

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

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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, v) 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 Mkapu 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 (MEM) and Secondary education Development program/plan (MES) (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.

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