# A REFLECTION ON THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATIONAL

# REFORMS IN TANZANIA

By

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Abstract

**A Reflection on the Context of Educational Reforms in Tanzania.**

This paper reviews the origins of educational reforms in Tanzania and discusses reforms in the context of the educational change process. The origin of educational reforms is assumed to be closely related to the policy formulation and implementation process. The reforms are conceptualized within the framework of three perspectives on change. **Policy** formulation and implementation are interpreted as complementary processes **and it is** argued that inappropriate perception of the implementation process is often **the cause of** failure in achieving the desired results from educational reforms or policy **initiatives.** Acceptability or non-acceptability of educational reforms are based on the **question of** responsiveness and compliance of the different groups charged with implementing the reforms. The co-operation of grassroot members and their institutional leaders is also considered crucial in implementing the reforms. Thus conflicts of interests have to be tolerated in order to maintain a balance amongst conflicting parties in the reform proces.

## The Genesis of Education reforms

An analysis of how educational reforms and policies tend to originate, focus and cover aspects of consultations and involvement of other people in introducing the reforms. Also it focuses on the procedure used for introducing the reforms and the amount of political influence which exists. Educational reforms are largely based on the educational philosophy of a specific country. In Tanzania, reforms therefore are based on the policy of socialism and self-reliance, in which education is made a tool of transformation through which national development is to be achieved. In Tanzania there is a tendency for educational initiatives to carry heavy overtones on the political objectives of the country rather than the educational ones. In most education system of the developing world, political objectives tend to over-ride and dominate any other objective in the education sector including those for educational reforms. Usually the first step to initiate a reform is to engage into a detailed assessment of needs whereby what is wrong is defined and possible solutions are identified. Such a process therefore becomes a basis for the intended product. Hyden (1975) Hanelock and Huberman (1977) Craig (1990) have pointed out that more often than not these have been neglected. This practice has led policy-makers into making hasty policy decisions and anticipate immediate results which preclude any opportunity for a thorough needs analysis. Subsequently it also causes incompatibility between the goals and the objectives of most initiatives and the strategies of implementation.

Kiwia (1992) found out in a study on the implementation of educational innovations that resourceful people from agencies and institutions of implementation are not consulted during the initiation or introduction of policy initiatives or reforms. They are only consulted at the stage of implementation. Consultations and involvement of other institutions are only made when leaders of implementing agencies such as schools take their own initiatives to explain the reforms to the people in those agencies and organisations so that they can perceive and understand the reforms clearly. Yet desired and anticipated outcomes from the policy initiative become difficult to achieve because major actors especially teachers and other implementers who are directly concerned with implementing the reforms may not have perceived the objectives and goals of the reforms clearly.

Studies by Mosha (1976), (1990) Bamba (1991) have showed that teachers, educational administrators and other implementers are       In Tanzania policies are usually introduced through statements from the central political organs and subsequently through corresponding government directives. But normally sources of most ideas about policy initiatives emanate largely from works and ideas of other people, most of whom play very key roles in implementing the reforms. These people include curriculum developers, school teachers, heads of schools and government bureaucrats in related ministries. However party officials and government authorities rarely acknowledge openly the contribution of other people as initiators of specific policy initiatives. Although it is a common belief, for example, that knowledge is nobody's property and therefore it should

not be identified with a single person, and as it sometime happens in most instances and in the final analysis, it is an individual who always gets the credit for introducing a reform.

The paradox with the seemingly centrally controlled education system in Tanzania is that, while government and the ruling party play down the role of other people in initiating and introducing policies or reforms, it apparently expects the same people to interpret the policy initiatives into workable programme and activities. This may not necessarily work. The notion that policies originate exclusively from the top political organ, is currently being challenged. Initial ideas about policy initiatives normally emanate from other individuals and groups of people besides members of the central policy making organ. Observations made by Mosha (1976), and Mukyanuzi (1986) for example, revealed that the reform on curriculum bias that was introduced in Tanzania in 1972 was cherished some years before it was even announced by the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the party.

In explaining the conventional cabinet system for formulating policies in developing countries, Adu (1965) placed the role of ministers at the centre of the policy-making process and reckons that it is also possible for ideas to originate from subordinate staff. Ordinarily in this system, ideas would originate from the ministers and, sometimes, initiatives and suggestions would arise from their support staff. If it is a new idea then it will be a subject of a cabinet memorandum in order to give it the full backing of the government. If it is a minor issue, the initiative may be able to proceed without reference

to cabinet. But major issues are agreed upon by the cabinet. Tordoff (1976) Hartman (1982) and Kapinga (1980) observe that in Tanzania unfortunately the role of the cabinet has consistently been undermined by the party. Sometimes the entire policy-making activity seemed to be in the single hands of the President. Hartman (1982) pointed out for example that,

> "The government had the de jure right to formulate policies but the party continued de facto to formulate policies while Nyerere, as president, had powers to override both organs.

The policy-making process in Tanzania was therefore dominated by the party and the president, such that the president had also become one of the organs of policy-making. Hence the initiator of policy initiatives and reforms.

## Reforms as Social Change

Different perspectives have been used in analysing the process of social change According to Burell and Morgan (1979) Paulston (1979) four main perspectives about social systems and the dynamics of change, can be identified, namely the interpretative, the radical-humanist, the structuralist and the functionalist approach. The interpretative perspective is based on a philosophy that makes a very subjective view of social reality while at the same time calling for stability and regulation of social affairs. According to this perspective, the word hads meaning only if viewed as a product of the mind. So to understand social reality, it is necessary to tap individual's subjective experience. But it should be noted that

every person constructs his/her own meaning of social reality on the basis of his/her experience. To study reforms as social phenomena, one should seek the views and understanding of the specific issues from the people involved in implementation. But yet from these views, one would still need to interpret them to make specific meanings.

According to Hewton (1982) and Carnoy (1979) this proposition overlooks the fact that even the person who is trying to make the interpretation of a specific phenomenon also has experience which could influence the construction of the social reality that is being constructed. This means that there cannot be a fixed meaning for a particular social reality. Furthermore the process of educational reform is a complex one which cannot be studied through a fixed model of educational change. It involves the process of eliciting and interpreting different meanings which teachers and other educators who are involved in the process of change, may give, about particular social situations.

While the interpretative perspective seeks to understand the world from the viewpoint of social reality, the radical humanist perspective sees some degree of alienation in all human beings. Thus it seeks to change an individual radically, in order to allow him to find his true identify. Education is therefore seen as the major cause of alienation which hinders the ability of an individual to learn through the direct experience of the world. According to the radical humanist perspective education plays the role of either colonising or liberating people's minds. It is therefore believed Freire (1970) Nyerere (1971) that the process of change could be hastened by awakening the consciousness of the people and

making them aware of the causes of the problems that they encounter. It means therefore that change that is brought about through educational reforms should aim at making the user system critical about existing reality. Therefore, the foremost objectives and goals of a specific reform should not only include the integration of the user system into the entire socio-economic and political environment, but also awakening and conscientizing the people.

The Marxist critique of society produced the radical structuralist perspective. This perspective regards education as part of the exploitative superstructure geared towards producing and reinforcing values, attitudes and capacities, which will smoothly transform individuals into an alienated workforce. As such schools are seen as performing the work of inculcating the values of docility and respect to authority, while at the same time frustrating creativity and any self-initiated behaviour. According to the Marxist perspective, educational change is mainly directed towards political change and the creation of a system which gives students and teachers greater powers in decisions concerning their own education, and which enables them to take their place in work places under worker's control.

The radical structuralists call for the transformation of the social relations first, before institutional and attitudinal changes could be attempted. In concrete reality, it underscores the fact that, it is difficult to achieve the objectives and goals of an educational reform by only focusing on the institutional framework. Shivji (1975), Nicholls (1989) and Mbilinyi

(1978) have argued that the process of reform at the local level requires a closer linkage between the organisations, institutions or systems within which reforms are taking place and other related agencies in the wider community.

The functionalist perspective developed as a branch of the natural sciences, and in fact it owes much to the work of philosopher Comte (1974) and his ideas on scientific rationality. The ideas from the functionalist perspective are considered important in studying reforms as social change. This perspective makes the phenomena being studied bear a more objective reality. Rice (1963), Katz and Khan (1966), Havelock and Huberman (1977), used this perspective in analysing educational technology. But the perspective was incapable of encompassing all the dimensions that could emerge in a specific social situation. Owen (1982) observed that it is difficult for the functionalist perspective to be all encompassing. Therefore it is erroneous and illusory to claim that it is objective in analysing social phenomenon. In short, these perspectives simply enable us to see how social change can be perceived differently, and the perspectives do not emphasize on the use of any one model in understanding educational change.

### The Policy Formulation Process

Many attempts to understand the policy-formulation process tend to begin with an examination of the various models used and their underlying assumptions. But it is difficult to select one specific model that would be ideal for policy-making or policy-

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analysis. Lindbloom's (1969) model on disjointed incrementalism has been very influential to the process of policy-making because, in the model,

> "the policy-making process is viewed as a series of actions in which those who are responsible for arriving at decisions muddle through a limited number of closely related alternatives (incrementally rather than qualitatively different) without evaluating all the possible ramifications and consequences of each one."

According Aucoin (1971) the alternatives available to policy-makers for formulating policies are usually limited. As a result they tend not to be able to consider all the implications of the decisions that policy-makers would take. As a consequence of the limitations, the interrelationships between policies and their outcomes cannot be fully explored or predicated because of, among other things, factors such as time, inadequate information and bureaucratic limitations.

Aucoin's explanation of Lindloom's model, comes close to explaining the philosophy upon which the policy-making strategy adopted in Tanzania in the 1970's is based, which Hyden (1975) characterized as "Running While Others Walk". Hyden (1975) summarised the strategy with four major characteristics. That there is a strong urge to deal with all problems simultaneously and immediately, and this results in overlooking the unintended consequences which could arise from the implementation of a policy or reforms and giving priority to immediate implementation notwithstanding emerging problems.

Secondly, decisions are reached without obtaining full and detailed knowledge of possible consequences for the policy. As a result educational reforms such as the one on the

admission of students at the University of Dar es Salaam was abandoned in less than ten years, after it was found that the University could not get enough and qualified students to register for some courses. Thirdly, there is unwillingness among policy-makers to draw upon past experiences as a guide to future decisions. Policy-makers believe that the right policies are not necessarily those based on what is considered feasible in economic terms. Emphasis is placed on solutions being generated from local knowledge and skills, but this does not remove the possibility of repeating mistakes. Finally the outcomes of a policy or a reform are expected to occur over a short period of time. Thus, implementers are forced to work in an environment where the expectations of the public exceed that which can realistically be attained by the implementers.

Plicy initiatives and educational reforms exhibit common relationships during implementation. This is precisely because both have to be implemented in order to achieve the perceived goals and objectives. According to Jenkins (1978) policies and reforms tend to emerge and become implemented in a series of actions and interactions between people in different situations and levels of power. This situation makes it very difficult to identify an ideal model of policy-making. Thus Jenkins (1978:31) suggests that,

> "a comprehension of implementation problems and of policy outcomes or impact may, therefore, be one of the more demanding areas of analysis, requiriring a model that exposes the structure of the policy environment and account for the behaviour of individuals and groups within it".

Omari and Mosha (1987) have grouped the theories of policy formulation into three models of policy-making, namely, naturalistic idealistic and eclectic. Naturalistic models include that of Dror's (1968) optimal model which is not entirely dependent on rationality

but also includes an element of creativity. Idealistic models tend to prescribe steps which are to be followed without taking into consideration the inherent constraints in policy implementation. The idealist model include those based on instituticnalism, incrementalism and rationalism. Eclectic models are models built on salient features obtained from an array of prescriptive and descriptive models with the objective of avoiding a miss-match between the purpose of a specific policy and the implementation framework.

There are many limitations in the use of most policy-making models especially when questions about policy formulation are raised. For example the concept of "policy" itself is a problems because it can be given different interpretations by different agents in the government system. The same people with differing conceptions about the term policy, engage in the formulation of policies and other reforms in the system. So the kind of policy that will emerge is likely to be influenced by the diverse perception of the concept of policy by the key actors in the process.

Most policy formulation models are prescriptive and tend to focus on the pre-decision stages of policy formulation. They tend to consider outcomes which could occur before specific policies are formulated. But the moment the models become prescriptive they cease to become useful for policy formulation because of the fact that policy-making does not take place in straightforward logical stages. Such limitations, save to highlight the problems underlying the use of some of the policy formulation models. In developing

countries, like in Tanzania there is even a more difficult problem of knowing exactly who constitutes the elite of the society and the extent to which they are involved in the policy-making and implementation process. It is therefore common for members of the ruling party and some government officials, for example, to regard themselves as the elite of the society especially those which are centrally controlled.

## Development of a Model

Jenkins (1976) developed a model of policy-making based on the assumption that policy-making is, in fact, a process consisting of a series of activities which are interrelated. The activities are initiation, reformulation of opinion, emergence of alternatives, discussions and debates, legitimization and implementation. Usually, policies or reforms are initiated when dissatisfaction with the existing situation is expressed. This stems from the ruling party or government, expressing concern about a particular inadequacy within the educational system, or from the parents and the community questioning the performance of educational institutions. Educators also may express dissatisfaction about particular issues in the education system.

Once concern has been expressed, gathering and crystallization of opinions around particular points are considered essential because, by exchanging ideas between and among the different actors in the agencies of implementation, the issues and concerns which have been expressed are consolidated. At this point it is to decide which opinion to reject or which one to review. Identification of potential constraints which may arise

during implementation are also considered. In order for the activity to be meaningful to the whole process, people from different spheres of life and related experiences should be involved so that the decisions that will be reached reflects the diverse interests, needs and aspirations of the society, and the reality obtaining in the implementing agencies.

Clarification of different alternatives that could emerge during reformulation of opinions is made in order to decide on which alternative to take. The chances of conflicting alternatives emerging, are higher where policy-makers consist of politicians, professionals and different experts. But where policy-making organ consists of very strong actors, they are likely to engage in continuous debate and discussion in order to allow for detailed scrutiny of the proposed policy or reform. During these discussions and debates, policy-makers are able to gather sufficient support upon which to base their final considerations and to consult with other institutions or bodies upon which compromises and concessions can be made in case of any variations or modifications of original ideas.

After the proposed alternatives are established, the policy-makers decide on the final solution. Jennings (1993) calls this activity "legitimization". In the Tanzanian context policy-makers would largely consist of high-ranking party officials who have the power to ratify and legislate a policy. After the policy has been ratified and legislated, it is then announced for subsequent implementation. As administrative procedures and arrangements to operationalize a policy or a reform are undertaken, fresh dissatisfactions or problems may emerge and the entire process starts again. So policies are reformulated

and formulated as they are put into practice. The exercise takes place both at national level as well as at grass-root level, in schools and colleges.

Kogan (1970) Improved on the process model by adopting the aspect of recipients of education as clients, who have an equal share in decisions and decision-making processes. He argued that in the process model, community involvement is a crucial element in strengthening the outcome of the policy process. According to Kogan (1970)

> "... in the traditional model decisions come from political inputs at the head of the system and from interactions between professionals and recipients. This newer model allows for political processes to everywhere. Local and communitarian movements get their way."

According to Kogan (1979) policy-making concerns people's values, beliefs and interests, and therefore, it cannot be value-free. It is difficult for one person or a small group to be able to represent the values and beliefs of the entire community. So the act of involving the wider community into the process of formulating policies as much as it is possible is desirable. It ensures consistent operationalisation of a policy decision during implementation, therefore some of the crucial issues which may need to be considered during implementation are given some attention during the formulation of the policy. Bunker (1972:73) summarised the point and concludes by suggesting that;

> "a high degree of the integration of the administrative staff in the policy process facilitates implementation because it allows for the generation of understanding and commitment through participation in the development of operating capacity, and improves linkages for subsequent feedback".

## Implementation of educational reforms

Inappropriate perceptions of the process of implementation is often the main cause of failure to achieve the desired outcomes or results from educational reforms. Fullan and Pomfret (1978) and Grindle (1980) maintain that the process of implementation involves far more than the mechanical translation of goals into routine procedures. It is a process which involves consideration of the questions of "conflict" between the major actors in the process, decision-making and the distribution of resources and power. But, although these fundamental factors may appear in the process of implementation, they have, however, been considered during the initiation or decision-making process. In the initiation stage, factors that are likely to affect the process of implementation, especially the strong beliefs and values of the people and the available resources, are considered before hand, thus suggesting that the origins of reforms and their implementation are basically supportive and complementary processes.

In practice it is difficult to separate the origins of a reform and its implementation as distinct processes. The process of implementation constantly undergoes modifications of the goals and objectives of the reform Directives are also interpreted or reinterpreted to suit the situation in which they are being implemented. The activities involved in the modifications lead to some amount of "policy-making" during implementation. The design of the innovation, whether it is grandiose or modest, and the kind of decisions made during the initiation stage, tend to have a great impact on the manner in which implementation will proceed. It is thus acknowledged by Kritek (1976), Bunker (1972), Smith (1973), Leithwood and Russel (1973) that the fact that policy formulation and

policy implementation are closely related, is indeed also the nature and context of the educational reforms.

One of the factors which makes implementation of educational reforms and policies difficult and which relates to the close relationship that exist between policy formulation and policy implementation is the nature of the policies which developing countries tend to formulate. Unlike developed countries, developing countries cannot afford the luxury of incremental policy-making in which policies tend to deviate little from the past policies. Smith (1973:43) argues that,

> "Policies tend to be ambitious, sweeping programmes designed to bring about development and social reform. This was especially true in the years immediately following independence or the overthrow of traditional rulers. Budgets soared, massive new programmes were formulated and foreign assistance money, adviser, and packaged programmes penetrated the policy-making system."

Strategies of implementing educational reforms and policy initiatives relate to the nature of the reforms themselves or policies and its interaction with the environment in which the initiatives are being implemented. Major actors who might be involved in implementation usually come from different levels of the administrative hierarchies and represent different interests from local, district, regional and national level. This diversity of actors who are charged with implementation, can easily influence the strategies which will be adopted for implementing the reforms and the extent to which the reforms can be accepted. Also conflict of interest amongst the actors, which could affect the entire system of

implementation is bound to emerge. The different interests of the actors may lead to a struggle competing for the scare resources available for implementation as well as for specific power positions in the various implementation mechanisms.

## Acceptance of IReforms

Grindle (1980) pointed out two basic problems in implementing educational reforms within certain policy frameworks in developing countries. The problems concern the question of "compliance" and "responsiveness" of different groups charged with implementing the reforms. In order to achieve the goals and objectives of the reforms those charged with the task of implementation, need to find ways of securing the support of the different groups of people in the adopting community or system within which the reforms are being carried out, and also need to gain the compliance of various agencies and institutions, such as government ministries, voluntary agencies, the local elites and the beneficiaries of the reforms. Morries (1990) summarised very succinity by stating that failure to implement educational reform emanate from;

"teachers' attitudes, and receptivity, institutional climate user participation and characteristics of the reform and the practicality of the reform."

The problem of achieving compliance and responsiveness from implementers or organizational members is based on the perception of the members about the extent to which the reforms benefits them. Durbin (1978) suggested that the acceptance of a reform

depends on the processes involved in dealing with the reform between different units of a system or organisation. In this way, any attempt to introduce change will result in some conflict between different units in a system, especially when a unit or an individual perceives that the change or the reform might reduce its influence. Therefore, the units will remain committed to the reform as long as there is something in it for them. Thus various types of bargaining takes place between the units as they try to improve their positions. So they begin to discuss conflict as it arises during the reform process and identify bargaining processes as ways of reducing the conflict.

The implication is therefore that the authorities that are responsible for educational reforms in country should work out ways of securing the co-operation of the leaders of institutions in which the reforms will be carried out. In turn, leaders of the institutions should secure the co-operation of the members of staff who would be involved in implementing the reforms. This means therefore that the major actors will be engaged in a considerable degree of bargaining and negotiation as well as some degree of conflict of interests. At the same time, they must maintain a balance in the negotiations by tolerating conflict of interests so as to avoid the danger of jeopardizing the attainment of the goals and objectives of the reforms which could occur in the course of trading-off resources to solicit compliance.

Implementers face the problem of maintaining a balance between flexibility, support and adequate feedback without losing control over the resources that are required for

successful implementation of innovation. They are likely to be faced with the problems of finding themselves deprived of specific information which is crucial in the evaluation process or may be frequently intervened by specific individuals or groups of people wanting to acquire greater amounts of goods or resources from the quota which is allocated for implementing a specific policy initiative.

## Conclusions and Implications

This paper has analysed the interaction between policy formulation and implementation as context upon which educational reforms are based. It has observed that very often in Tanzania political objectives tend to override and dominate any other objective in the education sector, including those for educational reforms. On the other hand the process of introducing educational reforms has not been very transparent. Within this atmosphere the process of consultation either between the government and its people or within the ruling party is uncertain. Thus educational reforms appear unplanned and are subject to frequent and abrubt changes, hence leading to non-attainment of the desired objectives.

Reform is a social phenomenon, and the process of educational reform is a complex one which should not be studies through a fixed model of educational change. The different perspectives about dynamics of change such as the interpretative, the radical humanist, the structuralist and the functionalist simply enable us to understand how social change can be perceived differently. The process of Educational reform is therefore perceived as a process of social change and in order for the process of change to take place there should

be a fixed meaning for a particular social reality. This means therefore that there needs to be consensus about the issues involved in the initiating the reform.

Policy initiatives and educational reforms exhibit common relationships during implementation. Most educational reforms in Tanzania are based on the philosophy of the country, therefore inevitably the nature of the policy formulation process influences the resultant educational reforms.

The most rational model of policy making which may lead to introduction of implementable educational reforms consists of interrelated activities of initiation, reformulation of opinions emergence of altenatives, discussions and debates, legitimization and implementation. Therefore a useful policy-making model is one that adopts the aspects of recipients of education as clients. The act of involving a wider community into the process of introducing reforms or policy initiatives ensures consistent operationalization during implementation.

Implementation of Educational reforms and policy initiatives is made difficult due to the close relationship that exist between policy formulation and policy implementation. Inappropriate perception of the process of implementation is often a major cause of failure to achieve desired outcomes from the educational reforms. The problem of compliance and responsiveness of the different group charged with the task of implementation is

equally important. So the support of such people in the system should be sequired in order to attain compliance and acceptance of the reform.

Another problem that has been considered of great impact, concerns the scope of the reforms envisaged. An ambitions scope of a reforms makes it difficult to bring about meaningful change in a system. For example, staff requirements may be underestimated during the negotiation stage of the reform; or economic pressures may lower costs and underestimate personnel and material requirements. But also conditions placed on implementing agencies and the country as a whole, may make it difficult to hire local staff or other local counterparts thus leading to a failure in realising the goals of the reform.

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