



ISSUES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT) AFFECTING DECISION MAKING IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

Curriculum development is an essential process that involves the selection of objectives, content, learning experiences as well as organising and evaluating these experiences to determine the extent to which they are effective in achieving stated objectives. It further involves implementation in which the structured set of learning experiences is disseminated and the resources are provided to effectively execute the plan and the actual execution of the plan in the classroom setting, where the teacher – learner interaction takes place. Nevertheless, it involves putting into practice the officially prescribed curriculum content in which various stakeholders become engaged in the process by making their contribution to operationalise the curriculum. Based on literature review, this paper seeks to discuss five issues that could affect decision making in curriculum development process particularly during the stage of implementation. In discussing these issues, teaching and learning of English subject is taken as the reference point, that is, the examples for substantiation of the contention are drawn mainly from the key issues in English language teaching (ELT) in Tanzanian education system by looking at teacher quality, limited authentic teaching and learning materials, class size, limited exposure towards using English language and assessment and evaluation procedures.

Keywords: Curriculum development, English language teaching, key issues

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Introduction

It is important to understand these terms '*curriculum*' and '*curriculum development*'. Understanding of these terms will shade the light towards the grasp of the notion of curriculum and curriculum development and five issues in English language teaching.

The term "*curriculum*" has been defined by so many scholars engaged in the curriculum field. According to Tyler (1949), *curriculum* refers to all of the learning of the students, which is planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals. On the other hand, Wheeler (1967, p.11) defines *curriculum* as the planned experiences offered to the learner under the guidance of the school. In addition, *curriculum* is defined as planned, guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge under the auspices of the school for the continuous and willful growth of the learner (Adirika, 2017).

These definitions suggest or imply that education curriculum (in this case) is ought to be planned, directed and/or intended towards achieving some set out objectives of an educational institutions be it a school, a teachers' college, a university or a vocational training institution.

The term *curriculum development* refers to a process that involves the selection of objectives, content, learning experiences as well as organizing and evaluating these experiences to determine the extent to which they are effective in achieving stated objectives (Adirika, 2017). According to Obilo and Saugoleye (2015), curriculum development involves implementation in which refers to a process which involves dissemination of the structured set of learning experiences, the provision of resources to effectively execute the plan, and the actual execution of the plan in the classroom setting, where the teacher – learner interaction takes place. They add that it involves putting into practice the officially prescribed curriculum content. All stakeholders become part of the process by making their contribution to operationalise the curriculum.

The concern of this paper is to discuss five issues that could affect decision making in curriculum development process particularly during the stage of implementation. In discussing these issues, teaching and learning of

English subject is taken as the reference point, that is, the examples for substantiation of the contention are drawn mainly from the key issues of English language teaching (ELT) in Tanzanian education system by looking at teacher quality, limited authentic teaching and learning materials, class size, limited exposure towards using English language and assessment and evaluation procedures.

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Tanzania

In Tanzania, ELT was introduced in education system in 1919 during the British occupation of Tanzania, by then Tanganyika (Mhina, 1976). Mhina extends that before this time, the territory was under Germany rule which played a significant role in the use of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction and not Germany. In addition, the British rule introduced secondary school education so as to get auxiliary staff for carrying out clerical jobs in their administration.

The British colonial epoch had a greater deal in the history of ELT in Tanzania. Since during British rule, English emerged as both a medium of instruction and a subject in the education system of Tanzania. English subject was allocated with more periods about twelve hours per week in the curriculum, contrary to Kiswahili subject which was allocated with two hours per week (Mhina, 1976; Swila, 2009; Qorro, 2013). In addition, an individual with an "A" grade pass in English subject was awarded an overseas Cambridge School Certificate. Similarly, an individual was considered to get employment or join secondary school on the basis of good performance in English subject (Mhina, 1976; Swila, 2009; Qorro, 2013). Consequently, English was viewed as high class language for further education and higher administrative posts while Kiswahili was regarded for low level administrative purposes (Bwenge, 2012).

In post-colonial Tanzania, language policy did not change that much as English remained a medium of instruction in post primary education. However, English is not a prerequisite for awarding certificates or employment (Qorro, 2013). The attitude towards English started to change after the Arusha Declaration in which glorification of Kiswahili was realised in various domains whereas speaking English in public was regarded to have colonial legacy (Bwenge, 2012). As a result, in the late 1970's onwards scholars reported the decline of English language proficiency in different

levels of education in Tanzania (Mlama & Materu, 1978; Crippler & Dodd, 1984; Roy-Campbell & Qorro, 1997).

English language in Tanzania has a significant role in educational system; English is a medium of instruction in secondary school levels, tertiary Education level and is taught as a compulsory subject from primary school levels to ordinary level of secondary education (Ministry of Education and Culture [MOEC], 1995). The mastery of English language is very important for gaining access to tertiary education. Outside the education system, English plays other roles although in a limited domain. English is a language of opportunities, high rank jobs in Tanzania and beyond, a language of the high court, diplomatic ties, advancement in science and technology as well as international trade and business (Swilla, 2009).

Nevertheless, the status of English is that of a foreign language since it is rarely used as a medium of communication in government offices and parastatals or in the day-to-day activities, be it in government business, at the family level or as a language for socialisation among peers (Tibategeza, 2009; Qorro, 2013; Sane & Sebonde, 2014). It is also noted that English is rarely used outside the classroom. In particular, learners in public schools do not normally use English language rather they use Kiswahili language when participating fully in the social, political and economic life of Tanzania (Vuzo, 2008; Qorro, 2013; Sane & Sebonde, 2014; Mtallo, 2015).

Key Issues in ELT in Tanzania and how they affect Curriculum Development

Key issues of English language teaching (ELT) in Tanzanian education system are focusing on the five issues such as teacher quality, limited authentic teaching and learning materials, class size, limited exposure towards using English language and assessment and evaluation procedures. These issues affect curriculum development process particularly in the stage of curriculum implementation. The elaborations of these issues are presented in the following sub-sections;

Lack of Competent Teachers

Most teachers teaching the languages in schools are not competent and well trained on how to teach the language using the recommended communicative language teaching (CLT) approach effectively so as to have a successful learning. Some studies have been conducted and it was found

that many teachers are still using teachers-centered methods such as lecture, questions and answers, chalk and talk methods, so this practice inhibits learners to acquire the required competencies and hence learning will not take place effectively as a result impacts how well curriculum goals can be implemented in practice (Yahaya, 2010; Vuzo, 2010; Mbalamwezi, 2012; Mpayo, 2012; Suzubeki, 2016; Omari, 2020; John, 2020).

As argued that for effective implementation of the curriculum, there shall be enough number of qualified teachers for all subjects. In addition to academic qualifications, a teacher implementing the curriculum shall have the ability to use participatory or interactive methods of teaching and learning (TIE, 2005; 2009a).

Limited Authentic Teaching and Learning Materials

Shortage of relevant teaching and learning materials, most of schools do not have adequate teaching and learning materials which always guide a teacher and learners during the whole process of teaching and learning. Most of the available materials are outdated and are not concurrent with the used competence based curriculum. There is dominance of textbooks in the teaching of English language in schools. Modern media such as audio, video tapes, language laboratories, programmed texts, flash cards; computers, magazines and newspapers are rarely used. This limits the effectiveness of curriculum planning as decision makers cannot assume certain resources will be available (Mdimba, 2014; Paschal, 2017; Nanai, 2019).

It is argued that teaching and learning materials are the most important resources needed at classroom level, if the curriculum is to be implemented successfully. These shall include textual materials such as: textbooks, syllabi, modules and manuals, reference books, charts and maps, newspapers, journals and encyclopaedias, texts in Braille, posters, fliers and photographs and non-textual materials such as laboratory apparatus, prototypes, braille machines, writing boards, weather stations, samples of actual materials, planateria and ICT resources such as computers, internet connectivity, photocopying machines printers and scanners (TIE, 2005; 2009a).

Large Class Sizes

Class sizes in schools are often very large; many schools in Tanzania are populated in which the number of students in class is above average. This

has been found in community secondary schools comparing to private schools, so due to high number of learners in class the teachers fail to handle and make a follow up for each individual student about his/her learning progress in language. Also most of teachers decide to use the traditional approaches in teaching especially lecturing method which to some extent leads to failure in these kind of classes with higher number of students since they ignore the use of current teaching approaches in languages which emphasize on learner centered method in which learners should be highly involved and engaged in a lesson through participation (Mdimba, 2014; Sane & Sebonde, 2014; Paschal, 2017; Omari, 2020; John, 2020).

This makes it difficult for teachers to provide individual attention and assess student progress, hampering curriculum objectives focused on developing students' language proficiency (Mdimba, 2014; Sane & Sebonde, 2014; Paschal, 2017; Omari, 2020; John, 2020). As it should be noted that for ordinary and advanced level of secondary education, the maximum number of students per class shall be 40 and 25 respectively, therefore the teacher-student ratio shall be 1:40 and 1:25 (TIE, 2005, p.23; 2009a, p. 21). This means that a teacher is responsible for teaching not more than the recommended number of students in a single classroom so as to effectively implement the curriculum.

Limited Exposure towards Using English Language

Students in Tanzania have limited exposure to English outside the classroom as it is not widely spoken in their communities. English is occasionally used outside the classroom settings, students in government schools do not usually use English language rather they use Kiswahili language when engaging fully in the social, political and economic life of Tanzania, thus they normally do not have platforms to speak English outside the classroom settings (Mtallo, 2015; Sane & Sebonde, 2014; Qorro, 2013).

Students did not have an opportunity to practice speaking of English language outside classroom context since English language is not emphasised and spoken around the school compound apart from classroom English lessons. The use of Kiswahili language and code-mixing dominated communications across schools' settings, teachers among themselves communicated using Kiswahili and sometimes they used Kiswahili in explaining ideas and concepts when teaching (Nanai, 2019).

This restricts how ambitious curriculum goals can be in developing students' listening, speaking and cultural skills. As stated that the objective of teaching English is to enable a student to be able to communicate orally and confidently inside and outside classroom setting and in different life situations (TIE, 2009b.p.vi).

Assessment and Evaluation Procedures

The assessment tools used by National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) particularly national examinations in one way or the other hinders the process of teaching the languages in the sense that NECTA uses norm referenced assessment which focuses on what the learner knows or how much the learner knows rather than criterion referenced assessment in which a learner is assessed on how well she/he can perform on specific learning tasks. Most of the national examinations' questions foster memorization rather than thinking skills, thus due to this kind of assessment, most of teachers tend to teach using drilling and rote learning which foster memorization that in turns leads to the learners not to master the required knowledge and skills which will enable them to use the language in the social context (Mdimba, 2014; Elisifa, 2015; Nanai, 2019; Masatu et al., 2019; John, 2020; Omari, 2020).

This influences curriculum design to focus more on test content, it is argued that assessment methods for the curriculum shall emphasize the competence based teaching and learning. These methods shall probe students' understanding, reasoning and critical thinking rather than their ability to return memorized facts (TIE; 2005, 2009a).

Conclusion

Therefore, issues like limited resources, insufficient teacher training, large class sizes, and examination-heavy system shape the realities that curriculum designers must consider. While ambitious goals can be set, curriculum decisions need to reflect the constraints of Tanzania's English language education context to have a meaningful impact. Addressing the underlying problems will be the key to empowering curriculum reforms to achieve their desired outcomes.

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