

Teachers' Professional Development in Tanzania: Policy and Practice Interplays

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Abstract

This paper challenges the policy and practice in Tanzania to embrace the expanded view of teachers' professional development. It takes stock of the trajectory of teachers' professional development with focus on policy and practice in Tanzania. Through this lens, the paper unveils that government policies and practices do not support institutionalisation and sustenance of teachers' professional development. Existing professional development in Tanzania is mostly characterised with traditional professional activities such as attending one- shot workshops, conference and seminars, which fall short in helping teachers acquire new skills because teachers themselves were treated as passive learners. This paper offers suggestions for reform in teacher education institutions, policy and practice including the manner to improve teachers' professional development that meets the demand for 21st century. The most significant of these suggestions is to have professional learning that could produce teachers with potential ability to meet the growing demands for the work of teaching in a post-modern era.

Keywords: Teachers' professional development, teachers' professionalism, policy, practice,

1.0 Introduction

A considerable body of knowledge shows that teacher professional development can enhance the quality of the teacher's classroom practices and subsequently, improve students' learning achievements and outcomes (Bolam, 2007). Today, knowledge may not be entirely useful tomorrow such it the reason why ongoing professional development has generally been recognized as having an important role in ensuring that teachers are part of a skilled and up-to-date profession. For most in-service teachers, professional learning is the most accessible means that they have to develop new

knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to meet students' learning needs better (Mhando, 2009). Worthwhile, arguably, teachers need to practice and use new methodology and approaches of teaching in consonance with the ever-changing contexts (Mhando, 2012).

Writing on the importance of continuous professional, Arthur, Davison and Lewis (2005) and Day (2002) assert that the ability of any teacher to do well in teaching depends not only on pre-service training, but also on availability of extensive and effective professional support, such as in-service training and on-going professional learning in the school settings. Such professional development opportunities are considered to be the best ways to improve teachers' effectiveness in the classroom. Expounded it further, Fullan (2001) remarks that quality improvement initiatives and curriculum reforms require that teachers should continuously learn new techniques of imparting cognitive and non-cognitive skills so that teachers can to translate themselves and change their own classrooms as well as out of classroom practices. In supporting this claim, OECD (2011) in its review of teacher education covering more than 50 countries, found that high performing education systems in provision of quality education such as Finland, South Korea and Canada have placed a high premium not only to in-service teacher education but also to systematic school-based professional learning programmes.

In Tanzania, like its East African counterparts, professional development programs for enhancing teachers' skills and knowledge are inadequate and once posted in schools, teachers rarely go back to formal learning or access in-service professional development opportunities (Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). Exemplifying it further, Ishumi (2013) found complete absence of the idea of professional development in as many as 52 percent of the schools in the public sector and 58 percent of the schools in the non-government sector. Overall, only 6.4 percent of the total teaching force in the public sector had an in-service professional development in the last five years (*ibid.*). It is plausible to link such phenomenon and millions of children who are attending schools but the level, quality and rate of learning in basic skills of literacy and numeracy are low (Mkumbo *et al.*, 2016). The growing number of primary school pupils with low basic skills of literacy and numeracy is a clear indicator of challenges ahead of Tanzania as a nation trying to achieve Development Vision 2025, which envisages that by 2025 Tanzania:

“... will be a nation with a high quality of education at all levels; a nation which produces the quantity and quality of educated people sufficiently equipped with the requisite knowledge to solve society’s problems, meet the challenges of development and attain competitiveness at regional and global levels” (United Republic of Tanzania, 1999: 5).

The Tanzanian Development Vision 2025 suggests that education will be a strategic agent for achieving its vision by positing that, “education should be treated as a strategic agent for mind-set transformation and for the creation of a well-educated nation” (United Republic of Tanzania, 1999: 19). In addition, the recently revised Tanzania Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) sees education as conduit for achieving the vision 2025 of well-educated citizens and the tool for ousting abject poverty in Tanzania by 2025. The ESDP:

“...envisages the creation of a well-educated nation with a high quality of life for all...total transformation of the education sector into an efficient ...outcome/output-based system...for achieving the educational goals expressed in Tanzania’s Development Vision 2025 ... within the overall aim of poverty reduction through educational provision improvement” (Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2008b: vii).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Professional Development

There are many terms that are used interchangeably to mean teachers’ professional development, which include ‘staff development,’ ‘in-service education,’ ‘staff training, and ‘professional learning’ (Ferrier-Kerr, Keown, & Hume, 2008; Loucks-Horsley *et al.*, 2010). While there are also various definitions of teachers’ professional development, Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1996: 203) literally conceived it as, “deepening teachers’ understanding about the teaching/learning process and the students they teach,” which they argue “must begin with pre-service education and continue throughout a teacher’s career.” In the same line of thinking, Bolam (2007) takes it as an on-going process of education, training, learning and support activities aimed at primarily promoting teachers’ professional knowledge, skills and values. In more recent years, Fentiman and colleagues (2013) look at in-service professional leaning within the context in which teachers are working as an essential part of lifelong learning that is likely to provide a

base for teacher motivation and improved classroom performance. Rogan and Grayson (2003) consider that professional learning is conducted for a purpose. “It may, for example, be linked to the introduction of a new curriculum or policy...Or it may be designed to promote change or improvement within the current curriculum framework...” (Rogan and Grayson, 2003: 155). It is effective in raising the level of teachers’ attainment, improving teachers’ ability to perform their duties and implementation of educational reforms (Avalos, 2011).

In this paper, by professional learning, the researchers mean all sets of continuous learning activities that teachers involve in to develop their expertise and experience across all areas of their professional practice. As they progress through their careers, teachers need to be supported to identify, plan and develop their own professional learning needs and to ensure a continuing development of professional practice. Specifically, advice seeking associated with knowledge transfer is essential for teachers’ learning and pedagogical skills development (Loughran, 2010). There is some evidence linking higher improved learning outcomes with teacher participation in a sustained formal professional development grounded in context-specific pedagogy (Darling-Hammond, 2000) and well aligned with policy changes (Mfuru, 2010). Importantly, the extant literature on teacher collaboration suggests that learning is fostered when teachers engage in conversations about new materials (Giroux, 2013; Lieberman & Miller, 2014).

2.2 Teacher Professional Development in Contemporary Perspectives

Literature on teacher education is wealthy with perspectives on what it means and takes to promoting teacher professional growth in 21st century. For example, Desimone and Stuckey (2014); Day, (2002); Bolam 2007; Loucks-Horsley (2010); Lieberman and Miller (2014); and Desimone and Stuckey (2014) invariably, point out that continuous development of knowledge by members of professions connecting profession-wide knowledge to their unique contexts as one of the essential elements of profession. The perspectives consider professional learning of teachers as a practice that should invite teachers to actively engage in the process of transforming their teaching practices for them to be able to provide students with rich learning experiences (Lieberman & Miller, 2014). They draw attention to necessity of providing spaces for teachers to become active constructors of professional

knowledge and not mere passive recipients of the same. With such an attention, teachers are required to actively wrestle with ideas over time while working to untangle pedagogical challenges facing their classrooms with the goal of enhancing students' learning (Fisher & Frey, 2014).

For Desimone and Stuckey (2014), teacher professional development in 21st century, should help teachers to recognize that there are so many professions in the modern world and thus, they can be prepared to play multiple roles as well as take their rightful positions in the teaching-learning environment to face these challenges confidently. One, which deserves mention is the ability of the 21st century teacher to control students' disruptive behaviour in the classroom, which makes it impossible for the teacher to work efficiently as well as effectively and even in some instances and it puts the security of both students and teachers at risk. Problems of such nature have multiplied in magnitude in today's classroom and for this reason, teacher professional development programmes need to equip teachers with knowledge and skills in classroom management to be able to address such problems effectively as well as efficiently (Loughran, 2010).

From Swai and Glanfield's (2018) point of view, professional development should be one which offers teachers with opportunities to see themselves as part of the process and being concerned with promoting their professional growth. Integral to these opportunities is not only to make teacher learning an ongoing practice in schools, but also an avenue for teachers to engage in a collegial process of deepening professional knowledge (Desimone & Stuckey, 2014). Given the message they communicate about teacher education, it is reasonable to note that the perspectives expand the view of teacher professional development as they draw teachers at the heart of the entire process of promoting their professional growth. This is quite the opposite of the narrow view of the same, which has been observed to orient teachers to depend on others for their professional growth (Lieberman & Miller, 2014).

Reasonably speaking, the perspectives challenge educational systems in Sub-Saharan Africa and Tanzania, in particular, to embrace the expanded view of teacher professional development. Despite the agreed potential of existing teachers' professional development in helping teachers acquire new teaching skills and grow professionally, some professional development activities are negatively perceived and criticised by educational researchers

(Johnson & Maclean, 2010; Ferrier-Kerr *et al.*, 2008). Because of the nature of traditional professional development activities, such as attending ‘one-shot’ workshops, conferences, and seminars, it is claimed that they fall short in helping teachers acquire new skills (DuFour, & DuFour, 2008; Desimone & Stuckey, 2014).

The grounds on which scholars advance their criticisms over traditional professional learning programs seem to stem from the need to shift from teacher professional learning programs that produce superficial changes to instructional practice to programs that produce and support viable changes that last over a long period. Pedagogically speaking, the intent is to have teacher professional learning that has the potential to provide teachers with opportunities to work together to push the growth of all and tackle dilemmas related to their practice or wider school concerns (Fisher & Frey, 2014). In that way, teacher professional learning needs to empower teachers to exert leadership given the demand placed for them to assume more leadership roles and carry out a wider variety of instructional leadership functions than ever before (Lieberman & Miller, 2014).

As a result of ineffectiveness of some professional development programmes in achieving the purpose of involving teachers in active learning, teachers’ professional development recently took a new approach called ‘professional learning’ (Lieberman, 2000; Ferrier-Kerr *et al.*, 2008; Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2009; Li 2015). This new outlook provides highly active learning opportunities for teachers (Loughran, 2010). Professional learning is considered an internal process through which individuals acquire professional knowledge and skills as well as change their attitude to improve students’ learning (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2008). It is conceptualized “as a product of both externally-provided and job embedded activities that increase teachers’ knowledge and change their instructional practice in ways that support student’s learning” (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2009: 1). Timperley and colleagues (2008: 3) argue that the two terms ‘professional learning’ and ‘professional development’ are intimately intertwined, and that “without professional learning, professional development is unlikely to have any impact. Thus, any well-constructed professional development experience should be designed to promote [teacher] learning.” Therefore, implementation of professional development training needs to change from the traditional approach of imparting new skills to teachers to improving

teachers' abilities and learning of new skills for the purpose of enriching their pedagogical skills. Such extension of professional learning can be achieved through adopting characteristics of effective professional development.

3.0 Methodology

Unlike primary research, which involves collection of raw data through experiments and research subjects, this paper employed secondary data (desk research) method. The search for accurate data pertinent to the topic, both published and unpublished data, were systematically conducted. The existing internet-based information on teacher professional development was collected. In addition, teacher professional development circulars, policies, analytical reports, newspaper, magazine as well as journal contents, conference proceedings, communication, workshop agreement and endorsement were analysed to get appropriate data. The collected data showed typically what was on-going in Tanzania in regard to teacher professional development practices on the time of writing this paper. Research reports with solid arguments were properly analysed and discussed to facilitate understanding of the topic in detail. The paper used both realist review and metanarrative reviews to synthesise the information (SOPHIE, 2013). Realist reviews encompass a set of relatively new approach to synthesizing research that seeks an explanatory focus. At its core, realist reviews unpack the mechanism(s) of how and why complex interventions thrive or fail in particular settings (Wong *et al.*, 2013; Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009). On the other hand, metanarrative review is one of an emerging menu of new approach to qualitative and mixed-method systematic review whereby review seeks to illuminate a heterogeneous topic area by highlighting the contrasting and complementary ways in which researchers have studied the same or a similar topic (Wong *et al.*, 2013; Barnett-Page & Thomas, 2009).

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

4.1 Teacher Professional Development Policy and Practice Interplays

In Tanzania, policies and reforms have been planned, designed and endorsed to safeguard teacher professional development in education. This paper draws on experience of three education policies and reforms, namely, Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 1995, Teacher Education Development and Management Strategy (TEDMS), the in-service education

and training Strategy, Big Results Now of 2013 and recent ETP of 2014. All influenced on teacher professional development in Tanzania. Each policy used a slight different approach towards teachers' professional learning.

Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 1995: Adoption of the Education and Training Policy (URT, 1995) followed by making Grade IIIA a minimum qualification for primary school teachers in Tanzania. Subsequently, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) designed a programme of upgrading Grade IIIC teachers to obtain a Grade 'A' teacher certificate professional qualification through what was termed as the District Based Support for Primary Education (DBSPE). On the practice, DBSPE was self-sponsored and conducted as a part-time evening programme in the Teachers' Resource Centres. It became a challenge among the targeted teachers' group and hence, there was discontent among them. Although the deadline for re-categorization to Grade IIIA was in 2004, however, to date, the primary education system still maintains an insignificant number of unqualified teachers who were not upgradable and would be retiring by 2020 or so. With such practices, it is reasonable to say that the DBSPE provided teachers with spaces to upgrade their teaching qualification from Grade IIIC to Grade IIIA instead of sharing experiences, knowledge, and skills to address pedagogical challenges facing them. Giroux (1988) would criticize such a situation by saying that it has the potential for framing teacher learning to become a tool for promoting teachers from one level to another. The contemporary perspectives of teachers' professional learning advocates structuring teacher learning to become an ongoing process of enriching teachers' professional knowledge and skills so as to improve pedagogy.

Teacher Education Development and Management Strategy (TEDMS): The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) developed and enunciated the Teacher Education Development and Management Strategy [(TEDMS) URT, 2007a; 2007b] in which it plainly observed that there had been sporadic in-service training (INSET) for teachers and that, '...systematically, the focus of INSET had reached only a small section of teachers leaving many teachers staying up to 10 years without any further training...' (URT, 2007a: 26). It recommended INSET to be for all teachers at all levels and be regularized. This made a pre-condition for promotion to the next rank. The TEDMS was followed by the In-service Education and Training Strategy (IETS)

in 2010 (URT, 2010). It had as a strategy, a systematic and coordinated INSET provision for all teachers through a school-based INSET drawing on the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) approach. From theoretical point of view, TEDMS and IETS seem to be fruitful, though neither there was a national framework for school based INSET nor specific regulations for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) from relevant regulatory authorities. In this case, the MoEVT and the Prime Minister’s Office, Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO-RALG) need to systemically enforce the TEDMS and IETS objectives including recommendations. Subsequently, there is no documented evidence on the extent of their implementation in Tanzania because they have remained in shelves.

Big Results Now (BRN): Big Results Now (BRN) was adopted in April, 2013 with the aim of producing tangible results by improving students’ learning outcomes and to lay the foundation for an outcome-based performance culture in the education sector (World Bank, 2014). It was supported by the World Bank International Development Agency (IDA) credit and parallel financing from the Department for International Development [(DFID) UK], the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Sweden and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania (URT) at an estimated total amount of 416,104,724 Million United States of America dollars [(USD) Dachi, 2009]. The funding was committed to activities or key result areas as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: BRNEd Activities aligned to the allocation in percentage of the total estimated budget

Activities	Budget allocated %
Capitation Grant	63.86
Teacher Motivation (non-financial performance incentives for teachers and clear backlog of claims)	16.21
Student-Teacher Enrichment Programme (STEP)	15.36
Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (3R) teacher training	2.21
School Incentive Scheme	1.04
Official School Ranking	0.54
National 3R assessment	0.44
School Improvement Toolkit	0.29

Source: World Bank (2014).

Following the Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (3R) assessment, two main activities related to teachers' INSET were to be implemented - training 12,300 standards one and two teachers in 3R teaching skills and training 17,000 primary as well as 8,000 secondary school teachers through the STEP to support low performing pupils and students, respectively. In addition, the following were interventions implemented correspondingly with the BRNEd:

- a. School-Based In-service Training (SBIT) funded by UNICEF targeting 1,000 teachers in three regions (Mainland Tanzania);
- b. Literacy and Numeracy Support Programme (LANES) funded by Global Partnership in Education (GPE) targeting 18,656 standards 1 and 2 teachers in 14 regions (Mainland Tanzania); and
- c. The Quality Education Improvement Programme in Tanzania (EQUIP-T) funded by DFID targeting 15,670 standards 1 to 3 teachers in seven regions (Mainland Tanzania Mainland).

Previous interventions included the Tanzania (TZ) 21 for Basic Education funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) targeting teachers in one region (Dachi, 2009). The convergence in the presented interventions with the exception of that of UNICEF that targeted higher grades, the rest aimed at strengthening of early grade reading and teaching using a learner-centered and participative pedagogy aligned to the new early grade curriculum and 3Rs syllabus developed by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE). The divergence was in their delivery modes oscillating between a one off INSET for teachers coordinated from the centre (LANES of GPE) and a continuous cycle of school based INSET linked to classroom practice cascaded from district to school level [(SBIT of UNICEF and EQUIP-T of DFID) Dachi, 2009].

Although, the BRNEd closed ranks officially in 2017, its value addition to learning achievements and outcomes through teacher INSET is indistinct or incorporated in the parallel interventions. It is possible to argue in retrospect that BRNEd INSET initiatives represented a paradigm shift from the sector wide approach to education development to project with programmes approach, too fragmented to have long-term effects on the holistic quality improvement of primary and secondary school teachers. To support this argument, Klingebiel and Janus (2014) as well as Janus and Kaijzaer (2015) argued that assumed benefits of results based aid are short-term and largely unsustainable 'quick wins.' More so, Table 1 suggests that finances

were expended thinly over a larger number of activities than concentrating largely on sustaining the INSET for teachers. Its allocation was just 2.21 percent of the BRNed budget.

ETP of 2014: The new ETP (URT, 2014) explicitly articulates institutionalization of Teacher Resource Centres (TRCs) and professional development centres as school clusters by way of a viable option for effective Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and INSET in Tanzania. However, available evidence tends to indicate explicitly that TRCs are dysfunctional because of lack of funding and the position of school clusters in the CPD equation is diminutive if at all (Dachi, 2010). Also, the institutional arrangement of TRCs in connection with the Tanzanian education system administrative and governance structures is unclear. Whilst the TRCs expected functions of offering professional support to teachers are not allocated budget resources by the central government or the Local Government Authorities, the TRC Coordinators are teachers who are on the government payroll. In the same outlook, the Oxford Policy Management (2017) draws from the EQUIP (T) experience to show how difficult it is to implement an INSET for teachers if the initiative has not been built with financial incentive or linked to promotion.

Principally, numerous researchers and scholars, including Kitta (2004) as well as Komba and Nkumbi (2008) questioned on efficiency and effectiveness of existing mode of teachers' professional development in Tanzania. To them, schools are hardly seen as appropriate places for teachers to promote and monitor their professional growth because most of in-service teachers consider teachers' training colleges or universities right places for their professional advancement (*ibid.*). Subsequently, teachers have to go out of their schools to seek opportunities so as to promote their professional growth. Apparently, teachers are tempted to consider their professional growth as something external and far from their schools. Professionally speaking, such a situation seems to raise concerns about the position of teachers and schools in owning teacher professional learning in Tanzania. Because seminars and workshops are distanced from classrooms and outside schools, possibilities exist for teachers not to see themselves capable of addressing pedagogical challenges that they might be facing within their classrooms.

This paper revealed that policies and practices of teacher professional development produce hierarchical relations between teachers and education officers. Since in teachers' colleges and universities, content

for professional development of teachers is determined by either TIE or universities' intellectuals and delivered by teacher college tutors as well as university lecturers, the relations between teachers and education officials are seemingly authoritative. They seem to inherently obey what Giroux (2013: 10) called producer-consumer paradigm. That is the case as the power regarding teacher learning is distributed by TIE to teacher college tutors and university lecturers who are charged with the responsibility of preparing teachers with professional knowledge and skills. Under such circumstances, teachers are molded to naturally become consumers of knowledge and skills produced by tutors and lecturers. Given that lecturers and tutors are ranked higher than teachers in the Tanzanian education system, their relations with teachers become none but authoritative. With such power relations in professional development contexts, chances exist for teachers to experience hesitation in sharing their classroom experiences and insights since they are led by people who are formally considered powerful and more knowledgeable than them.

Under such contexts, teachers are likely to largely assume the role of receiving what officials consider important for improving student learning in classrooms. Subsequently, since teacher learning occurs elsewhere, schools become places for implementing what teachers are learning in professional development and not places where teachers could collaboratively work together to untangle pedagogical complexities they experience in their classrooms.

5.0 Conclusion and Implications

It is important to restore the lost glory of teaching profession in Tanzania. The situation is unlike in the past where teachers in Tanzania had a special place in society (Ishumi, 1988) and it perceived them as champions of development (Nyerere, 1968). Today, the nobility linked to teachers no longer holds. Subsequently, people have perfected the art of looking down on teaching (Ishumi, 2013). Interestingly, the government has customarily relegated teaching to a lower tier of professions by allowing those with dismal grades and weak points to join the teachers' colleges, while, on the other hand, it has failed to institute tractable regulatory and policy frameworks for improving teachers' competencies through professional development. Subsequently, most of the teachers' professional learning programmes have continued to be organized in an *ad-hoc* manner with weak

institutional arrangements for re-tooling teachers on a regular or systematic basis. As situational analysis shows that the Tanzanian education system has had not instituted a formalized and programmed professional development for teachers at all levels. It is, however, possible to identify several initiatives though they were not implemented under any institutional arrangements and a coherent policy of teachers' professional development. A strong case has to be made to the government to indicate that policies and practices do not support the institutionalisation and sustenance of teachers' professional development.

There is also a need to re-think and re-shape teacher professional development to become one that has the potential not only just to empower teachers but also to restore the teaching profession status. In blending teacher knowledge and expert knowledge to make professional learning, a rewarding experience for teachers is also important. Unlike existing traditional professional learning of teachers, which rely heavily on expert knowledge at the expense of teacher knowledge, the ideal professional learning landscape needs to utilise both kinds of knowledge with the purpose of helping teachers develop pedagogical knowledge and skills they essentially need to enrich students' learning.

The government needs further to ensure that TRCs and professional development centres have credible sources of the funding and technical support. This is possible by financing their functions through the Human Capital Investment component of the Government development budget allocation to the Local Government Authorities. Nevertheless, the efficacy of these programmes hinges crucially on formulation and implementation of a coherent framework for a systemic institutionalisation of the CPD provision, monitoring and evaluation in a cascaded manner from the ministerial level down to the regions, districts and schools.

6.0 References

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