

Teacher Professional Development in Tanzania: Perceptions and Practices

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Abstract

This study focused on and critically analyses perceptions and practice of Teacher Professional Development by head teachers, primary school teachers, ward education coordinators, district education officers, school inspectors, and members of the school committee in six school districts. A total of 186 respondents were purposively sampled and reached. Data on the nature, importance, organization, motivation, adequacy of and support for Teacher Professional Development, were gathered using questionnaires, interviews and observation checklist. Qualitative responses were coded, categorized and analyzed into themes. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Majority respondents perceived Teacher Professional Development as being important because it improves the teacher professionally, academically and technically. However, most respondents thought it was inadequately supported and motivated. At all levels (national, district, ward and school levels), Teacher Professional Development was poorly coordinated and rarely budgeted for. The findings indicate a conception and practice of Teacher Professional Development which combines both the raising of teacher academic qualifications and professional growth. This study is a significant contribution to the understanding of Teacher Professional Development in developing countries contexts where general pedagogical knowledge takes precedence over the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter.

Introduction

Tanzania has been implementing the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP 2001-2006) that aimed at the universalization of primary education. Major achievements have been recorded in enrolment expansion, teacher recruitment and deployment, construction of classrooms and sanitary facilities, provision of teaching and learning materials, as well as provision of pre-service and in-service teacher education. However, not much attention has been paid to Teacher Professional Development. The pressure for expansion requires a re-examination of the mechanisms for the preparation and development of teachers and managers of Tanzania's education system so that quality of education is not affected negatively.

This is so because in Tanzania, as in most other developing countries, education means teachers. Due to lack of teacher's guides and essential texts, invariably, teachers are the key source of knowledge, skills, wisdom, appropriate orientations, inspiration and models for the students. As a consequence, the teacher is central in facilitating the processes that lead to meaningful education and pupils' learning outcomes are affected by teacher quality.

The teaching workforce in Tanzanian primary schools is made up of five categories: Grade IIIC, IIIB, IIIA, Diploma and Degree holders. Grade IIIC are a category of teachers who completed seven years of primary education and are employed as teachers after undergoing a non-residential short course. This arrangement began with the adoption of Universal Primary Education programme in the late 1970's and was designed to produce as many teachers in the shortest time possible so as to cater for the demands of the programme. Grade IIIB are a category of teachers who completed seven years of primary education and employed as teachers after undergoing 3-4 years in a teacher education college. However, with the adoption of the Education and Training Policy in 1995, grade IIIA became the minimum qualification for primary school teachers. This is a category of teachers who have attained an Ordinary level certificate of secondary education and have undergone training for one or two years in a teacher education college. The minimum pass level for admission to Teacher Education College is division III in the Form IV examination. By 2006 there were 151,882 teachers in 14,700 schools at the ratio of 1: 52 (URT 2006, p.171). There were 47,536 grade IIIB/C teachers (31.3%), 100,177 grade IIIA teachers (66%), 3,754 Diploma holders (2.5%), and 415 degree holders (0.3%) (URT 2006, p.35). This means that there are about 47,536 teachers to be developed through upgrading. The upgrading of grade IIIB/C teachers involves successful completion of the Ordinary Level Certificate of Secondary education course offered through distance education or attendance of evening classes offered by the Institute of Adult Education.

Tanzania has, ever since gaining independence in 1961, been committed to the Universal Primary Education. However, by the late 1990s, it failed to achieve quality education due to lack of essential inputs largely because of unqualified and un-development teaching work force (Mosha 1995; Omari 1995). In addressing the shortage of teachers in primary schools, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) revised the two year Grade IIIA teacher education program into a one-year program followed by one-year school based training. A similar crash program was designed to train paraprofessional teachers for the Complementary Basic Education program (COBET) to cater for primary education needs of the out of school children. Also, in the name of Teacher Professional Development, the Ministry has encouraged and supported massive upgrading of grade IIIC/B teachers. The concern about these crash programs and the upgrading activities revolves around appropriateness of perception and practices of Teacher Professional Development.

Objectives of the Study

In line with the identified knowledge gap about perception and practices of Teacher Professional Development, the study aimed to achieve the following four major objectives:

- i. To review the concept of Teacher Professional Development;
- ii. To investigate factors influencing Teacher Professional Development;
- iii. To identify practices that promote Teacher Professional Development;
- iv. To examine support mechanisms for Teacher Professional Development in selected primary schools.

Conceptual Framework

This section presents some views on Teacher Professional Development with regard to its nature, importance, and factors influencing its practice.

Meaning of teacher professional development

Definitions about Teacher Professional Development differ according to educational traditions and contexts. In education systems where teacher education programs are well established, Teacher Professional Development is described as a process embracing all activities that enhance professional career growth (Rogan & Grayson 2004; Teclé 2006) or as formal and informal experiences throughout the teacher's career (Hargreaves & Fullan 1992; Arends et al. 1998). The design of professional development program is represented in the Rogan & Grayson shown in Table 1. The model assumes that the teacher is sufficiently knowledgeable about the subject matter and has successfully completed a minimum of secondary education or bachelor's degree.

Table 1. Levels of Professional Development Programmes

Level	Design of Professional development
1	Information on policy and expected changes are presented to school based personnel. Typical mode is short, one-shot workshop.
2	Examples of 'new' practices as suggested by the policies are presented to school-based personnel, who are given an opportunity to engage in these practices in a simulated situation. Typical mode is a series of short workshops lasting for one year.
3	Professional development is designed by school-based personnel depending on which new practices they wish to implement, and implemented using both inside and outside support. Typical mode consists of both external and school based INSET for two to three years.
4	Communities of practice take full responsibility for their own continued professional growth, and for school governance and curriculum implementation, calling on outside support as appropriate. Typical mode consists of ongoing school-based and directed professional INSET.

Source: Rogan & Grayson (2003)

In other less advantaged contexts, Teacher Professional Development is defined as a process of improving both the teacher's academic standing as well as –acquisition of greater competence and efficiency in discharging her/his professional obligations in and outside the classroom. This view seems to fit the Tanzanian context. In both the advantaged and less advantaged systems it includes the processes, organizational mechanisms and practices that are aimed at providing support to the teacher for the improvement and smooth discharge of her/his duties. Organizational mechanisms are the mechanisms for monitoring continuous development of the teacher. These may take the form of planned and scheduled short term training programs and seminars aimed at meeting various professional needs of the teaching force.

Practices, on the other hand, include the formal mentoring programs developed in situ e.g. advice that the teacher gets from the head teacher, or ward education officer. Other forms of practice are the meetings held at school level and at cluster level with the purpose of reviewing and reflecting on practice on a regular basis. Establishment and effective utilization of Teachers Resource Centers is an important element in the professional development of teachers. This fact is supported by scholars such as Kruse and Luis (1997) as well as Quinn and Restine (1996) who argue for an interactive, on-the-job coaching and mentoring approach to Teacher Professional Development because it is cost-effective. Training can be organized in small school clusters and qualified senior teachers or university lecturers are invited to these clusters to serve as trainers and mentors. Such formal arrangements for professional development are supported by informal practices like team teaching and the sharing of experiences and educational resources among teachers, which greatly contributes to self improvement. This approach has the advantage of stimulating healthy debates about various reform measures and innovations and encouraging collaboration, peer coaching, inquiry, collegial study groups, reflective discussion and action (Pounder 1999).

Importance of teacher professional development

There is agreement among scholars about the importance of the teacher and her/his competence in the teaching-learning process. The teacher is the heart of classroom instruction (Hawes 1979; Galabawa 2001; URT 2007). The effectiveness of the teacher depends on her competence (academically and pedagogically) and efficiency, (ability, work load, and commitment), teaching and learning resources and methods; support from education managers and supervisors (Rogan 2004; Van den Akker & Thijs 2002; Mosha 2004). Teacher Professional Development provides opportunities for teachers to explore new roles, develop new instructional techniques, refine their practice and broaden themselves both as educators and as individuals.

Factors influencing teacher professional development

Villegas-Reimers (2003) identifies conceptual, contextual and methodological factors that contribute to a successful professional development program. Conceptual factors relate

to how change, teaching, and teacher development are perceived, while contextual factors refer to the role of the school leadership, organizational culture, external agencies and the extent to which site-based initiatives are supported. Methodological factors relate to processes or procedures that have been designed to support Teacher Professional Development. It would seem that from the perspective of an interactive system model, Teacher Professional Development is a function of the interaction between and among five key players or stakeholders. These are the ministry responsible for teacher education, universities, schools, the community and the teachers themselves.

In the context of Tanzania the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training is responsible for providing policy and financial support for Teacher Professional Development. Universities and Teacher Education colleges are responsible for providing training, conducting policy oriented research and providing relevant literature and materials to support teachers in schools. School management on its part is supposed to provide support to the teacher on a daily basis through advice, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning activities. The community through the school committee is responsible for supporting the teacher's professional development by providing the necessary resources in the budget. The teacher is responsible for being proactive in seeking for opportunities for his or her own professional development.

Teacher's motivation is the most important of all factors. A teacher's intrinsic drive towards self improvement cannot be matched with any amount of pressure from the educational managers. For real Teacher Professional Development, the teacher herself/himself has to perceive it positively. The teacher has to see and accept the need to grow professionally. A teacher who perceives professional development positively is eager to attain new knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions. Within such dispositions there is pride, self – esteem, team spirit, commitment, drive, adventure, creativity, and vision. All these attributes have to be owned by the teacher (Mosha 2006). Teacher's perception depends on self-evaluation, the influence and support of school leadership, and school culture.

Support of the school management is crucial for promoting teacher development and high quality education. If school managers are empowered they will be able to play their social and technical roles more efficiently (Blasé & Blasé 1999; Mosha 2006). School management capacity is the ability of the leadership to perform its duties including supporting Teacher Professional Development at the school. This ability depends on the way it has been empowered by education administrators and supervisors; human and physical resources available; managerial knowledge, skills of the Head Teacher and the school culture.

The school head is the key player or backbone of a school and the main executive of School Management. The overall effectiveness of the school is directly influenced by the Head Teacher. Her/his roles include to facilitate, broker, provide resources, encourage, command, question, coach, and cheerleading (Dillon-Peterson 1986). She/he is like the spring to the watch and an engine to the ship. She/he is the heart of school and School Management. The Head Teacher should be well knowledgeable and skilled on management issues. She has to attend various seminars, workshops, meetings, and courses on management and

administration. Rowland and Adams (1999) suggest that the Head Teacher should be committed to develop teachers and therefore be able to design professional development activities. She/he has to be a model. Her/his work of teaching must be exemplary and has to make sure that she/he inspects teachers in order to know their teaching abilities and provide clinical supervision.

Education managers are very important in capacitating the school management. They have to interpret and monitor the implementation of educational policies at their levels of administration (URT 1995). They have to plan and develop teachers and to guide, direct, and advice the School Management on Teacher Professional Development. Planning has to be based on teachers' needs, examination evaluations, inspectorate and monitoring reports. The teacher cannot teach productively, even if she/he is well qualified and developed, in the absence or inadequacy of Teaching and Learning facilities. There should be adequate classrooms equipped with facilities like furniture, books and visual aids. These help the teacher to perform her/he duties competently. Many schools in Tanzania lack sufficient books, furniture and teaching aids. Many classes are overcrowded. For the teacher to realize the best of her/his potential there should be enough teaching and learning materials and facilities at her/his disposal. Participatory methods cannot be implemented neither can discipline be sustained easily without the help of teaching and learning resources.

A School Management with motivating culture encourages teachers to engage in professional development programs at the school or elsewhere. A motivated teacher learns from others and is more likely to attend various professional development activities. Motivation can be intrinsic or extrinsic which drives the teacher towards self improvement. Collegiality within the school is part of the school culture. If teachers cooperate, there is room for them to learn from each other (Galabawa & Agu 2001, p.6). The role of School Management is to encourage this culture to prevail in the school and between the schools. This is one of the indicators of the presence of a responsible School Management in the school. Planning, that is, the setting of goals and objectives with activities to be done at the specified time, is one of the main roles of the School Management. To involve all teachers in the school during the planning processes should be part of the school culture. Effective participation leads to a feeling of ownership and easy implementation (Galabawa 2001). Meaningful improvement in the education system requires pressure from below, support from above, and continuous negotiations among those at different levels of the system. The professional development issue, therefore, should be regularly discussed by teachers because they know what they need most. Administrators and supervisors should be guiding, supporting, monitoring the implementation, and evaluating the work done. Effective communication among the key players is very crucial (Campy 2000).

Methodology

The study on perception and practices of Teacher Professional Development targeted head teachers, primary school teachers, ward education coordinators, district education

officers, school inspectors, and members of the school committee in six districts, namely Bagamoyo, Masasi, Korogwe, Hanang, Iramba and Songea. The six school districts were chosen because they contained head teachers who had undergone management training at the Agency for the Development of Education Management. Some background in education management training was considered important for the head teacher's disposition towards Teacher Professional Development.

Table 2. Study Sample

Type	Targeted	Reached	Analyzed
District Councils	6	4	4
Ward Education Coordinators	12	12	12
Head teachers	12	12	12
Teacher Resource Center coordinators	6	6	6
School Committee Chairpersons	12	12	12
District School Inspectors	6	6	6
District Education Officers	6	4	4
District Academic Officers	6	6	6
Teachers	120	74	74
TOTAL	186	136	136

The total sample consisted of 186 respondents who were purposively selected (See Table 2). Data on perceptions about the nature, importance, organization, motivation, adequacy of and support for Teacher Professional Development were gathered using questionnaires, interviews and observation checklist. A questionnaire was administered to teachers while some of them were interviewed. The purpose of the questionnaire and the interviews was to understand the teachers' own perception of professional development and attitude towards self-improvement. Some of the questions for which answers were sought from different respondents included:

What challenges do you face while teaching your subject?

Why do you think professional development is important for teachers?

Who initiates the programs for Teacher Professional Development?

How adequate are human resources for supporting Teacher Professional Development in your school?

Do you think school management is able to support Teacher Professional Development at the school level?

What is the focus of Teacher Professional Development activities at school/district level?

To what extent are school inspectors helping you to develop your profession?

How are teachers involved in planning for professional development activities?

How are teachers being motivated to participate in professional development programs?

How would you describe the status of Professional Development activities before and after the launching of the Primary Education Development Program?

The study examined the prevalence of teacher-initiated practices such as team teaching and the sharing of experiences and educational resources among themselves. Educational managers such as head teachers, ward education coordinators, district school inspectors, district academic officers, and district education officers were interviewed in order to gauge the perception of Teacher Professional Development as well as the kind of support they provide to teachers at school level.

The observation checklist gathered district level data on the number of teachers who had the opportunity to participate in professional development activities in the form of long or short courses and seminars/workshops between 2002 and 2006. Qualitative responses from the questionnaire were coded, categorized and analyzed into themes. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

Findings

Challenges faced by teachers while teaching in the classroom

In response to the question 'What challenges do you face while teaching your subject?' two outstanding challenges were cited by most respondents: overcrowded classrooms and lack of relevant textbooks. Other challenges were lack of skills to handle certain topics in the revised primary school curricula, handling of pupils with special needs and shortage of desks. Figure 2 provides more information on those challenges.

Importance of teacher professional development

The majority of teachers who responded to the questionnaire (N= 48/74 = 67.6%) perceived Teacher Professional Development as either advancement of teachers in the field of teaching or as improving teachers professionally, academically and technically. Others defined it as a process of enabling teachers to move with changes in science and technology, and as a new way of acquiring new methods of teaching. A similar picture is obtained from the analysis of interview responses from the educational managers (which includes head teachers, ward education coordinators, district education officers and district school inspectors) where about 81% of the respondents perceived Teacher Professional Development as academic advancement as well as development in the profession. In their opinion, Teacher Professional Development enables teachers to become professionals, to realize their potential as teachers, to move with changes in science and technology, and enables them to serve pupils better by improving the standard of teaching. In the process of improving themselves they also gain confidence and self esteem. These perceptions lean towards a much broader conception which combines academic advancement and professional development.

The teachers and educational managers describe the importance of Teacher Professional Development in more or less similar manner. Several advantages are mentioned for engaging in Teacher Professional Development. Ranked according to frequency of responses the advantages include:

- Getting more skills, gaining confidence and competence
- Enabling teachers to move with changes in science and technology
- Improving the teacher professionally, academically and technically
- Updating teachers in line with changes in the curriculum and
- Enabling teachers to serve pupils better and improving the standard of performance

In other words, teachers think that Professional Development will help them achieve high standards of teaching and keep them updated in teaching; it increases their self-worth, enables them to move with time, and it allows them to react appropriately to the challenges brought about by advancements in science and technology, and also to get promoted to higher ranks in the career.

Support for teacher professional development

The educational managers at district, ward and school level support Teacher Professional Development by facilitating seminars and workshops, preparing handouts, establishing links with colleges, teaching and finding experts from outside the district ward or school. Information obtained from the respondents indicate that the District Education Officer, inspectors, Ward Education Coordinators and head teachers are supporting Teacher Professional Development by allowing teachers to participate, giving allowances where necessary, conducting seminars, and sensitizing teachers to take the initiative of upgrading themselves. Examples of Teacher Professional Development programs in which the council/ward/school have supported both financially and technically include seminars to review shortcomings in Mock examinations both conducted at district and at regional levels as well as private candidate examinations. Frequency of Teacher Professional Development varies depending on the nature of the program. Teachers who wish to upgrade from IIIB/C to IIIA –are granted a leave of 21 days twice a year. Professional development programs that are initiated at ward/school level take place once per month. Long sessions are usually held during the holidays to avoid disruption of classes.

Responses from educational managers and teachers themselves indicate that teachers are involved in planning and implementing Teacher Professional Development. They identify the topics and issues to be discussed. Some of them are engaged as experts and facilitators in the workshops supported by education officers and school inspectors. Planning for Teacher Professional Development is largely influenced by availability of finance, academic requirements and perceived deficit in some skills. The data show that teachers' attitude towards Professional Development is positive, but they are constrained by financial resources.

Teachers -receive academic and professional assistance from colleagues and through

that some have increased their content knowledge in specific areas through informal networks at personal/individual level. The following statements testify this:

Through mock examinations when marking or invigilating we discuss how to correct mistakes from the learners

I have learned many strategies of teaching better; problem solving methods according to the local environment; participatory methods of teaching.

*We share ideas in all difficult topics by meeting together and exposing the issues
We meet in the staff room, the one who is responsible stands in front of us and guides the discussion on the specific topic.*

We normally conduct it in the normal pupils classes, that is when doing correction of either a test or any exercise given.

For the complicated sections during the teaching activity we go in class and practice the portion together e.g. as two teachers, where I fail my fellow gives me a help and vice versa, but no [not?] many times.

Thus, teachers get assistance on Professional Development from colleagues at the cluster center, at the library and from fellow teachers in the school, and neighboring school or college.

Extent of Support for Teacher Professional Development

Although each year the district councils conduct seminars (professional and academic) for some teachers in the district, about 56% of the educational managers including the officials at district, ward, and school levels admitted that Teacher Professional Development was not a priority in the strategic plan and there was no special budget for it. Furthermore, although the Ward Education Coordinators recognized the importance of seminars in enabling teachers to widen up their knowledge and improve teaching skills, seminars are rarely conducted at cluster level. There was no schedule for courses, workshops and seminars to teachers at ward level. Teachers complained that there was very little support for Professional Development at school level. However, data obtained from the six districts show an increase in the number of teachers who have had the opportunity to upgrade themselves from grade IIIC/B to grade IIIA, from grade IIIA to Diploma, and from Diploma to Degree. Table 3 presents data obtained at district education offices in Hanang, Iramba, Masasi, Songea and Bagamoyo. One can surmise that the thrust of Teacher Professional Development programs centres on the upgrading of teachers from grade IIIC/B to Grade IIIA. As explained earlier, upgrading involves successful completion of the Ordinary level Certificate of Secondary Education course offered through distance education or attendance of evening classes offered by the Institute of Adult Education. Participation in short courses and seminars has increased from 133 teachers in 2002, to 492 in 2004 and 653 in 2006. These data confirm the perception of teachers on the status of Teacher Professional Development before and after the Primary

Table 3. Number of Teachers Who Attended Courses, Workshops and Seminars at District Level, 2002-2006

District	2002			2003			2004			2005			2006					
	C/B-A	A-Dip.	S/ Course	C/B-A	A-Dip.	S/ Course	C/B-A	A-Dip.	S/ Course	C/B-A	A-Dip.	S/ Course	C/B-A	A-Dip.	S/ Course			
Hanang	DNA	14	8	DNA	6	7	DNA	6	DNA	421	DNA	5	2	DNA	5	DNA	150	
Iramba	25	4	DNA	80	7	1	35	4	1	35	85	6	2	70	6	DNA	400	
Songea	DNA	DNA	DNA	63	DNA	DNA	149	36	2	DNA	113	11	1	67	3	DNA	103	
Bagamoyo	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	651	12	20	DNA	327	15	DNA	DNA
Masasi	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	DNA	750	DNA	DNA	DNA
TOTAL	25	18	8	133	80	13	184	171	1	492	849	34	25	140	1187	29	-	653

Education Development Program presented in Fig. 1. About 43% of the respondents said the situation has improved.

No or scanty information was available in some district education offices about short courses and Teacher Professional Development programs initiated at ward/school levels. This situation can be attributed to lack of proper keeping of school records and educational statistics. There is a need to strengthen the education management information system (EMIS) at district level for improving education policy decisions.

Support from the Tanzania Institute of Education

A documentary review and interview with officials from the Tanzania Institute of Education show that the Institute has incorporated Teacher Professional Development in its Corporate Strategic Plan and annual work plans. For example, among the 21 activities that were planned to be implemented between July 2005 and June 2006, three of the activities directly focused on Teacher Professional Development. The activities were: first, conducting training for Complementary Basic Education facilitators in five districts (Songea rural, Musoma rural, Masasi and Kisarawe) on how to use books for grade III. The aim was to have competent Complementary

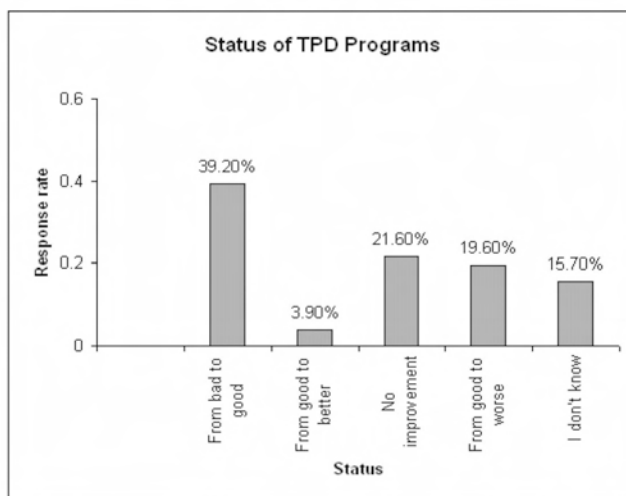


Figure 1. Status of Teacher Professional Development before and after PEDP

Basic Education facilitators. The second activity was conducting training for facilitators in Kisarawe, Masasi, Songea rural, Musoma rural, Ngara and Makete on control of HIV/AIDS. The third was training of Heads of Secondary Schools on the teaching related to the revised curriculum. In the 2006/2007 Plan the Institute aimed at training 1900 facilitators for the revised primary education and pre-school curricula in all the zones at the cost of Tshs. 1.1 billion, and to train Complementary Basic Education facilitators for Makete district. The training on pre-school curricula was funded by UNICEF (Tshs. 49.7million).

As can be observed from the above description, the extent of support provided by Tanzania Institute of Education is largely limited to training of facilitators at zonal level on a limited range of expertise, i.e., Complementary Basic Education, HIV/AIDS, and new syllabuses. This approach leaves the target groups, namely classroom teachers, un-reached by the curriculum changes. There is no efficient mechanism of ensuring that all teachers are prepared to handle the revised curricula or the new subjects that may have been decided by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

Support from the Agency for the Development of Education Management

Information gathered from the Agency for the Development of Education Management, which is a semi-autonomous institution mandated to train education managers for the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, showed that the training course for Head teachers (written in Kiswahili) is organized around eight modules, one of which focuses on implementation and supervision of the curriculum. The Agency organizes short and long courses lasting from one or two weeks to two years leading to certificate or Diploma in Education Management.

Community support

The issue about school management capacity, particularly the functioning of school committees, has been recognized by education stakeholders in Tanzania as a crucial element in promoting good quality education. In fact, it is a fundamental component of the Primary Education Development Program (TEN/MET 2004). Non Governmental Organizations working in Tanzania have identified twelve aspects as being critical to school committee capacity development, calling for support. The key aspects are: information and communication, ownership or accountability, community mobilization and facilitation, motivation, collaboration, gender mainstreaming, resource mobilization, HIV/AIDS, Children's Participation, School e.g. awareness of HIV/AIDS)

A report by one of the Non Governmental Organizations operating in Mtwara Region, Save the Children, shows the activities undertaken by the NGO to support capacity development of school committees in the region. The training focuses on general roles and responsibilities, planning, budgeting and development skills, mobilization (including fund raising) and management of local resources for educational development, general management skills, financial and resource accounting (including need for audit of school funds), networking (with other education actors, District Council) and relationship building (to improve school-

community relations). While the efforts towards school committee capacity development are appreciated, it should be noted that there is no documentation about the development of capacity for Teacher Professional Development.

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

In this study an attempt was made to document what the respondents perceived as programs aimed at Teacher Professional Development. Majority respondents perceived Teacher Professional Development as being important because it improves the teacher professionally, academically and technically. However, most respondents think it is inadequately supported and motivated. At all levels (national, district, ward and school levels), Teacher Professional Development is poorly coordinated and rarely budgeted for. The findings on practices indicate a conception of Teacher Professional Development which combines both the raising of teacher academic qualifications and professional growth. There are also informal practices initiated by teachers and their head teachers at school/ward level. These need to be nurtured and supported by all education stakeholders. The civil society organizations have not done much in this regard. The need for such support is suggested by the number of challenges that teachers face while teaching in the classroom. The two outstanding challenges often cited by teachers are overcrowded classrooms and lack of relevant textbooks. Other challenges are lack of skills to handle certain topics in the revised primary school curricula, handling of pupils with special needs and shortage of desks. (See Figure 2).

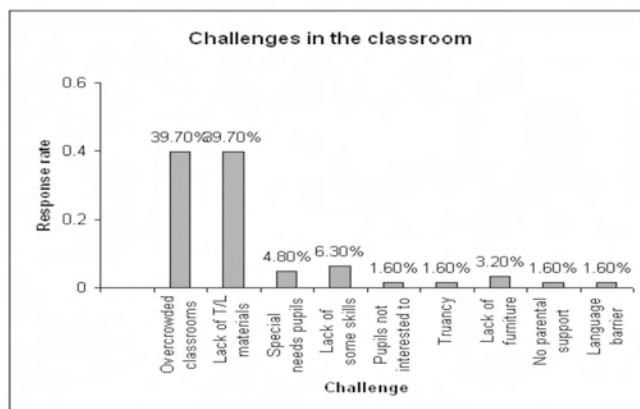


Figure 2. Challenges Encountered by Teachers in the Classroom

Implications of the research findings and recommendations

These research findings have implications for theory, policy, and further research. As far as theory is concerned, this study is a significant contribution to the understanding of Teacher Professional Development in developing countries contexts where general pedagogical knowledge takes precedence over the teacher's knowledge of the subject matter. The Tanzania model for Teacher Professional Development differs from the model proposed by Rogan and Greyson in that it requires acquisition of the basic academic qualification as a crucial component of Teacher Professional Development programs. This is particularly so because about 31.3 per cent of the teachers in primary schools have not yet attained the required qualifications and have to upgrade themselves from grade IIIC/IIIB to grade IIIA. Findings of this research suggest the need to develop a Teacher Professional Development model that is more comprehensive and encompassing, and which combines academic advancement in the content areas as well as improvement in pedagogy and ethics of the teaching profession.

As for policy, these research findings tend to suggest that continuous and sustained programs for teacher development largely depend on support that the teacher receives at school level. Therefore, while it is recognized that Teacher Professional Development requires support of many stakeholders at various levels, there is need for the ministry for education and vocational training to provide requisite resources both human and financial at the school and cluster level. This can be done more efficiently through reviving the support to and use of Teachers Resource Centers that have been established throughout the country. In the current set up, universities have featured very peripherally in providing support to teachers in primary schools. This is partly because of lack of programs mounted specifically to improve teaching at primary education level. This research indicates the need for evolving such programs.

Teachers in primary schools face a number of challenges while teaching. Overcrowded classrooms, lack of relevant textbooks, lack of skills to handle certain topics in the revised curricula and inability to handle pupils with special needs stand out as the biggest challenges. Teacher Professional Development support must target these areas while the central and local governments address the infrastructural and logistical support.

At the moment, opportunities for professional development are ad hoc, irregular, unfairly distributed, unplanned and uncoordinated. Teacher Professional Development should be incorporated in the strategic plan at all levels and should be budgeted for. The Tanzania Institute of Education should be empowered financially to plan for wider and more encompassing programs including such emerging skills as the use of ICT in education.

Faculties of Education at the main campus of the University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam and Mkwawa University Colleges of Education, as well as similar Faculties in the newly established public and private universities, should provide professional back up to Teacher Professional Development at all levels. The linkage which currently exists with the Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education (CICE) should be strengthened so as to benefit from the Lesson Study experience in Teacher Professional Development.

Finally, and in relation to further research, studies similar to the present study need to be carried out in more districts and schools and in higher learning institutions. This will serve to improve the validity and reliability of the above conclusions and recommendations.

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