issues, and one of the issues is quality of textbooks.
Statement of the Problem

As a consequence of current failures of National Form Four examination in Tanzania, there has been uproar for credible answers from the general public as well as lawmakers. There are many reasons which have been proposed as sources of this problem. The reasons include motivation of teachers, school infrastructures, irrelevant curriculum, irrelevant textbooks etc. The issue of irrelevant textbooks appears to be critical as Hon. James Mbatia heightened it during a debate for approving 2013/14 budget estimates for the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT). Mr. Mbatia who is one of the opposition parties’ leaders proposed immediate overhauling of national body for textbooks approval namely Educational Materials Approval Committee (EMAC). He added “EMAC has failed to do its work properly, because many of its approved books have glaring mistakes. He cited one example of a mathematics book that had a sum which indicated that ‘zero divided by zero is equal to zero’ while another indicated that ‘two times seven is equal to fifteen’ (Saiboko, 2013). His sentiments were received with ridicule from many of ruling party Members of Parliament. The name of this party is Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). But all in all few weeks later, Mr. Phillip Mulugo, the Deputy Minister of MoEVT confessed before the members of parliament that EMAC presided over incompetence and irregularities. The Deputy Minister added, “The team of experts will cross-check all textbooks accredited by EMAC and those found wanting in quality and standards will be revoked (Mtweve, 2013).” EMAC is composed of experts from the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Institute of Education, Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. It appears that if the issue of textbooks in Tanzania will not be given adequate scholarly attention the vicious cycle of massive failures is bound to continue (Mwakyusa, 2013). This situation will lead to the nation of incompetent professionals who cannot compete in 21st century labor market. The aim of this study is to explore the importance textbook authorship in the context of Tanzania’s competence based curriculum. The analysis is situated in the local and wider global debate on textbooks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The findings discussed below are categorized in the light of the stated objectives. The findings are also discussed in the order of appearing.

The Importance of Teachers as Authors of Textbooks

An empirical study by Kapiga (2013) is contextual and illustrious to begin this discussion. The writer conducted a study entitled, “The Centrality of Textbook Writing for Enhancing Understanding and Practice of Learner-Centred Education in Secondary Schools in Tanzania.” The study took a qualitative approach where 10 teacher trainees were interviewed. The trainees were doing bachelor degree in education in among three constituent campuses of the University of Dar es Salaam. After data analysis, four findings became evident. These were financing, production, human resources and authorship. According to the participants the core issue was financing, but I argue the last issue that is authorship stands at the center and the rest fall in their place. When teachers are equipped psychologically and intellectually in the art and science of textbook writing, the aspects of finance and others will naturally fall into place. The findings in this area of authorship indicate that many teachers have limited knowledge in textbook writing; there has been on a reliance on textbooks that had been produced for commercial purposes because teachers feel or believe that they cannot write; Teaching colleges and even universities still maintain a culture of making textbook writing as not part of the core curriculum. The paper presupposes the aspect of textbook writing belongs
either to Tanzania Institute of Education or other people who are simply interested in the area. The result of this has been textbooks that are not only removed from learner-centered context, but also inadequate of preparing the learners as competent examinees and future capable workforce.

In line with the above study, Atkinson (2008) of Lancaster University in the UK, did a profound empirical study entitled, “Investigating the Expertise in Textbook Writing: Insights of a Case Study of An experienced Materials Writer at Work.” The aim of the study was to discover how an experienced materials designer went into his work in the process of textbook development. The guiding research questions were first: “How did the experienced textbook writer go about his work; what processes and procedures did the writer follow when developing a textbook?” And second, “What facets of expertise were revealed in the work of the experienced textbook writer who participated in the study? The one participant study revealed one core finding, that is the empirical research can inform textbook design.

It appears textbooks in Tanzania are lack empirical based experiences. As a result the textbooks that are available are not adequate at all since they do not address the competence based curriculum. Since the available textbooks are inadequate, you may find teachers using up to four textbooks for one subject (Masome, 2013; Miombo, 2013; Mwakibete, 2013; Sempombe, 2013). And most of these textbooks were authored in the last 40 years, when the country practiced officially performance based curriculum that was borrowed from Britain (Bernstein, 2002). The new textbooks appear to come from famous publishers whose style takes a question-answer format; a typical performance-based learning materials. When these ‘textbooks’ first appeared, school administrations were suspicious of them. But when they discovered that the selected teachers who compose National examinations use them, schools began buying them. The subjects covered by these ‘commercial textbooks’ are bookkeeping, commerce, History, English and Mathematics (Yanga, 2013). This paper argues the time has come to empower teachers to become textbook authors in the context of competence-based curriculum because they have a firsthand experience with learners. It appears that most text book publishers are not currently teaching, so one may argue that, they are removed from classroom experience.

In order to equip teachers, the plans should be implemented for in-service training on textbook authorship, design and evaluation. Moreover, for learners who are currently in Teachers Colleges ought to study the same course as one of core modules. The discussion will now shift to another aspect on textbooks.

**Gender Stereotypes and Textbooks: Selected Global Survey**

Gender stereotypes in textbooks means the intended or unintended subjugation of one gender—particularly female gender. Gender stereotypes have one core negative effect that is making the girl child feel incompetent in the academic arena. However this study argues that if the authors of textbooks employed gender stereotypes it could have been a result of deeply entrenched patriarchal culture that is supported largely human societies. This is usually mainly through oral or written religious traditions. Seeing this culture has existed and informed academic discourses for almost 20 centuries, its departure requires a continuous deconstruction of mindsets.

The matter of gender stereotypes in textbooks is not a Tanzania issue alone, but a global one. Various studies globally have been conducted to address this matter. For example in Iran, Ghajarieh and Cheng (2011), have argued that although in 2001 the student populations was almost equal between males and females, but it has been found out that the textbooks are currently reflecting gender-bias in their language and illustrations, especially at lower levels of education. The study further argued, future generations that hope for the
pictures of gender stereotypes and the bias, can affect sustainable development generated through these textbooks. If one may read this aspect, Islam may be blamed as a causative of this but the next section negates this assertion.

Similar to these findings a study Táboas-Pais (2012), did a content analysis of photographs in Spain to establish gender stereotypes in physical education textbooks. It must be known that Spain is a strongly catholic country, even if it could be termed secular but the secularized people are nominally Catholics. In this study, the textbooks examined were published for use in secondary schools between 2000 and 2006. The sample was composed of 2,724 images published in 36 textbooks by 10 Spanish publishing houses. The findings showed a noticeable imbalance between male and female representation in which the male model is clearly predominant. One may clearly wonder are not European Countries that have been pushing for gender equality agenda, while they have not fully ‘cleaned their houses!’

Coming back to Africa, Barton and Sakwa (2012) did a study in Uganda. The study was entitled, ‘The representation of gender in English textbooks in Uganda.’ The paper reports on how an English-language textbook used commonly in Ugandan secondary schools reinforces gender stereotypes that are prevalent in societies. The paper climaxes by arguing that the content of textbooks, mediated in the classroom, undermine the Ugandan government’s commitment to equity and inclusion. One more time, the issue of gender stereotypes is seen. Any least informed reader may argue that because Uganda has the largest African population that is the reason for gender stereotype. As argued earlier, this is a global issue, in Iran that represents Islamic populations is an issue; Spain that may represent Christianized developed nations, gender stereotype remains an issue. Let us now move to South Africa, perhaps there is a different story.

Schoeman (2009), conducted a qualitative intrinsic case study in South Africa with the aim of determining the extent of the representation of women in three South African school History textbooks. Moreover, the study sought to establish whether or not a sample of these textbooks had built upon the gender equality initiatives introduced after 1994. The results demonstrated that, despite the introduction of gender equality initiatives, in the sample selected the role of men in history continued to receive emphasis. The study climaxed by proposing the need for tools to empower in-service History teachers to teach learners to deconstruct patriarchal or hegemonic power relations in school History textbooks. This study like the previous ones is not guilty free from gender stereotypes in textbooks. One would expect for a young democratic country like South Africa to purge away gender stereotypes in textbooks as it did for racism that had existed for over 400 years! Sadly enough, it is not. The discussion now will be wrapped up by visiting Tanzania.

Mkuchu (2004), wrote a doctoral thesis entitled, “Gender Roles in Textbooks as a Function of Hidden Curriculum in Tanzania Primary Schools.” Based on a Liberal Feminist Framework, the study used content analysis method and examined the extent to which gender roles had been portrayed in the 40 textbooks for six subjects taught in Tanzanian government primary schools. Further, there was employment of interviews, the study examined mechanisms instituted by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) and Publishers to ensure that the production of textbooks is not gender biased. Female compared to male characters were being underrepresented in, frequency of appearance and power related aspects such as leadership; ownership of property and association with technology; leisure and sports activities; The depiction of reproductive and productive roles is biased into traditional femininity and masculinity; Gender biased language is minimal; and Personality traits are differentiated between traditional masculinity and femininity groupings; and the mechanisms to eliminate gender stereotyping in producing textbooks are inadequate as the empha-
sis is on producing textbooks that matched with the official curriculum.

These findings are evident that there is imbalance in gender presentation. However I contend that the curriculum ought to reflect what is happening in the society, but try as much as possible to mainstream a lesson for change. What the author of the thesis is implying is to write textbooks of the ideal society which does not exist. Moreover, these findings like the ones discussed in the previous studies show that Tanzania has a long journey to travel before reaching the destination of gender equality not only in textbooks industry but also in general life.

**Textbook Industry and Corruption**

This section discusses the fact that, textbook industry regardless of the truth that teachers are left out; and that it largely exhibits gender stereotypes; it must be also noted that is plagued by corruptions in terms of approval of manuscripts as well as distribution. Selected examples from Thailand, Philippines and Tanzania are put into limelight.

East (2000), made a documentary on the action taken by the Thai government against textbook corruption. It was proved that head teachers were involved in the scandal. This was done through inflating commission fees of the book price paid by publishers. As a result of this corruption, the parents were affected economically by textbooks exorbitant prices. This documentation may become a surprise to many since Thailand is a middle income economy. Furthermore such happenings are true even in Tanzania in one way or another. That is the reason EMAC has been dissolved as discussed earlier. All of these sad realities affect the end user, a learner in the ‘said’ competence-based curriculum. The study argues that the attainment of the goals of competence-based curriculum goes beyond the written curriculum to real life experiences. And this demands that a war against corruption must not be only waged in other sectors, but in the education sector as well.

Another example of corruption in textbook industry is picked from Philippines. Reyes (2007, 2009) discusses that corruption in an obstacle to the Philippines pursuit of development. The articles discuss that the government mechanisms of textbook distribution is oftentimes interrupted by corrupt government officials and businessmen. The articles expose case studies of corruption in order to bring the nation into a critical awareness. This aspect may not seem true to the Tanzania context, because since the Liberalization policy of 1991, the government is not the sole distributor of textbooks (Kira & Bukagire, 2003). However, if corruption will not be purged in bodies such as EMAC, we will continue seeing textbooks which lack quality are approved for use in primary and secondary schools.

In closing this discussion, the study of Kira and Bukagire (2013) is illustrative. Its title was “Perceptions of Education stakeholders on the Implication of Textbook Liberation Policy in Tanzania.” The researchers used various methods of data collection. The findings were both negative and positive. Negative views involved frequent change of the school syllabus, approval of books with low quality, piracy and corruption. Positive views involved improved quality of textbooks, enhanced intellectual diversity and increased employment opportunities. However, pedagogical issues were less considered by the respondents. Hence improving the skills of those involved in the chain of publishing should go together with appropriate management system under liberal policy.

Out of the many negative and positive findings, this study is interested in the aspect of approving books with low quality, an aspect that is always connected to piracy and corruption. The Tanzania education sector as previously discussed in the context of Big Results Now (BRN), is ambitiously expecting to raise the quality of basic education, in primary and secondary schools to 60% in 2013, 70% in 2014 and 80% in 2015 (MoEVT 2013). This is being done without clearly seeing the issue of corruption being addressed by the Minister, Dr.
Shukuru Kawambwa, in the launching of BRN; this same matter is not even mentioned in the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training as a matter of critical importance. Therefore, the study further argues that if BRN is to be achieved; it must be critically revisited in the eyes of teachers and students. Otherwise, it may remain only a political slogan or a utopian agenda.

CONCLUSION

This documentary review emerged from current realities happening in Tanzania in the context of the textbooks, curriculum and politics. The overall findings are that, the political promises through the ambitious program of Big Results Now do not resonate well with the textbook industry as well as with the competence based curriculum. Furthermore, the documentary review has shown that teachers ought to be empowered to be authors of textbooks. Additionally, it was found out that gender stereotypes is not only a Tanzania issue, other countries like Iran, Spain, Uganda and South Africa have the same problem. It was advised therefore that the textbooks for the future ought not to address the current imbalances only, but mainstream a direction for change. Towards the end, the review analyzed the textbook industry in the countries of Tanzania, Thailand and Philippines. The findings indicated in all of these countries the textbook industry is plagued by corruption in terms of approving manuscripts with poor standard as well as distribution. Below is the way forward:

Recommendations to Teachers

- Teachers ought to be empowered in the art and science of writing textbooks through professional development
- Teachers ought to be empowered on textbook evaluation in the context of the curriculum
- Teachers ought to take a personal initiative in being gender inclusive in their methods of teaching

Recommendations to Universities and Teachers Teaching Colleges

- Courses must be mainstreamed on textbook authorships
- Courses must be mainstreamed on textbook evaluation
- Course on Gender Theory must be strengthened

Recommendations to Evaluation of Manuscripts Approval Committee

- All evaluated manuscripts must be of high quality in terms of content and paper format.
- Any evidence of corruption in approving manuscripts must be squarely dealt in the court of law.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training

- Big Results Now ought to include textbook industry and competence-based curriculum as pertinent aspects.
- Big Results Now ought to address challenges of Teachers and Students and not only priorities of the central government

REFERENCES


**ADDITIONAL READING**


KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Author: Refers to a person who has written a publication.
Curriculum: Is the totality of what happens in a school setting.
Corruption: It is an act of being dishonest by those in power, typically involving bribery.
Evaluation: Is a process of assessing a particular educational process.
Gender: Is a cultural construct which assigns roles according to sex type.

Liberalization: Is process of increasing freedom for more players to involve in a certain decision.
Textbooks: Are stipulated learning materials in form of books.

ENDNOTES

1 United Republic of Tanzania will now continue to appear as URT.