

## POLITICS OF CURRICULUM MAKING: A QUANDARY TO QUALITY EDUCATION IN TANZANIA?

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### ABSTRACT

Curriculum is the lifeblood of quality education. Its ineffectiveness can have devastating repercussion to quality education. While being aware of the role of other factors in influencing quality education, this paper posits that curriculum development dilemma and its impact on quality education in Tanzania have not been sufficiently addressed. The interplay between sound curriculum and quality education cannot be overemphasized. To get quality curriculum, Tyler (1949) proposed a model to facilitate the process. Nevertheless, an attempt to develop sound curriculum has been a subject of heated debate in academic discourse in many parts of the globe, including Tanzania. Following contemptible education performance in Tanzania, education stakeholders have questioned the feasibility of the contemporary curriculum. However, they remained silent about the root cause of the dilemma. This paper argues that the absurdity of the existing curriculum is attributed to politics of curriculum making. Therefore, through a thematically oriented review of literature, this paper is inclined to shed light to that contention.

**Key Words:** *Curriculum, Quality education, and Politics*

### Introduction

There is no dispute that quality curriculum influences quality education. Because of this fact, some prominent educators such as Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962) strongly stressed that curriculum issues are central to education and curriculum is taken to be at the heart of education enterprise. Quality education carries with it numerous attributes of curriculum matters. However, curriculum matters, such as those of its implementation can be surpassed by existing complexities. Taba (1962) clearly argued that curriculum development is a complex undertaking that calls for determining a complex set of decisions. In the process of curriculum design, such decisions hinge upon the general and specific objectives of basic education set to be transmitted

in schools. In a nutshell, such complexities are housed in curriculum designing, planning, development and evaluation process. For instance, it is possible to associate poor academic performance with curriculum, although that can be attributed to teaching-learning process, which is but a part of the curriculum. Macdonald (2006:4) observed that "...a lot of attention is paid to the outcomes or results of our activities in terms of student's results, less energy is expended in finding out how well we carry them out". Hameyer (2003) observed that the quality of a curriculum can only be as good as the quality of the curriculum development process, depending on the self-renewing capacity of the individual school. All that said, what matters is the quality of the process. Lovat and Smith (2003:74) emphasized that "students achievements can only be enhanced when the nature of the pedagogy required is targeted with precision and implemented with rigor and with assessment for outcomes that is in tune with the entire process". In that regard, it can be argued that pitiable curriculum is the process-centered dilemma.

This means that a lot of curriculum quandaries emanate from the process of planning, development, implementation, and evaluation. There have been hot debates in parliament and public circles about whether Tanzanian has an effective curriculum or not. However, these debates have rarely addressed the process of curriculum development and how it, *ceteris paribus*, affects quality education. It is imperative, therefore, to understand the process of curriculum making in Tanzania. Curriculum development process involves tensions and confrontations. This is naturally due to a diversity of interests among stakeholders. An attempt to address such interests carries with it aspects of politics. It involves deciding what should or should not prevail. Such decision ultimately depends on the power capability of those involved in the process. It is arguably held that the "decision to define some group's knowledge as the most legitimate, as official knowledge, while other groups' knowledge hardly sees the light of day, says something extremely important about who has power in society" (Apple 1993). As such, competing interests make curriculum making a puzzle.

Having said that, it is useful to consider curriculum not as just the document outlining the topics to be covered in classrooms but rather a totality of the education system and how it shapes the behavior of its outputs. Its main objective is to bring about the intended changes as a result of teaching new learning experiences that are important to learners and a society (Tyler 1949). The prerequisite for taping such experiences have been identified. Amdesilasie (1996) proposes thorough examination of the educational level of parent, the culture, and the environment of society. Brunner (1960:12-13) adds knowledge on the type and structure of subjects, their scope and limitations, and their basic ideas or functional principles. Pratt (1980) advocates for learner needs assessment which involves knowledge, ideas, interest, beliefs, attitude, and practice. All such requirements have a place in curriculum development models. Despite the fact that such principles are well studied and known, anecdote evidence suggests that there is little attention paid to such principles in part due to politics of curriculum development process.

Politics - understood as the authoritative allocation of values - characterizes decisions about not only how inputs are aligned to attain educational objectives but also influences the very choice of

those educational objectives. This notion is more and more growing in the literature on politics of education (Hough 1978, Phillips and Hawthorne 1978, Steller 1980, Apple 1993, Marsh and Willis 1995). One key question this paper tries to exhume is how politics of curriculum making affects the quality of education?

To execute this task, the paper is divided into three main parts, namely the conceptual framework, the politics of curriculum development and its implications to quality education, and the final section offers concluding remarks.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Concepts carry different meanings to suit different purposes. It is against this fact that this section provides the conceptual framework to ease our understanding of the concepts employed in this paper. We further borrow some models of curriculum development as presented by Tyler (1949), Taba (1962) and Oliva (1988) to elucidate our discussion.

### **Curriculum**

There have been multiple definitions from various scholars on the term curriculum but to date not a single description has found a universal acceptance. Edward A Krug, in his book, *Administering Curriculum Planning*, summarizes the essence of the curriculum to engross a plan or an area of academic inquiry. Curriculum is “the means employed by the school to provide students with opportunities for desirable learning experiences” (Krug 1956:4 cited in Zais 1976:8). Similarly, Oliva’s (1988) conception, broadly takes curriculum to mean something that reflects: what is taught in schools, a set of subjects, content, a program of studies, a set of materials, a sequence of courses, a set of performance objectives, a course of study, everything that goes on within the school, including extra-class activities, guidance and interpersonal relationships, everything that is planned by school personnel, a series of experiences undergone by learners in a school, and finally, an individual learner’s experiences as a result of schooling. Anchored on the views of a multitude of scholarships, curriculum can generally be taken to mean the totality of all aspects including the learner and teacher, teaching materials and equipment, the teaching and learning activities and techniques, as well as the specified or unspecified outcomes and the manner of ascertaining whether or not those outcomes have been achieved by the teacher and the learner within a given environment.

There are many types of curricula as described by a number of scholars at different epochs such as Tyler (1949), Taba (1962), Wheeler (1967), Tanner & Tanner (1995), Urevbu (1985:3), Zais (1976), and Common Wealth Report of 2000. The *formal curriculum* means what is laid down as the syllabus or that which is to be learnt by students. The official selected body of knowledge which government, through the Ministry of Education or anybody offering education, wants students to learn. The *informal curriculum* is the curriculum in use. It entails that teachers or instructors may not adhere to the presented formal curriculum but can include other aspects of knowledge derived from other sources. The *actual curriculum* entails both written and unwritten

syllabuses from which students encounter learning experiences (Tanner and Tanner 1995). Learning experiences can be taken from other sources rather than the prescribed, official and formal syllabuses. It is the total sum of what students learn and teachers teach from both formal and informal curricula.

The *hidden curriculum* is nonacademic but educationally significant component of schooling. It is also known as *collateral curriculum*. It is not a written or officially recognized, its influence on learning can manifest itself in students' attitudes and behavior, both during and after completing their studies. The hidden or collateral curriculum is often responsible for the values students may exhibit later in life and not the opposite. The *core curriculum* refers to the area of study, courses or subjects that students must understand in order to be recognized as educated in the respective area. It entails the *heart* of experiences every learner has to go through. Therefore, the learner has no option but to study the prescribed course or subjects. *Extra – mural curriculum* refers to those learning activities or experiences students are exposed to by their teachers but which are not stipulated in the formal or official curriculum. Teachers deliberately plan and teach these experiences and sometimes assess their outcomes. Coaching and training in various aspects of school sports are some of the extra-curricular learning experiences available to students. Such numerous types of curriculum offer imperative ingredients, which portray certain behaviors that speak a lot about the quality of education.

### Quality Education

According to UNESCO (2000 cited in Mkonongwa 2012:3), quality education entails “one which enables the learner to acquire knowledge, values, attitudes and skills needed to face challenges of the contemporary (current, modern) society and globalization.” It also covers both qualitative and quantitative aspects. Such aspects include school facilities, teaching environment, characteristics of teaching qualification, pupil achievements, access to reading materials, availability of exercise books, libraries and laboratories, the class size, teacher-student ratio, location/proximity to school, evaluation criteria and effectiveness of school management, school committees and boards (Nyerere 1967, Sanguinety 1983, Ndabi 1985, Chonjo 1994, URT 1995 and Masue 2010).

Mkonongwa (ibid) further posits that “quality education can be attained by considering five perspectives, namely learners, content, teaching-learning process, environments and outcomes.” Other aspects that have a bearing on quality of education include education policies, relevance of curricula, teaching and learning materials, evaluation of learning outcomes, availability of qualified teachers, continuous professional development for teachers, quality of teaching and learning process, mastery of medium of instruction (language), presence of all necessary school infrastructure, and integration of technology in teaching-learning process.”Lack or inadequacy of such aspects presents serious implications on quality education.

Basing on the quantitative dimension of measuring quality education, the present level of shortages in basic facilities and teacher-student ratio arguably suggests that Tanzania's quality of education is skidding downhill. Numerous studies and government reports attest to that effect. Recent statistics of primary education in Tanzania indicate that while the teacher-pupil ratio currently stands at 1:70 the required ratio is 1:45, class room-pupils ratio stands at 1:70 but the required ratio is 1:45, pit latrine-pupils ratio stands at 1:55 and 1:56 for girls and boys but the required ratio is 1:20 and 1:25 for girls and boys respectively, and the book-pupils ratio stands at 1:5 but the required ratio is 1:1, the required pass rate in national examinations for primary education is 70 percent, but learners have been scoring below average at an interval of 50-59 (ESDP 2012:32, UNESCO 2010, Mkumbo 2012, Dachi 2012:36, Tidemand and Msami 2010:26). The persistence of such shortages limits effective implementation of the curriculum and positive learning outcomes. When the curriculum is crippled by insufficient means for its implementation an understanding of politics and the role it plays becomes indispensable.

### Politics

Politics is about the influence different actors exert on the curriculum process (Marsh and Willis 1995: 307-312). These authors assert that "curriculum planning and development is as much a political process as it is a theoretical or practical process." Curriculum process is "an abstraction about the development of educational objectives and the means of achieving them". It is also an interactive, dynamic and complex process that involves multiple actors, often with conflicting interests and varying degrees of formal and informal influences on numerous decisions. A teacher, for instance, may be at the forefront in implementing the curriculum more than influencing education policy, and the director of education on the contrary may be playing more a policy monitoring role (ibid). According to Miller politics refers to the activity by which groups reach binding collective decisions through attempting to reconcile differences among their members (Miller cited in Hague and Harrop 2007). This definition creates no room to differentiate political activities from non-political activities. Elements such as 'conflict,' 'disagreements,' 'influence,' 'building coalition,' 'resistance,' are important and common in people's lives, but less sufficient to define characteristics of politics for they supply insufficient understanding of politics. For example, influence, is just one dimension of power. However, power is taken to mean the ability to induce others to do what they would have not otherwise done in the absence of such influence (Joyce, 2006). Not every act of inducing someone to do something that he/she would not have otherwise done in the absence of such influence is political.

Politics, at the basic level, has to do with the question of power. Although, some political scientists do not buy this conception of politics, but they view the term politics as the struggle for state power (Nnoli 1986). David Easton defines politics as the authoritative allocation of scarce values (Easton 1953). Lasswell (1958) conceives politics as the determination of "who gets what, when, and how." This, then, implies that the struggles for scarce resources are mediated through institutional arrangements embedded in political processes. For the purpose of this

paper the term politics is used along Lasswell's conception to broadly mean who decides what is legitimate knowledge to be taught in society by what means, when and how. This definition incorporates the behaviour of both the state, individuals within a group context, and inter-group relationships, operations of the collective enforcement of decisions and the manner power is exercised in arriving at those decisions.

### **Model of Curriculum Making**

This paper is guided by curriculum development model. The chief proponent of this model is Tyler. The model attempts to provide a general frame in curriculum development and the planning of teaching. It proposes a certain order or sequence of progression in curriculum development. Curriculum development models follow either a deductive or an inductive itinerary. A deductive approach proceeds from the general- examining the needs of society, learner and subject matter to specific-specifying the instructional objectives (Tyler 1949 and Oliva 1988). An inductive approach starts with the development of curriculum materials and then leads to generalizations (Taba 1962).

Inclined to an inductive angle, Taba suggests that curriculum should be designed by teachers rather than handed down by higher authority. Teachers should begin the process by creating specific teaching-learning units for their students in their schools rather than by engaging initially in creating a general curriculum design. However, this is contrary to what is happening in Tanzania. From a deductive point of view, Oliva offers a plan for facilitating the process. The arguments raised are such that programmatic decisions can be enhanced under the following conditions: - schools should focus on curricular components, concentrate on instructional components, develop school-wide interdisciplinary programs and design ways from which curriculum can be carried out.

Tyler (1949: 62) raised four key questions, which he believed if were thoroughly answered, could lead to sound curriculum and plan of instruction. These questions are as follows:

1. *What educational purposes should the school seek to attain? (Objective)*
2. *How can learning experiences be selected which are likely to be useful in attaining these objectives? (Instructional strategies and content/selection of learning experiences)*
3. *How can the learning experiences be organized for effective instruction? (Organization of learning experiences)*
4. *How can effectiveness of learning experiences be evaluated? (Assessment and evaluation)*

The first question intends to uncover the educational purposes the school seeks to attain. In order to answer this question, Tyler recommends that information to guide curriculum development

should be gathered from three sources namely learner, '*pupil or student*', contemporary life outside the school, '*society*', and subject specialists, '*experts or teachers*'. Such sources raise general objectives. The general objectives culminate into instructional objectives after going through philosophical and psychological filters or sieves. The philosophy of education outlines essential values for good life and good society. However, psychology enhances selection of attainable objectives, length of time required to attain them, and efficient efforts to be exerted at a certain age level.

The second question explores the manner learning experiences can be selected with the view of attaining instructional objectives. Learning experiences entails the interaction between the learner and the conditions in the environment to which the child can react. So learning takes place through the active behavior of the child. “.. It is what s/he does that s/he learns not what the teacher does” (Tyler 1949: 63). There is no clear evidence on how this question is taken on board in Tanzania.

The third question intends to unearth the way learning experiences can be organized for effective instruction. It intends to capture changes in human behavior. However, such changes cannot be produced overnight and no single learning experience has a profound influence on a child. Changes develop slowly by the accumulation of educational experiences. Experiences are organized to reinforce each other in order to produce a cumulative effect. Tyler offers three criteria for organizing learning experiences namely continuity, sequencing and integration (ibid). In practice, such principles are not taken on board. For example, subjects for standard one are three namely reading, writing, and arithmetic. However, pupils in schools are exposed to many subjects. As a result, they get confused leading to some completing standard two or seven without knowing how to read, write and do arithmetic.

The fourth question is about the way effectiveness of learning experiences can be evaluated. Evaluation is a process of finding out how far learning experiences are generating desired outcomes. It involves identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the plans. In that regard, it is possible to understand in what respects the curriculum is effective and in what respects it needs improvement. It implies that evaluation must appraise the behavior of students by involving more than a single appraisal at any one time as to see if change has occurred. And not only based on examination as it is always the case in Tanzania.

### **Universal Perspectives on Curriculum**

Curriculum is shaped by numerous aspects such social, political, technical, economic, and environmental. However, the political factor overshadows all other aspects. This point and its effect will be explicated in details later. Social factors influence the selection and interpretation of resources and hiring of personnel. If certain course is deemed to affect religious and cultural values of a given society then it cannot be accepted by the society. However, a course that

intends to cement moral and ethical values such as patriotism, hard work, honest, and the so on is likely to become part of the curriculum.

To attain curriculum goals, content and learning experiences, economic aspects are essential. They influence material production, and standards of academic attainment. Market forces dictate what should be included in the national curriculum. However, this determines the quantity of learners at different levels. For example, the enrolment of students, school supplies such as textbooks, charts, equipment, and chemicals for science experiments have financial implications (Common Wealth 2000, Tanner and Tanner 1995, Urevbu 1985). The government, in that regard, is expected to take a lead role in dispensing necessary resources to facilitate the process of promoting excellent education. This is largely possible when the economy is vibrant.

Technological factors facilitate material production, and standards of academic attainment. For example, the innovation of a computer has pressed higher demands for use in education system and society in particular. With this innovation many schools have introduced computing as one of the subjects to equip the learners with the requisite computer skills and knowledge (ibid). The emergency of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has accelerated learning. Learners through World Wide Web components, internet, mobile phones, TVs, blogs, e-groups, SMS, emails, socializing portals, e-dictionaries, e-encyclopedia, webcasting and audio-video, among others, can access relevant information under the guidance of instructors.

Environmental factors affect the sky, the land and the wetlands. The end result is detrimental to humanity. Industrial wastes if not well managed pollute the world. Environmental pollution has depleted the ozone layer in the atmosphere<sup>1</sup>. As a result infra red radiation hit directly the earth to affect mankind and animals. Due to the need for environmental protection such courses on sustainable environmental management are taught to ensure survival of future generations.

In the context of curriculum development, however, all the above factors are in turn influenced by political factors. The ensuing discussion looks at the interface between politics and curriculum development.

### **Politics of Curriculum and Its Repercussions**

Three decades ago Phillips and Hawthorne strongly articulated the influence of politics and how curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation are as political as theoretical or practical processes. To be sure, they argued: “deciding about who should have access to what knowledge, how that knowledge is to be selected, organized, presented, and evaluated, ... is clearly a process of allocating values in society. It is a political reality that some people have greater power than others in making curriculum decisions” (Phillips and Hawthorne 1978:362).

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<sup>1</sup>Common wealth, 2000. General Education Modules for Upper Primary and Junior Secondary School Teachers of Science, Technology and Mathematics by Distance in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Common wealth of learning



In the same vein, Apple (1993) argued that “curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone’s selection, and some group’s vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the culture, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and disorganize a people. ... The decision to define some group’s knowledge as the most legitimate, as official knowledge, while other groups’ knowledge hardly sees the light of day, says something extremely important about who has power in society.” Consequently, one that has power his/her interests will be addressed and not necessarily be those of a society as proposed by Tyler (1949), Taba (1962) and Oliva (1988).

Likewise, and mindful of the role that politics plays in curriculum development, Hough (1978 in Steller 1980:161) wrote: “There is need... for more people to recognize the significance of the power and the influence of those who are external to the school, and who are able to direct decisions in a way that is supportive and not counterproductive to the teaching-learning process”. This should not, however, be taken to mean that the influence of powerful groups always produces positive outcome to the teaching and learning process. The Tanzanian experience with some of the World Bank sponsored policies of state’s roll back and cost cutting measures in the country’s education system from the mid 1980s is illustrative of how negatively the curriculum can be affected by some powerful actors.

Teachers on the other hand involve themselves in making decisions as they implement curriculum in classroom situations. Likewise principals affect the planned and implemented curricula through their decisions in the respective schools. Despite being in their professional roles these actors’ decisions are also influenced, whether directly or indirectly, by a number of factors including their students, parents, and the general public (Marsh and Willis 1995: 308-09). Citizens’ participation in building community schools in Tanzania, for example, has a bearing on policy decisions undertaken by school teachers, principals and educational officers and/or administrators.

The fact that curriculum development is political in nature, the influence of politics to quality education needs to be unearthed. The following part identifies stakeholders involved in decision-making process, intricacies of the process and their possible effects on quality education. The key facets include access to education, budgetary allocation to education sector, quality of curriculum implementation, curriculum objectives evaluation, curriculum planning and subjects choice, existing ideology shapes the curriculum, curriculum language of instruction, hiring of teachers who implement the curriculum, school inspectorate, learning environment, text book publishers, mass media, employers, and school committees.

*The General public:* The public can influence the curriculum at the operational level. Parents, for example, can refuse or want certain things to be taught to their children. In Tanzania the parents’ refusal of some aspects of sexuality education (Mkumbo and Ingham 2010) or the demand for

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education to be taught to their children is illustrative.

The role of primary school committees, secondary school and college boards in the curriculum process cannot be underestimated. In the public sector, for example, although these school committees and/or boards have limited powers, they are involved in a number of school aspects including monitoring school academic performance, financial and other resources expenditures, planning and disciplinary matters, just to name a few. In the spirit of devolving power from the center (central government) to the periphery (the people) the role of school committees (for primary education) and boards (for secondary education) in managing schools is embedded in the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) and the Secondary Education Development Plan (SEDP) respectively (HakiElimu 2004, Masue 2010).

The decentralization of powers from the center to lower levels is undertaken within the broader context of governance reforms, partly as a response to accountability problems in the delivery of education. In this way, one may argue that some powers for curriculum decision-making have been devolved to grassroots levels in order to facilitate citizens' ownership and accountability. However, even at this level, decisions are politically influenced. Powerful actors in society including politicians, elite groups, have a say in the nomination of school committee and board members. For example, although it is the village general assembly that is legally mandated to nominate members of the school committees, in practice the village chairpersons and other politically powerful actors at that level and above enormously influence the process. In that regard, the concept of general public interest is made to be utopian. Majority of ordinary people have limited or no room in curriculum development. This is contrary to Tyler's ideal conception of society, experts and learners being sources of curriculum development.

*The state dominance:* In many countries the central government's influence seems to pervade virtually all facets and levels of the education system. This is particularly the case when it comes to such areas as planning, funding of the education system, policy and legislative functions, deciding what should be taught in schools, how and by whom, as well as evaluating both students and teachers' performance. According to Phillips and Hawthorne (1978) government's control of curriculum decision-making manifests itself at least in the following four ways:

1. Legislative mandates that define certain areas to be included in the curriculum for specified amount of time
2. Nationwide textbook adoption policies
3. State approval of school registration, college or university charters and inspection rights over the curriculum are cited as powerful control mechanisms
4. State certification of teachers and setting minimum qualifications for college and university teachers

The role that various state agencies play can help us understand the extent to which the government influences and controls curriculum decision-making. Consider, for example, the roles of the Educational Materials Approval Committee (EMAC) and the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. While EMAC, among others, approves textbooks to be used for teaching in schools, TIE is legally charged with the responsibility of designing and developing curricula for pre-primary, primary, secondary and teacher education. In addition, the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) does the evaluation of students' performance at the national level to determine their progression to the next level of the education system. This covers basic education and secondary education levels. Moreover, it must be remembered that the government, whether central or local, employs school teachers, builds schools, purchases teaching materials and equipment through the taxpayer's money in the form of an annual budget. The approval of the annual budget is highly a political activity that involves political bargaining in determining who gets what, when, and how. Some areas will get more of these curriculum inputs, yet others will get less. This bargaining is by nature not as smooth and straightforward process as some may mistakenly think. It is rather characterized by disagreements, conflicts and compromises between and among the different actors whose interests are affected or likely to be affected in the process.

When considering the budget for the education sector, the experience shows that the budgetary allocation in Tanzania has been increasing at least in nominal terms over the years. For example, in 2008/09 the budgetary allocation to the education sector stood at 19.7 per cent of the total government budget. In 2009/10 the budget was 18.3 per cent. Allocations to the education sector are positively approaching the international best practice of allocating 20 per cent of the national budget to education. While the education budget approaches international standards, however, the capitation grant for procuring textbooks, notebooks, pens, and chalks for primary school, among others, has declined from Sh53.5 million in 2007 to Sh45.5 million in 2010. This decline has limited the capacity of schools to access essential facilities such as textbooks, essential chemicals for laboratory experiments and the like.

*Curriculum objectives evaluation:* Evaluation of learning objectives is centralized. While teachers in the respective schools do the teaching the ministry of education does the assessment and announces the results. The manner this is done often involves political manipulation. A vivid example is the recent aborted decision to lower failing grades and the replacement of division zero with division five in national form IV and VI examinations. In early November 2013, the Permanent Secretary (PS) of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) announced that the government had abolished division zero and introduced division five in the national form four examinations. According to the PS, evaluation of examinations would be based on the following grades: A (75-100), B (60-74), C (50-59), D (40-49), E (30-39), S (20-29), F (0-19) (Rai Newspaper, November 5, 2013). A few days later, the ministry's Deputy Minister, when asked in parliament why such decision had been made, issued a statement to the contrary stating that the government had not eliminated division zero in form four examinations.

The deputy minister added that there was no such a thing as division five reiterating that evaluation of student's performance would remain unchanged based on the following grades: A (80-100), B (65-79), C (50-64), D (35-49), below D are (E, S, F) which means zero. All this was happening when form four students had started writing their national examinations.

Another example where curriculum is affected by politics is in the form two screening examinations. This examination was abolished in the early 1990s and was later reinstated. The abolition and reinstatement did not involve consultation of teachers who are experts and implementers of the curriculum in classroom. This means that teachers who are always at the forefront are not given enough room to underscore the reasons for failure or success in the national examinations such as Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) and O-Level Leaving Certificate (OLLC) as politicians take a toll of the debate. Following the abolition of form two national examinations massive failures of students in national form four examinations became inevitable because majority of those who failed would have been screened at form two to allow them an opportunity to be well 'cooked' before they proceed to a higher level.

*Access to education:* The government strategies adopted to achieve the Millennium Development Goals via Tanzania Vision 2025 witnessed the emerging of Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) and Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP) with the purpose of increasing access to education. So far the evaluation reports have shown quantitative achievements, envisaged by increased enrolment of learners but the setback is acute shortage of qualified teachers, teaching and learning materials coupled with poor learning environments. The estimated teacher-student ratio of SEDP by 2009 was 1:30 which has not been achieved. The current ratio on average is above 1:80. However, with the exerted pressure on secondary education, following increased expansion of primary education and increased enrolment rate witnessed tremendous demand for teachers at secondary level. It is imperative to note that the progression to secondary school has missed justification on performance in standard seven examinations. This is because the pass rate of primary school leavers passing standard VII examinations has been unpredictable signifying an overall declining trend. According to MoEVT (2010 in Mkumbo 2012), the pass rate fell from 70.5 percent in 2006 to 49.4 per cent in 2009. In 2010 there was a slight improvement whereas the pass rate scaled up to 53.1 per cent. The irony, however, is that progression to secondary education is not determined by the pass rates but rather availability of places in secondary schools as Mkumbo (2012:16) notes:

*“.....the pass rates at primary school level have been decreasing, the proportion of primary school leavers selected to join secondary school has been increasing progressively. In 2005, for example, 64.4 percent of the primary school leavers were selected to join secondary school compared to 61.7 percent of those who actually passed standard VII examinations. In 2009, 90.4 percent were selected to join secondary schools despite that only about 50 percent of candidates passed the standard VII examinations. It is evident that the rise in number of pupils joining secondary*

*schools is not wholly based on the performance in their standard VII examination, but on the availability of places in these schools...”*

This can be viewed as an attempt to attain a universal secondary education by 2025.

*Curriculum implementation:* The increasing enrolment rates regardless of performance exerted demand for quality teachers. Quality of teachers stand as the greatest factor in the quality of education of our children, but due to skyrocketing enrollment and shortened pre-service training, teachers are having a harder time than ever. To address this, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training introduced the Teacher Development and Management Strategy (TDMS) in 2008 to ensure the adequate recruitment and training of teachers in all levels of education<sup>2</sup>. This has affected much the implementation of curriculum at the classroom level as those shortly trained individuals have no adequate pedagogical skills and knowledge on the foundations of curriculum principles and education psychology of learners. The net result of such politics has been the subsequent failure in national form IV examination results with a special mention of 2010, 2011, 2012 results. Mkumbo (2012) has shown that the pass rate has dropped from 90 percent in 2005 to just about 50 percent in 2010. For the past five years, particularly 2010 and 2011, there has been a steady decline in terms of the performance in form IV national examinations with the majority of students scoring between division IV and zero. For instance, half of the 354,042 students who sat for the 2010 national form four examinations scored division 0 and 136, 633 (38.6%) scored division IV. Only 15, 335(4.3 per cent) scored divisions I and II. What this means is that when those who scored divisions four and zero and combined, they constitute 88.6 per cent (Ibid: 17).

*Curriculum planning and subjects choice:* Politics in curriculum planning is a fact of life. Some groups in the society exercise an enormous influence over curriculum planning. According to Ramsey (1971), these groups despite being unprofessional are involved in provision of resources and hiring teachers and support human resources that are professional. Above all, the merging of some subjects in secondary education that took place in Tanzania in the 2000s is illustrative on the influence of politics in curriculum. Following the directive of the minister of education, subjects such as chemistry and biology, among others, were combined in 2004 to be taught as one subject. Yet other subjects such as commerce and agriculture were abolished on the pretext that these were professional subjects, which would be taught in professional colleges. This decision frustrated implementation of the curriculum at the classroom level because teachers were not only unprepared to implement the curriculum but also not consulted at all before the decision was made. President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania revoked the decision in January 2006 immediately after taking office.

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<sup>2</sup>Source: Public Expenditure Review (PER) 2006/07 to 2010/11.

*Curriculum and the language of Instruction:* The role of language in effecting the curriculum cannot be overemphasized. The climbing of the ladder in the education system largely depends on the language of instruction if effective learning has to take place (Swilla 2009). It is common knowledge that effective thinking and learning can only take place when the learner uses a language he/she is most comfortable with. Kiswahili has been the sole language of instruction of primary education in Tanzania. Hence majority of learners at the primary education level are more comfortable with Kiswahili language. However, when one moves from primary to secondary level, there is an abrupt shift of the medium of instruction from Kiswahili to English. Such a shift creates communication hurdles to the learning process. This is apparently the case because both students and curriculum implementers are not conversant with the English language. Under these circumstances the English language instead of becoming the medium of instruction has become both the medium of discrimination and destruction. This situation denies student's competency to pursue their studies in English.

*The hiring of teachers who implement the curriculum:* Different ministries are involved in the management of teachers. A primary and secondary school teacher is managed by more than one authority, i.e. the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Regional Administration and Local Government. Such kind of political arrangement leads to problems of dual loyalty, increased bureaucracy in attending to teachers' needs, as well as obfuscating accountability.

*School inspectorate activity:* The inspection of schools is a vital means for monitoring the delivery of education in line with the existing curriculum. It also ensures efficiency and quality delivery in education. The efficiency and effective delivery of education under the decentralized and liberalized education system as stipulated in the Education and Training policy document of 1995 requires closer monitoring of schools as well as adequate feed-back mechanisms between school inspectors and education agencies, managers and administrators at zonal, regional and district levels. However, the major setback of this inspectorate function of the curriculum is politicized. While the education Act No. 25 of 1978 as amended in 2002 by CAP 353 emphasizes on inspection of all key education institutions<sup>3</sup> such institutions including inspectorate departments have had little funds set for them<sup>4</sup>. The implication of such underfunding is that some schools go without inspection, which in turn, affects the curriculum implementation at the classroom level, as teachers may not deliver as per set standards given the absence of regular monitoring. Moreover, appointed officers imbued with patronage, would be incompetent to undertake the tasks.

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<sup>3</sup>See Government Education Circular No. 1 of 2013 on Cost Sharing of School Inspection

<sup>4</sup>A Speech by Hon. Dr. Shukuru J. Kawambwa (MP), the Minister for Education and Vocational Training of the United Republic of Tanzania, during the inauguration of the 'Big Results Now' campaign in the education sector that was held on 15th August 2013 at the Mwalimu J.K. Nyerere Conference Center in Dar es Salaam

*Country's ideology:* An ideology, as put by Leichter (1979), is a comprehensive, logically consistent set of ideas that can subsume all conceivable social issues or questions. It is a part of the political culture that entails a set of values, beliefs, expectations and attitudes concerning what the government should do, how it should operate and the proper relationship between citizens and the state. The ideology shapes societal values and by so doing shapes curriculum. For example, in Tanzania during 1960s the curriculum embraced elements of socialism and self-reliance. However, with the marketization the core values have been altered and so has the curriculum. The current curriculum is inclined towards a market model of running society. Despite the fact that Tanzanian constitution of 1977 engrosses socialism ideology, however, such an ideology was buried in 1990s following the heightening of pressure from the western donors to implement neo-liberal policies.

*The mass media, Textbook Publishers and education curriculum:* The mass media at face value may appear completely 'outsiders' in the curriculum process. However, it would be a mistake to underestimate their influence in curriculum decisions. It should be remembered that when the former Minister of Education and Vocational Training in Tanzania, Mr. Joseph Mungai, expunged the vocational subjects from the secondary curriculum in 2004, media reports on the matter created considerable public pressure (Mwananchi 2005). It is imperative to note that such kind of a decision did not take into account the views of all stakeholders. As a result, its implementation did not bear requisite fruits. In response to public criticism, in April 2006, the country's President, Mr. Jakaya Kikwete, revoked the ministry's decision by ordering reinstatement of the subjects into the curriculum (Mwananchi 2006).

*Textbook publishers:* These are also key players who often seek to influence curriculum decisions. At one time there was a heated debate about whether schools in Tanzania should use a single textbook or multi-textbooks for teaching subjects. While some voices (textbook publishers included) preferred the use of multiple textbooks to single textbooks, on the contrary, teachers and students indicated preference for the use of single textbooks (HakiElimu 2011). There are concerns from stakeholders regarding the current government policy of multiple textbooks. Central to these concerns is the lack of harmonization in the use of textbooks despite a centralized national examination system that evaluates students' performance based on the same syllabi across the country (Ibid: 16). Since publisher's survival to a certain extent depends on high returns from the sale of textbooks in schools, the continued use of multiple textbooks implicitly suggests the ability of textbook publishers in influencing government policy on textbooks in schools. However, numerous stakeholders have indicated that such textbooks have missed the aspect of quality. Some textbooks are accused of containing errors that in many respects not only cast doubts to state of their quality but also have implications for the performance of learners.

Some unscrupulous Textbook publishers driven by profit motives exert pressure (lobbying) for inclusion of specific topics in a curriculum chosen by a school or district to capture interest of decision makers of a given school. To accomplish that they may produce free sample copies of

textbooks to influence teachers purchasing decisions. Another group of stakeholders that may influence curriculum decisions is of employers. Marsh (1995:315) holds that “many employers are motivated by business interests.” In that regard, such interests fit well with school curriculum that focuses on training students for employment occupations that are prevalent in the society.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The paper has shown the extent to which curriculum is influenced by political decisions. We have further shown how such decisions to a great extent tend to distort quality education. The paper has indicated that curriculum in Tanzania is often influenced by political interests from the process of planning, designing, implementing, reviewing and evaluation. Such influence has more often than not generated negative outcomes. The implication is that when politics inevitably influences the goals, content, materials and their interpretation, educational funds, learning experiences, educational evaluation strategies, entry into educational institutions and examination systems. However, when unwisely employed, politics may have detrimental effects on the nation’s curriculum and educational system generally.

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