

Is the System Tuned to Deliver? Evidence from the Competence Based Curriculum Reforms for Basic Education in Tanzania

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Paper Outline

Introduction

Over the past five decades, the government of Tanzania has engaged in implementing five major curriculum reforms for basic education (TIE, 2013). These reforms are outlined below:

- The post-independence reforms (1961-64) aimed to eliminate racial segregation.
- The 1967 Education for Self Reliance reforms aimed to equip graduates with skills for self-reliance.
- The 1979 reforms introduced technical and vocational skills to enhance the competencies of graduates.
- The Makweta Commission recommendations of 1982 and the National Task Force report in 1992 and 1997 compressed the curriculum from 13 subjects to 7.
- The Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in 2005 aimed to orient the output of the education system away from content to competence based skills.

A critical analysis of reforms from the period of independence to 1997 suggests that these were homegrown in a sense that they were aimed at creating an education system that is relevant for Tanzanians. It was argued that colonial education system was unsuitable, emphasizes in segregation and production of people of lower cadres to help in low skilled jobs. Yet, one of the major weaknesses associated with the implementation of some of these reforms, for example the ESR was that it was a top-down reform, promoted by government directives rather than by the demands of teachers and students (Murray &

Graham, 1983).

As outlined earlier in this paper, in 2005, Tanzania adopted another curriculum reform namely Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). This reform advocates for a shift of education goals from content-based to CBC orientation. The CBC emphasizes on students' competence development than acquisition of content knowledge. Competence-based learning is a "system of instruction, assessment, grading and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills that they are expected to learn as they progress through their education". The CBC is perceived to be desirable for equipping school graduates with knowledge and life skills to survive in the modern world.

The available evidence suggests that several studies have been conducted in Tanzania with regards to the assessment of implementation of CBC. These studies confirm that there are challenges associated with implementation of CBC in all levels of education (See for example, Paul & Tilya, 2014; Kavindi 2014, Komba & Mwandanji 2015; Makunja 2015; Nzima 2016 & MOEST 2016). Similarly, findings from previous studies reveal that the implementation of CBC was associated with various challenges to teachers in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), primary and secondary schools. These include, teacher lack of knowledge and skills for effective implementation of CBC in the actual teaching and learning process. This problem is largely explained by lack of provision of training before implementation of the CBC reform. Other challenges include teacher lack of proper understanding of the objectives of CBC, teacher failure to implement CBC curriculum in classroom teaching in terms of preparing competency based lesson plans, engaging students in teaching and learning and assessing students performance. In TTCs for primary and secondary school teachers, studies show similar trends that CBC was not implemented as it was intended (Kavindi 2014, Nzima, 2016). Notably, though tutors seem to understand CBC yet the actual instructional practices in classroom contradict their knowledge. Indeed, several previous findings indicate that the CBC policy intentions as expressed in the formal curriculum documents differs with actual instructional practices in school and colleges.

Aim of the study

We hypothesize that: (1) the quality of implementation of CBC reform is largely explained by the existing accountability structures; (2) to achieve success in implementing CBC reform initiatives require collective actions of various actors

from different levels and coherence in working of the various subsystems responsible for its implementation. The aim of the study therefore, was to examine the accountability relationships between the key actors in the delivery of the competence-based curriculum reform.

Conceptual Framework

We define accountability to mean obligation by every member in the education system to accept responsibility assigned to them and work toward achieving objectives and expected results in accordance with set standards. In this study we emphasize that accountability is a “two-way” relationship whereby the system can’t hold schools or other reform implementers accountable if it doesn’t provide them the necessary requirements for the implementation of the reforms. Hence, we are exploring the provision of the necessary requirements by the government to allow success implementation of CBC reforms.

The study is informed by Lant Pritchett (2015) description of accountability framework, system theory and policy attribute theory by Porter, Floden, Freeman, Schmidt, & Schwille, (1988) as cited in Desimone (2002). Pritchett emphasizes that achieving effectiveness in learning requires systems of education that are coherent in two ways. Firstly, the accountability relationship has to be coherent across its four elements (delegation, financing, information and motivation). Secondly, the relationships have to be coherent across relationships of accountability. Informed by Pritchett we examined the level of coherence existing across the four elements of accountability in implementation of the CBC. We examined how well teachers were prepared to implement the CBC and if what teachers (actors) were asked to implement in classroom is coherent with financing, information and motivation. We also explored the level of coherence existing among the various accountability relationships for example between teachers and their employers; teachers and students as well as teachers and parents/community members.

The policy attribute theory informs the study regarding the five components necessary for successful reform implementation: specificity, consistency, authority, power, and stability (Desimone, 2002). The theory maintains that the five attributes influences policy implementation, explain the depth, quality, consistency and longevity of implementation and that the higher a reform is in one or all of the attributes, the greater the chances of its successful implementation (Porter et al., 1988 cited in Desimone, 2002). We adapted this theory and use its five components to examine CBC implementation process in

Tanzania.

Methodology

The study employed qualitative and structured survey approaches to illuminate what is going on inside the classroom and how/why it differed from policy and reform objectives. The study involved officials at the ministry level and other levels which are key to the curriculum implementation, such as Teacher Training Colleges, and primary and secondary schools. The participants included: (1) One Director of Basic Education - Ministry of Education Science and Technology; (2) one Assistant Director Primary Education - Ministry of Regional and Local Government; (3) one Director of the Centre for Curriculum Training - Tanzania Institute of Education (4) one Director for Quality Assurance and three school Quality Assurers; (5) tutors and principals from Two Teacher Training Colleges; (6) three lecturers from one university that offers Teacher Education; (7) 50 public schools (head Teachers and teachers) and four private primary schools; (8) 227 teachers who participated in the *Sauti* survey questionnaire; and (9) 50 teacher colleges tutors.

Data collection strategy involved reviewing documents, face-to-face and telephone interviews, and survey questionnaires in Dodoma, Morogoro, Pwani and Dar es salaam Regions.

Key Findings

- The goals of CBC were clearly stated in various curriculum documents. However, these goals of the CBC were not clear to a good number of implementers. With some expressing no difference between content-based and competence based.
- The key implementers of CBC did not understand the reasons for changing from a content- to a competency-based curriculum. As a result, they perceived CBC negatively and viewed it as a burden on them in terms of implementing the teaching and learning process.
- There are several sources of funding available, yet the main source of funding is the government. The findings however, reveal that the available resources were insufficient to facilitate effective implementation of CBC.
- Internal mechanisms (namely, the head teachers, principals and school academic committees) largely monitor the implementation of CBC. In

addition, the findings demonstrate that WEOs played a significant role in monitoring the schools, yet even the heads and the WEOs lacked knowledge about CBC.

- Quality assurers are key actors to monitoring classroom teaching and learning, however, findings show that they visited the school very rarely.
- There was no system of rewards or sanctions established for the effective or ineffective implementation of CBC. Teachers and tutors were largely motivated by cash, letters of appreciation and certificates, yet the major basis of motivation is good performance in the final examinations rather than effective implementation of CBC.
- Teacher training colleges were expected to play an important role in training of pre service teachers on CBC. However, even in colleges, CBC teaching approaches were rarely used. Student teachers were less exposed to the CBC teaching and learning approaches.
- The study found inconsistencies between the CBC provisions and assessment practices. The existing assessments focus much on content rather than skills as advocated by the CBC.
- There exist a lack of mechanisms for instilling teacher authority of CBC reform. The culture of corroborating among teachers is missing and there is little support provided to teachers to enable them to implement the curriculum successfully. As a result, CBC is not regarded by the teachers as part of their professional norm but, rather, as a burden, and several teachers opted not to use
- There is a lack of well-established mechanisms for holding teachers accountable for the proper or improper implementation of CBC

Conclusion

- The government did not put in place the necessary provisions and foundations for implementing the CBC reform successfully. The teachers were not well prepared to implement the curriculum and curriculum materials like the teachers' guides and textbooks are largely missing.
- The goals of CBC were clearly stated in various curriculum documents. However, these goals were not clearly shared with the key actors. Thus, the goals and objectives of CBC were not very clearly communicated to the agent. As a result, the implementers of the curriculum were unaware of the goals and objectives of CBC
- The key implementers of CBC did not understand the reasons for changing from a content- to a competency-based curriculum. As a result,

- they perceive CBC negatively and see it as a burden on them in terms of implementing the teaching and learning process. This contributed to poor implementation or resistance to implementing the curriculum, a tendency whereby teachers opted to continue using the content-based curriculum.
- The accountability relationship across its four elements (delegation, financing, information and motivation) is incoherent. On the one hand, the actors are slightly unclear about the goal of CBC, the financing is not sufficient, the information collected is not useful in terms of providing a clear picture on what is going on inside the classroom and the classroom environment does not encourage the proper implementation of CBC.
 - There is incoherence in the accountability relationships between the key actors regarding the delivery of the CBC reforms, as indicated by the low levels specificity, consistency, authority and power in implementation. The lack of a clear accountability relationship among the actors hinders the proper implementation of CBC.

Implications for policy and practice

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are made

1. Strengthen the accountability relationships between and among the actors by improving the level of coherence across the four elements of accountability namely delegation, financing, information and motivation
2. There is a need to develop school-based in-service training implementation guidelines with the aim of providing all teachers with this training to avoid the tendency to train a few teachers per school on the assumption that these will help to train the others.
3. Schools and teacher training colleges should be provided with all of the required teaching and learning facilities for implementing Competency-based Curriculum (CBC), including syllabuses, teachers' guides and textbooks
4. Efforts need be made to ensure that the teaching of methodology related to CBC is heavily emphasised in universities and teacher training colleges.
5. There is a need to reflect and reform existing assessment practices so as to ensure that they align with CBC provisions.
6. School quality assurers and Ward Education Officers should be trained on the CBC teaching approaches and methodologies.
7. More resources need to be provided to school quality assurers to allow them to increase the frequency of their school visits.