Tanzania Secondary Schools Curriculum and the World of Work: Dodoma Municipality Students and Teachers Perceptions

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Abstract
This study was conducted to examine secondary school teacher's and student's perceptions on preference of curriculum and the role of the then secondary schools curriculum in the then Tanzania. The study delved in examining whether students and teachers preferred comprehensive or general education curriculum and whether the curriculum prepared the graduates for the world of work. The study used cross-sectional survey research design. Open and closed ended questionnaires were used to collect data. The study found that 100% of teacher and student respondents preferred comprehensive curriculum. Also, the then curriculum did not prepare the graduates for the world of work; it prepared them for further education. In other words, it was irrelevant as it did not respond to the social demands and the nation's economic development. The study recommends establishing pilot secondary schools with comprehensive curriculum in Tanzania. The study concludes that comprehensive curriculum is better for secondary schools in Tanzania.

Keywords: Tanzania, curriculum, world of work, comprehensive curriculum, general education curriculum

Introduction

Curriculum prepares an individual to become what s/he wants to be as asserted by Braslavsky (as cited in Acedo, 2002). He further asserts that for the end to be realised it is important to have integrated curriculum in secondary schools. Secondary school curricula are prepared to produce elites, thus meeting the demands of the few while the majority are left unquenched their 'educational thirsty' (Holsinger and cowell, 2000). Ndala (2006) observes that in Sub-Saharan Africa curriculum, it is used as an instrument for selecting individuals for further education, namely university education (Figueredo and Anzalone, 2003;Anamuah-Mensah*et* and Asabire-Ameyaw, 2007). This view is contrary to the 1995 Tanzania Education and Training Policy which asserts that secondary education prepares the graduate for both the world of work and further education (objectives (c) and (b), respectively of secondary education) (URT, 1995). In colonial era, British regime in particular, technical education was underscored at secondary education level; however, around 1980's it was not encouraged by governments and international organizations because it was perceived too expensive.

Moreover, most people perceived that technical education was meant for low-achievers (Ndala, 2006; Lauglo, 2004). Indeed, because technical and vocational education, it is perceived as meant for low-achievers; therefore, jobs related to it are given low status (Fafunwa, 1971; Ansell, 2002 as cited in Ndala,

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2006; World Bank, 2008; Wahyudin, 2008). Probably, this widely heldbelief towards technical and vocational education partly can explain why most governments do not give priority to it. This is because the governments are formed by people with this view, thus making it difficult to initiate programmes promoting technical and vocational education in most countries. In the meantime, Briseidet, Caloids, Lugaz and Marth(2004) argue that it is hard to prepare a student for vocational education and lifelong learning at a go. To the contrary Etim (2007) observes that the Nigeria National Education policy of 2004favours comprehensive curriculum to meet student diversities in schools (Kinyaduka, 2012; Kinyaduka, 2013; Sifuna, 2010; Wagha, Indoshi and Agak, 2009; Makombe, Kihombo, Sesabo, Hodgson and Spours, 2010). In some countries, Malaysia, for instance, there are secondary schools sepecialising in general education and those specialising in vocational education; however, in Japan comprehensive curriculum is taught in upper secondary school only (Wahyudin, 2008).

Indeed, there are contradicting views, that is to say, some scholars view that it is impossible to implement a comprehensive curriculum while some national educational policies go for comprehensive curriculum. Moreover, the question of irrelevant secondary education has its home in developing countries, in particular, those in the Sub-Saharan Africa (Ndala, 2006, URB, 2004; ILO, 2006; MOEVT, 2010; Obanya, 2006; Asian Development Bank, 2007; Anamuah-Mensah*et al.,*2007). Given these contradictions this study intended to explore opinions of teachers and students on preferred curriculum and whether the then curriculum prepared the graduates for the world of work. Figure 1 shows the Theoretical Framework.
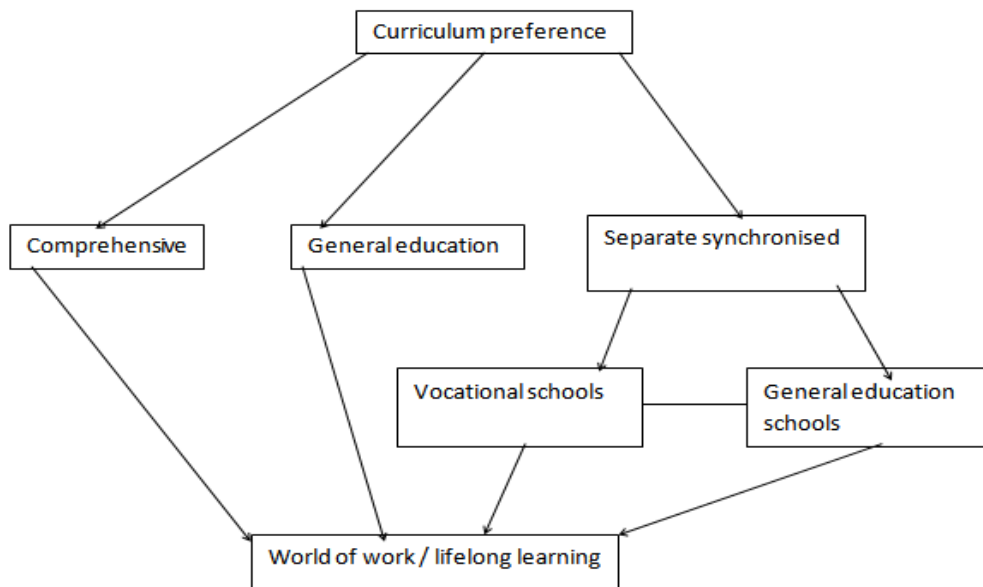

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

Source: Researcher's own construct 2014

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore teacher and student opinions on the preferred curriculum (general education or comprehensive) in secondary schools. Also, it intended to know whether the then curriculum prepared the graduates for the world of work or not.

Significance of the study

This study is expected to inform us on the relevance of secondary school curriculum in Tanzania. The study is particularly to the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) as it provides a clue on what is generally perceived as important to be included in the current secondary education curriculum. Moreover, the study is useful to researchers as its findings may arouse more interest and/or do the same study with larger sample and triangulated data collection methods.

Methodology

Which curriculum is preferred in secondary schools in Tanzania (comprehensive or general education curriculum?)

Does the secondary education curriculum in Tanzania prepare the graduates for the world of work or for further education?

Instruments

This study adopted a cross sectional research design. The design was adopted because the study intended to understand opinions at the time of this study. Though the design allows triangulation of data collection methods, this study used closed and open ended questionnaire only to collect the required information. The method was used because the researcher had limited time to use other methods of data collection. The questionnaire required the respondents to say whether they preferred general education curriculum to comprehensive curriculum. It also sought to know whether the respondents thought the then curriculum prepared the graduates for the world of work. Moreover, the questionnaire required the respondents to comment on their responses. The questionnaires were distributed to students and teachers. The researcher collected them few days later in some schools while in other schools the questionnaires were distributed and collected on the same day. During data collection in some schools, the respondents were reluctant to fill in the questionnaire on grounds that they were too busy to fill in the same. The researcher on such circumstances had to do lobbying through promising to pay them for their time spent in filling in the questionnaire and they seemed to happily accept the assignment. In the meantime, one school selected denied to participate in the study.

The municipality had 50 secondary schools. Four secondary schools were selected, whereby two schools were A-level and the other two were O-level schools. The schools are not identified here to maintain anonymity; however, they are referred by letters, as; A, B, C and D. Convenience sampling technique was used to sample schools from which data were collected. That is to say, schools were chosen because it was easy for the researcher to reach them. The study intended to collect data from form six and four students, who made a population of 435 students in selected schools. School A form four student did not participate; also, form four and six student respondents from school D. Form four students in school A were not at school at the time of this study while students in school D (private school) the administration was reluctant to participate in the study. This means questionnaires were distributed to students and teachers in three schools, A, B & C. Convenience sampling technique was used to get the sample of schools and the respondents. This technique was adopted because the researcher had limited time. Questionnaires were distributed to 18 teacher respondents and 9 out of the 18 returned the questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to six teachers in each school. This made a sample of 18 teacher participants. The data for this study were manually analyzed.

Findings

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This section presents the findings on two main themes. These are: teacher and student respondent preference of curriculum (general education or comprehensive) and whether the curriculum prepared the graduates for the world of work or for further education. The findings of this study can be generalized because the participants were the key education stakeholders, the teachers and matured students form four students (in the Tanzania system a form four student is expected to be at 18, thus the data collected were reliable). Moreover, the curriculum for secondary education is the same in all secondary schools because Tanzania has a centralize system of education.

Teacher and student curriculum preference in Dodoma municipality/ General education or comprehensive curriculum

The researcher was interested to know whether the respondents preferred general education curriculum or comprehensive curriculum. The purpose of this item was to know the curriculum that the respondents thought was relevant in our today's Tanzania. When asked to choose whether Tanzania needed general education or comprehensive curriculum, all 9(100%) of the teacher respondents mentioned that Tanzania needed comprehensive curriculum in secondary school. Commenting on their responses, the teacher respondents said that comprehensive curriculum would: cater for students' diverse talents; respond to societal needs; boost the national economy; the graduates would be able to employ themselves and the curriculum would produce multi-skilled graduates.

In the meantime, student respondents were asked the same item. All, 19(100%) student respondents observed that they preferred comprehensive curriculum to general education curriculum. The reasons advanced for their response included: the graduates can get self-employed even if for whatever reasons they fail to go for further education; the curriculum can develop a sense of valuing any job among students; students talents can be identified and developed (accommodates for student diversities). This suggests that the students prefer an integrated curriculum in our secondary schools. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Teacher and student respondent responses on preference of curriculum

Curriculum category	Respondent category	number	percentage
Comprehensive curriculum		9	100
	Teachers		
General education curriculum		19	100
	Students		
	Total	28	

Summarily, of all 28(100%) respondents (teachers and students) preferred comprehensive curriculum to general education curriculum. The reasons for this preference are many and diverse; however, there are some common reasons advanced by both, teacher and student respondents these are: the curriculum caters for self-employment to graduates and for student diversity.

Curriculum for further education or for the world of work

The teacher and student respondents were asked to say whether the curriculum prepared the graduates for the world of work or for further education or for both (work and further education). It was found that none

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of teacher respondents mentioned that the then curriculum prepared the graduates for the world of work. Two out of nine teacher respondents said that the then curriculum did not prepared the graduates for the world of work. The reason given was that the curriculum was too much academic-oriented and theoretical. Four out nine teacher respondents were of the view that the then curriculum prepared the graduates for both further education and the world of work. No reason was given for this response. Interestingly, three out of nine teacher respondents said that they were not sure whether it prepared the graduates for the world of work or for further education. The reason for their response was that there were too much and/or frequent changes made in the curriculum in Tanzania.

Finding from student questionnaire on the same item show that three (15.8%) of student respondents said that the then curriculum would help them get employment after graduation. No reasons were advanced over this response. Thirteen (68.4%) observed that the then curriculum prepared the graduate for further education. In this response, the following reasons were advanced: the curriculum did not provide professional skills to students; the curriculum was too theoretical; therefore, they suggested the curriculum be modified to prepare the graduates for self-employment after completing their education cycle. Three (15.8%) mentioned that they were not sure whether the curriculum prepare the students for further education or for the world of work. The reasons advanced for this response included: poor teaching, poor learning environment, shortage of teaching and learning materials and finally it was mentioned that most secondary school graduates were seen jobless in the streets. Table 2 shows summary results on whether the curriculum caters for the world of work or further education or for both.

Table 2 Teacher and Student responses on curriculum and world of work

Curriculum suitability	Respondents category	number	percentage
Caters for further education	Students	13	46.4
	Teachers	2	7.2
Caters for the world of work	Students	3	10.7
	Teachers	0	0
Caters for further education and the world of work	Students	0	0
	Teachers	4	14.3
Not sure	Students	3	10.7
	Teachers	3	10.7
	Total	28	100

In summary, in this study it was revealed that, 15(53.6%) of all respondents (teacher and student respondents) were of the view that the then curriculum prepared the learners for further education whereas three (10.7%) of respondents said that it prepared the graduates for the world of work. Meanwhile, 6(21.4%) said that they were not sure whether it prepared the graduates for the world of work or not, and four (14.3%) were of the view that it prepared the graduates for both, further education and the world of work.

Discussion of findings
This study used cross-sectional survey research design. The method used to collect data was only questionnaire the study was confined to this method because time was limited. Also, the sample of 28

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respondents was too small for a researcher to come up with generalisable findings. However, looking at data from the reviewed literature and current study data meta-analysis one can generalise the findings of this study. These findings may motivate curious researchers with resources and time to open into a similar large research project that can come up with more evidence on the findings of this study.

The findings show that comprehensive curriculum is preferred most by both teacher and student respondents (100%); this suggests that technical and vocational education should be an integral part of general education in secondary schools and probably technical and vocational education is a social demand in today's Tanzania. This can help the graduates join the world of work after completing their respective education cycles. These findings are consistent with those of (Makombe*et al.,* 2010; Sifuna, 2010; Ndala, 2006; Ananuah-Mensah*et al.,*2007; Wahyudin2008; MoEVT, 2010;Etim, 2007) who report that diversified curriculum is a solution to the problem of unemployment. In other words, education should prepare the graduates for the world of work and further education.

Interestingly, 3 out of nine teacher respondents say that they are not sure whether the curriculum prepares the graduates for further education or for the world of work. This is an eyebrows raising issue; however, the reason given is that, there are too many curriculum changes in Tanzania. This suggests that frequent changes of the curriculum may frustrate its goals.

Also it is revealed that most respondents are of the view that the secondary education curriculum does not prepare the graduates for the world of work. This implies that the curriculum does not provide a broad horizon of employment to secondary school graduates or probably the way it is taught does not help a student to link what is taught in the classroom and real life experience. This finding is similar to those of (Ndala, 2006; URB, 2004; ILO, 2006; MOEVT, 2010; Obanya, 2006; Asian Development Bank, 2007; Anamuah-Mensah*et al.,* 2007) who establish that secondary education curriculum in most developing economies is irrelevance.

Conclusions

Reviewed literature indicates that some educationists recommend comprehensive curriculum for secondary education; however, some educationists recommend general education curriculum for secondary schools. The purpose of this study was to address these contradicting views though most of literature indicates that comprehensive curriculum is better. This study concludes that comprehensive curriculum is better than purely general education curriculum because 28(100%) of the respondents prefer comprehensive curriculum in secondary schools. While secondary education in Tanzania intends to prepare the graduates for the world of work and for further education, it appears that the secondary education curriculum does not prepare the graduates for the world of work because 53% of respondents are of the view that secondary education prepares the graduates for further education, but not for the world of work.

Recommendations

This study recommends establishing pilot schools with comprehensive curriculum, and thereafter, there is need to evaluate their impact in terms of competencies and success in life in terms of employment creation and/or employability. Also a similar study with more respondent categories, sample size, and data collection methods need to be conducted.

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