The Challenges Facing the Execution of Communication Skills Course in Higher Education Institutions. A Case Study of two Universities in Tanzania

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Abstract

The paper examines challenges in the teaching of Communication Skills (CS) course in higher education institutions in Tanzania. Teaching of the course in Tanzania started in 1978 to date and aimed at helping students learn effectively using English language as medium of instruction. However, many students fail to communicate effectively using the language and exhibit deficiencies even after doing the course. The study was informed by relativist-interpretivist research paradigm which is consistent with the qualitative approach and case study method. It involved 55 participants including: students, lecturers, Heads of Departments and Academic Deans from one public and one private university in Tanzania as well as officials from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. The respondents were sampled purposively. The interviews, observations, focus group discussions and document reviews were used to generate data that were analysed mathematically. The key challenges revealed include: poor background of the students and lecturers, interference of other languages and lack of appropriate resources. In view of the findings, it is recommended that teaching of the CS course should start from the lower levels of education, among others.
Keywords: Communication, Communication Skills and Communication Skills Course

Introduction

This study examines the challenges facing the implementation of Communication Skills course in Tanzanian institutions. Tanzania is a multi-ethnic and multilingual country, home to approximately 120 languages. Strom (2009) explains that one of those languages is absolutely dominant, namely the Bantu language Kiswahili. This language has been used as a language of wilder communication along the Tanzania coast for centuries but was especially promoted from 1960 as the National Language by Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the first President of independent Tanzania. To date, the official and material language of Tanzania is Kiswahili.

With reference to formal education and Training system, Tanzania follows a 7-2-7-4-2-3+ System of education. Pre-primary education takes two years; primary education takes seven years followed by four years of lower secondary education (Ordinary level), two years of upper secondary education (advanced level) and three years (pus) of tertiary or university studies.

The Communication Skills course was one of the course programmes devised by Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and Ministry of Education and Vocation and Training (MOEVT) to help students cover the planned content, skills and knowledge. According to TIE (2007) the course was prepared to help students develop effective skills. It aimed at aiding students develop ability to communicate in their specialist subjects taught in English Language. The course was introduced to solve the problems in learning effectively using English Language which was the medium of instruction (MOI) in the institutions of Higher Education in Tanzania

However, some studies (Komba, 2008; Mbowe, 1994) indicate that many students in the Higher Education institutions fail to communicate effectively using English and the Students exhibit deficiencies in Communication Skills even after doing the course. Besides, majority of the students claim to have communication problems even after doing the course. These problems demonstrate that the CS course does not meet the students' academic and communication needs. The skills taught are not applicable in other course. The studies (Komba and Mbowe) indicate that various problems need to be solved. Some issues need to be explored through research to understand better the teaching of Communication Skills in Higher Education institutions in Tanzania especially the challenges faced in its implementation. Therefore, the following were the objectives of the study: to examine the challenges faced while teaching and learning the CS course and recommend ways of addressing the challenges.

The previous studies have not revealed the challenges related to teaching and learning of the course. The study has investigated the challenges that face the implementation of the course in Tanzanian institutions. The results are used to compare and contrast the challenges highlighted in the background to the study. Finally, I explore the ways of addressing the challenges that face the teaching of CS course in Higher Education institutions in Tanzania.

Literature Review

The evolution of Communication Skills course can be traced back to the mid 1970's in England (Msangi, 2008). The course was introduced in the vocational centres after realizing that most of the overseas students from non – English speaking countries (Africa, Arabian, Asia and others) showed poor academic performance which was attributed to their limited knowledge of English. The CS course was geared to helping students improve their level of mastery of the medium of instruction. It was taught in the universities, polytechnics and other higher learning institutions.

Rugemalira (1990) contends further that similar arrangements existed in many universities across Africa and beyond. There was a CS centre at the University of Zimbabwe, a language and study skills at University of Nairobi, a Communication Skills Unit (CSU) at the University of Dar es Salaam and a course in Language and Study skills at Kenyatta University in Kenya. Each of these institutions was entrusted with the task of tackling the language problem.

Mlacha and Rea (1985) indicate that, in the Tanzanian context, the CS course was introduced for the same reasons. The course was first introduced at the University of Dar es Salaam in 1978. Besides, the CSU was also established at the same University in the same year as a semi – autonomous section of the department of foreign languages and linguistics. It was the university's response to the complaints from lecturers and external examiners that the students were failing to express themselves effectively in English. Then, Sokoine University of Agriculture started teaching the course in 1987.

Various studies (Mbowe, 1994; Msangi, 2008; Rugemalira, 1990; Mbuligwe, 1995; Komba, 2008) have been conducted in secondary schools, technical colleges, tertiary institutions and public universities. However, the studies did not follow the scope and methodology employed in this study.

Mbowe (1994) examined and established the factors influencing lack of interests in the CS course among the students in Tanzanian training instructions. Mbowe's findings indicated that there was a lack of CS tutors and that even the few available were specialists in general English teaching and not in Communication Skills. Msangi (2008) carried out a critical analysis of the technical CS syllabus. The study pointed out the constraint of the teaching staff especially in terms of their number in relation to that of their students. However, the study was silent on the challenges that face the implementation and their solutions.

Rugemalira (1990) discussed the Communication Skills Unit (CSU) and the language problem at the University of Dares salaam, Tanzania. He revealed that only a few of the hours were allocated to tutorial sessions in small groups. The teachers saw themselves as teaching matters that ought to be dealt with at earlier levels. In other words, a University lecturer would not like to see himself do the work of a secondary school teacher. This implies that the lecturers had negative attitude towards teaching the course and the students' lack of motivation to learn. The strategy that was used in teaching CS course was lecturing. The previous, studies (highlighted above) show that lecturing is one way of communication that is not effective because the teacher is authoritative, dominates and source of all knowledge whereas the students remain passive, bored and uncooperative. Lecturing assumes that the students know nothing about the discipline.

Mbuligwe (1995) conducted a study to evaluate the CS dimension in the General studies (GS) course for High Schools candidates in Tanzanian Secondary Schools. GS course is a CS related course in High Schools. The findings of the study indicated that majority of the respondents (80%) said that there had been no preparation for the GS teachers. As the teachers were not prepared for GS, follow–ups on its implementation were minimal. Some teachers in the Schools visited did not have the syllabus. According to Mbuligwe (ibid) without the syllabus the text book is useless and the teacher is crippled as he lacks clear objectives.

Impact of the CS course on students' communicative abilities was studied by Komba (2008). The study found out that the skills taught were not helpful to students in all subjects. In addition, majority of the students did not

employ writing techniques during lectures and in their assignments. They exhibited deficiencies in writing skills even after doing the course. Other challenges identified by Komba (ibid) included small number of course lecturers and poor teaching approaches which did not aid lecturer student interaction. Moreover, the resources available, both human and materials, were inadequate to make the course delivery efficient and effective furthermore, the dominant teaching method was lecturing which did not aid interaction. It led to ineffective teaching, learning and communication. Besides, the teaching of the CS courses was more lecturer–centred than student-centred. The anticipated course outcomes, including students' mastery in writing and note taking skills were not adequately realized.

Another study was conducted by Mwalimu (1998) on the attitudes and motivation of students towards CS course. It was found out that the CS course was faced with a number of problems, that is, insufficient time allocated for the courses, unsuitable learning and teaching materials, poor methods of teaching and CS teachers over emphasis on the teaching of English Grammar.

Generally, the review of related studies and the studies done in the tertiary institutions on the CS course has pointed out that most of the students communicate ineffectively using the English language. Therefore, this study was important as it explores the challenges behind the problem and ways of addressing them. The academic, political economic and contextual challenges which face the teaching of CS course need to be studied in detail to find out their remedies. There was a need to conduct systematic enquiry that goes beyond generally available knowledge about the challenges that face the implementation of CS in Tanzania. Having identified the challenges, a serious study had to be done to explore the ways of addressing the challenges experienced in teaching CS course in Tanzania.

Methodology

This study was conducted within the relativist ontology. This is due to the fact that the relativists take a subjective position. This implies that knowledge is constructed as people (such as lecturers and students in case of this study) interact.Since my study was related to the teaching of the CS course, the view of the relativists was relevant. Similarly the study was informed by interpretivist epistemology because my intention was to get knowledge about how teachers and students interpret and understand the challenges faced in the teaching of CS course.

I used the qualitative approach in this study because it is consistent with the philosophical orientation (paradigm) I chose for this study (the relativist interpretive paradigm). Besides, this research approach was adopted because, as Adam (2007) explains, it was concerned with qualitative a phenomenon, that is the challenges relevant to the teaching of CS in Tanzania. The features of qualitative research include collecting data in the form of description and obtained from the participants point of view (live experience) (Dörnyei, 2007). In addition, most of the analysis is done in words, which means the information is descriptive.

In this study, I adopted the case study method, a research strategy that involves the empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, using multiple – sources of evidence (Saunders, et al 2004). The present study was a multiple case study (of two universities) that sought to examine the teaching of CS course. The method allowed an in–depth insight and better understanding of the problems faced by the students, lecturers, universities and Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. However, as Ong'ondo (2010) argues, it is not the main goal of case study to generalize. It is interested in undertaking the particular, nothing that this is a very important aspect of social science research. Creswell (as cited in Ong'ondo 2010) argues that as a general rule, qualitative researchers are reluctant to generalize from one case to another because the contexts of cases differ.

Basically in this study, I was guided by the need to select participants who were likely to give rich and in – depth information on the issue being studied as is the expectation in qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007). The study was conducted in the northern and Eastern zones of Tanzania for my convenience in terms of costs and accessibility. The regions (provinces) in the zone include Arusha, Kilimanjaro, Manyara and Tanga). I carried out a case study of two Universities (a public and private University) and one agency of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. The universities chosen were relevant to my study because they offered various courses in Education, Business and Management or Humanities and Social Sciences, hence could afford me different perspectives on the teaching of CS in the institutions of higher learning. The students and lecturers in the universities constituted public and private universities. The officials from the Ministry of Education and

Vocational Training (MOEVT) were part of the population. The MOEVT was an embedded case since the case study was a multiple or collective one. Wan and Ong 'Ondo (2011) explain that in a study, researchers can have a big case and other smaller case within the big case.

Saunders et al (2004) defines a sample as a part of population. The subgroups sampled included: first, second and third year students. Besides, lecturers (teaching CS course and other courses) were sampled. In addition, each HOD where CS course is located was part of the population sample. Finally, Officials from MOEVT were participants due to their involvement in the curriculum preparation. The exact number of each cadre of participants is indicated in Annex-I

Generally, for the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was used to select the participants because it is less expensive and quick for selecting a sample. Convenience sampling was used to select other lecturers that are those who are teaching other courses of their specializations. I used four techniques to generate data. Interviews, observation, focus group discussion and documentary review to generate data. Indeed, these are the data generation techniques which are commonly used with qualitative researchers as explained by Baxter and Babbie (2004). Ong'ondo (2009) indicates that interpretivists commonly use these techniques to collect primary data. As Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011, p.103) suggest, data analysis in qualitative research ought to follow a six stage procedure involving the following steps, transcribing the data, re–familiarizing with the data, first phase coding, second phase coding and third phase coding and producing a report. This is the approach to thematic analysis used in data analysis process.

Qualitative research is evaluated for its trustworthiness (Baxter and Babbie, 2004). Qualitative researchers use the following terms: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. I used the terms to ensure that the research process was trustful, careful and rigorous enough to qualify to make the claims it does. Ethics are critical aspects for the conduct of research. As Cohen et al (2007) advises, I told all participants the truth and they were given detailed information about the research. Besides, I assured them about their express content, confidentiality and anonymity. Finally, I showed appreciation of the participants support.

Findings

The challenges that were revealed are in four main groups: challenges related to the background of the students and lecturers, challenges related to the curricula and syllabi, the challenges concerning the teaching and learning process and the challenges concerning resources.

The study revealed that poor background of the students and lecturers was one of the main challenges facing the implementation of CS course in Tanzania. There were six challenges related to this challenge: background of the students, poor language background, interference from other languages, negative attitudes of the students and lecturers, insufficient qualifications of the lecturers and finally the lecturers teaching other courses.

Regarding the background of the students, it was stated that the students were cramming to memorize content while learning the CS course as quoted below:

> ….generally, for this course, the challenge is students. They are cramming. Since they are cramming, they cannot apply the knowledge. For instance, most of the students not only in our university but also in many universities in Africa, after being taught at the end of semester and after completing their examinations, they normally throw away their books. They are not applying the knowledge because they are cramming. So, when you cram, you can't apply the knowledge. You live with your mistakes. So, that is the challenge… **(Former student of CS course)**

When asked to give views on how such a challenge could be addressed, the students were advised to work hard in studies and be open to learning as noted below:

> ...As for me, if the students are attentive, the claim that students are many or the lecturer speaks with low voice does not matter much. Seriousness in attending classes on time and punctuality can be a solution. Also, paying attention to the lecturer can be a solution. It is possible if people are serious but it seems that many of us are not serious. We are here and we are learning what we came for but we meet the friends. Now the mob psychology (especially for the young ones) affects many. For the older ones, it is not a problem, being attentive is our duty. We know what we are doing. But for the young ones, if it is CS period, they just sleep in the dormitories... **(Former student of CS course)**

The findings of the study also showed that many Tanzanian students were poor in communication using English language. Poor reading culture was identified as one reason for this poor mastery of the English language as reported below:

> …. A few of them know how to communicate but others no. Tanzanians don't have a good background in speaking language. Presentation was hard due to lack of competence in English grammar. The students sometimes fear to answer questions due to poor grammar. According to my experience, communication is very broad and wide. I don't think if even the Ministers know what communication is, what is the right communication, how to communicate in a right way, in a right manner, to whom, how and when. It means that they lack the knowledge of Communication Skills. So you can find that somebody is presenting something very poorly and it is shame upon him. I think this is because they lack the knowledge and they don't even notice that this is a problem with them. So, they think they are right while they are not... **(Former student of CS course)**

The findings of the study denoted three remedies: conducting needs analysis, teaching CS course and English language from lower education levels and encouraging students to communicate as one of the quotations shows:

> ....It is possible to solve this problem because the universities emanate things which are considered important. For instance, I visited one University and found that all students were learning English from first year. It did not matter what a student was studying. They had to learn English. This is considered as an important course to all. You have to learn this from the first year to the last year of graduation. I think that may be done even here. You have to learn it. In normal circumstances, you will find that it is a helpful to you as a graduate because once you graduate here and you fail to practice what you have earned from the University, it is shame... **(Student studying CS course)**

Furthermore, other languages apart from English made CS course in English fail to achieve its objectives. Most of the communication is done in Kiswahili which was being used when students were communicating with their fellow students as verified by the following statement:

> …Yah, code mixing and code switching. Sometimes he may go back 'Kama akiona watoto hawajamuelewa', he switches to another language. So this is the trend. "Wasichague kwamba kwa sababu yule anaweza" Ndio tumuulize huyu" If everyone engages on these activities actually ningumu kidogo... Through those needs given, they try to develop the curriculum "Kwa hiyo sasa anapoitwa, unapokwenda kumuuliza nini, tayari anakusaidia ku-develop curriculum" but as far as I know it is difficult in Schools and I have visited some of them… **(Participant from Ministry of Education)**

The respondents suggested ways to address such challenges. These include using English language all the time. English should also remain a compulsory subject to all students as cited:

> …The lecturers and administration have to suggest that when a student enters the office, he/she has to speak English all the time. It will help because you can't punish the university students and we can't force them to talk. The only means to control them is to start with the lecturers and administration. Then others will follow in using use English language... (**(Student studying CS course)**

Similarly, the findings of the study denoted that students and lecturers have negative attitudes towards English language and CS course. Three challenges emerged; difficulty of CS course and English language, lack of interest and underestimated value to CS course and English language.

Regarding the difficulty of CS and English Language courses, the study denoted that the students, HODs, academic deans and the Ministry of Education developed the attitude that the CS and English language courses were too difficult to learn and apply as noted below:

> ...I think the course is too complicated. It has many topics. The problem I am facing is only that in communication we have many topics. I don't know where I am supposed to read or where to start. Time is not enough. The topics should be few. Our lecturer is always giving us a lot of notes. So it confuses us. We don't know what to read and what not to read. .... **(Student studying CS course)**

The participants proposed that teaching all language skills simultaneously could address this challenge. With regards to low interest towards CS course, the findings indicated that the students and lecturers had low interest towards CS course and English language Course. They were just forced to learn and use English language as quoted below:

...actually we need to have the basic skills for communication if a person wants to communicate with any one from any place in terms of the language used. With this medium of instruction: Kiswahili for primary education and English for the upper education, we need this Communication Skills course. We have to deal with it and this is what we are doing. We have to deal with four language Skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. These are very important and how do we do on this? The basic thing is not just only reading, it is not only sitting there and listening, it is not only writing, is not only speaking. All of them should go together... **(Participant from Ministry of Education)**

To develop interest towards CS Course was suggested as a solution to the challenge.

Concerning underestimated value of CS and English language courses, the findings noted that the value of CS course and English language was under estimated as seen in the statement below:

...I cannot say that it is well researched but I may real say that we have one challenge. For example take any level between the two we are discussing. I understand that this is not among the core courses. Many students do not take it as a serious course. Yes, for them, they consider it as a subsidiary course. It is not the same effort the students apply in other courses. For example, a student taking physics and mathematics and whatever the course scores A, A, A and he fails CS course. When you ask him why, he treats it as a subsidiary or less important course. He does not treat it as a core course...**(Participant from Ministry of Education)**

The possible remedies include teaching the importance of CS course to the students and the public as the following extract shows:

....There is number of times when they will discuss, they will use it in abundance. However, most of them are now politicians. Most of them are applying the skills they got in the same subject. They are politicians. You can see them arguing very well. They did not know that Development Studies course was preparing them to become good politicians later. At that time, there was narrow understanding. So, one of the things which probably can help to address this challenge is to keep on educating these people that this course is not less important as they consider it. They are going to use it... **(Participant from Ministry of Education)**

Another challenge related to poor background of students and lecturers is insufficient qualifications of lecturers. Some students interviewed explained that some topics were not taught well as verified by the following statement:

…If I am teaching a certain topic and I am not conversant with it, I will real struggle looking for the materials. How can I teach this course? What do students need in this topic? If I have the knowledge, I have studied the course, I have specialized in communication skills, I could not suffer. I will just prepare because I know what is very important in this topic and whatever. So, I think the qualification is a challenge. From secondary school, I studied English as a normal course and the language of instruction. In A-level (form five and six) I studied HGL that is, History, Geography and English Language. In undergraduate level, I was majoring English and ICT (Information Technology Communication). At the in Master's level, I studied Master of Education majoring teacher education but in English, not in communication skills. I have not real studied communication skills except the English and four language skills. It is very important to have those people who have specialized in teaching communication skills and of course I am interested in it because I think it comprises so many things more than English. Myself, I think it has a lot other things to offer**... (Lecturer teaching CS course)**

On how the challenges could be addressed, many participants, especially the students, requested the universities and the government to train the teachers as stated below:

...I can see a lot of problems that are real associated with lack of Communication Skills course. Back to Secondary Schools, somebody can even question the way of teaching English as a subject at the primary and secondary schools because the outcomes can be seen at the university level. If students don't have good and competent English teachers, very likely they are going to meet problems in communication using English at the University level. So the major problem I can see is real teachers of English, good teachers of English at the lower levels. To me, I think the issue of training competent teachers is very important right from the Secondary School level. Those who are earmarked to be good English teachers and have a potentiality of that should be trained for that…. **(Academic Affairs Dean)**

In terms of poor background of students and lecturers, the final challenge was caused by the lecturers teaching other courses. The lecturers teaching CS course complained that the students were reluctant to use the English language because they knew that other lecturers taught while mixing languages. One lecturer teaching CS Course made the following statement:

> ...The students even sometimes say 'this madam is very strict because we are facing difficulties compared to other courses where lecturers do allow us to speak in Kiswahili'. But we had a meeting with lecturers teaching other courses and we said that these students will continue failing unless other lecturers assist us because we cannot go to class and order lecturers to teach in English language only. Other lecturers are teaching in Kiswahili. So even students become reluctant knowing that there are lecturers who will teach them in Kiswahili and they will understand just because they are code-mixing. But when it comes to examinations, if you look at what they have written, you will see a lot of problems. They cannot express themselves. There are some lecturers who claim that this is not communication skills. Only communication skills lecturers should do this. You can even sometimes pass by and hear some of the lecturers teaching in Kiswahili. If a lecturer is teaching while mixing the languages, it is a problem already. That is how we teach our students... **(Lecturer teaching CS course)**

Many participants proposed the employment of competent, qualified and professional lecturers.

Other main challenges related to the curricula and syllabi included inadequate time, poor structure of CS course and lack of research on the content hence inadequate curricula and syllabi. The final challenge under curricula was inability of the lecturers to interpret the curricula.

Pertaining to inadequate time and poor structure of CS course, the time allocated to teaching of CS course was not enough as cited:

> ...It does not address the needs because the time allocated to this particular subject is very limited. We are teaching this course to all levels, from the certificate to Diploma and finally bachelor's degree level. They are always taught in one year (the first year). There are some programmes which are taking it in the first semester and there are some programmes that take it in the second semester known as business communication. It is not different from communication skills. There are some additions of how they are going to tackle the employment opportunities in this business communication but it is almost the same. So, it is normally carried out in one semester with the certificate and the Diploma. It is carried out in two semesters with some of the programmes. They are studying CS course in the first semester as communication skills but during the second semester, it is called business communication...... **(Lecturer teaching CS course)**

In relation to the lack of research for needs assessment, the studies to find out the needs of students in terms of various courses were minimally conducted as shown in the statement below:

> …Exactly! Exactly! Exactly that is the meaning of the needs assessment, the meaning of needs which have the assessment before. Developing country, you know, it's only because of the country's economy is not good. We don't do this always…**(Participant from Ministry of Education)**

With reference to shortage of researches, several remedies were recommended. The Universities were asked to develop their own curricula because they were independent from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training as illustrated below:

> ...Actually I may say that although the activities of the students are there in our syllabuses but it is not well done. They are there but may be the interpretation of the syllabi is difficult because the activities are there. That is now a problem. May be it is due to the incompetence of teachers or whatever but everything is there directed. That's where may be sometimes you may say that the development of curricula should involve everyone: stake holders and students should, teachers and the curricula coordinators and the inspectors so that they know what is going there... **(Participant from Ministry of Education)**

The interpretation of the syllabi was a challenge to the lecturers. The participants explained that may be the problem was caused by the incompetence of teachers as illustrated in the notes below:

> ... The activities are there but it is difficult to interpretation of the syllabi. That is now a problem. May be this is due to the incompetence of teachers but everything is directed there. That's where may be sometimes you may say that the development of curricula should involve everyone: stake

holders, students, teachers, the curriculum coordinators, inspectors, etc. so that they know what is going there... **(Participant from Ministry of Education)**

On how to address the challenges, the respondents proposed that competent, professional and qualified lecturers should be employed. It was further said that the teachers should have taken the courses themselves at either undergraduate or master's levels as illustrated below:

> ...the teachers must be grounded in the courses they are assigned to teach. I am recommending that that no teacher should be assigned to teach a subject which he/she did not take at undergraduate level. It is important that teaching of the courses be done by people who are conversant with the subject matter they teach and a rough guide is that the teacher must have taken the course himself/herself at the undergraduate or master's level…**(Documentary Review)**

In relation to teaching and learning process of the CS, two challenges emerged; poor presentation skills and the large number of the students. About poor presentation skills, most of the methods used in the process of teaching and learning the CS Course were not effective. The methods include: lecturing, note taking and reading notes provision of hand outs, among others. For example, the students were given a lot of notes as explained below:

> ...she is just using the projector, and she reads the things that are displayed by the projector. So, students who are sitting at the back cannot see clearly. The teacher reads only. She doesn't give any kind of explanation. She is just reading! So, I think it is not okay. In addition, our teacher just gives us a lot of notes, so it confuses us. We don't know what to read and what to leave. By using of projector, we are writing from there. So much notes... **(Student studying SC course)**

Regarding the remedies, the respondents suggested that proper teaching methods could be used to address the poor presentation skills. The lecturers must communicate with the students through group discussions and classroom presentations. One student made this statement:

> ...I think the Lecturers need communicate with students. Maybe we are talking about presentations or group discussions. So, she has to spend a lot of time for students to discuss, present and interact. No one will feel bored like just sitting and doing nothing except listening. So, interaction and trying to do group discussions by grouping the students into three is very important. During the presentations, the lecturers can ask one student after another to come in front and present. Then fellow students will assess you. The interactions like those will help us... **(Student studying SC course)**

From the findings of the study, a large number of students was a challenge to the students themselves. There were too many students for the Universities to accommodate in a single classroom session. It was noted that a single classroom session had about 600 students who were in the assembly hall. The students were not satisfied with that kind of situation and they failed to effectively access what was going on, as cited:

> ...the number of students is too large to accommodate. It is estimated that first year students are almost six or seven hundred. This group include students who are taking education courses but there are other faculties like theology and Law. These are all taught by the same lecturer. I think this is a problem. Sometimes I am not satisfied with that because the class is too large. So, there are many students. Sometimes we can't access effectively what is going on. So to be satisfied with a lecture, it depends on the position where you are sitting... **(Student studying SC course)**

The possible remedies were suggested. They proposed methods like regrouping students in the classrooms and considering resources available during the admission of the students as one respondent said:

> …In case of sitting arrangement in classroom, may be they can group us, because here, we have different programmes like BAED, BED, and BSS. The lecturers can teach us according to our programmes, each programme alone. I think they have few lecturers (only two) who teach Communication Skills. So, if they divide the students, they cannot teach all of them. So this is the challenge to the side of university, because the university has very few lecturers. I think the university has to sit and see what to do... **(Student studying SC course)**

The challenges relating to teaching and learning resources were reported as shortage of human resources, inadequate infrastructure and teaching and learning materials. In terms of human resources, that there was a shortage of human resources at the universities. As they indicated, there were several reasons for the human resources shortage: retiring, deaths, crossing over from one department to another or from one ministry to another as illustrated below:

....Yah, it is the challenge. That is not only the problem of the university but also the nation. We need to train more Human Resources. On the other side, even this system of birth control might be the cause of the problem of the shortage of Human Resources in every sector. Some are retiring and others are just passing away. Then others are crossing from one department to another, from one ministry to another, from one profession to another in searching for green pastures. But again those who are trained, jump over, they cross over from this department to another department, from one ministry to another Ministry in search of … **(Former student of CS course)**

The findings also showed that Tanzania had a shortage of universities. Besides, the available Universities faced the shortage of buildings. The students highlighted the reasons for the challenge: many students and few desks and chairs.

With regards to how such challenges could be addressed, the respondents asked the Universities to build more classes, halls and buy chairs. Besides, the Universities were asked to open more colleges. The participants made the following statement:

...The University should provide good sitting plan and chairs. Because the space is big but chairs are not enough. We are combined with other courses which mean that a class has 400-600 students. Also the university has to put more chairs in the lecture rooms instead of students moving with chairs from one class to another. Also the library is not enough because we are more than 400 students and the library can accommodate 200 students maximum. Sometimes books are not enough... **(Student studying SC course)**

Concerning teaching and learning materials, the participants highlighted an acute shortage of books. Additionally, some of the books were not relevant as cited:

...Even a few books we have are not relevant. I can't say with confidence that books are irrelevant. We have books with reading, writing and reading skills. We have this essential grammar. So I can say that generally most of the books are not helpful. They are helpful to some extent. We can access electronic sources from the internet. If the students are committed they can do something. They have internet throughout. They can access the internet from the library and at the computer laboratory... **(Lecturer teaching CS course)**

In order to address the challenges, the Universities and students were asked to buy teaching and learning materials including books. Not only that but also the Universities were requested to introduce remedial classes. Similarly, the lecturers requested for the creation of conducing environment like providing chairs and projectors as quoted:

....some courses enrol many students. Let us think of a way forward before taking the students. We need to think about accommodation. The students want to study but will they study comfortably? We must prepare the environment for them to be comfortable. The venues should have enough space, chairs and projectors. Advanced technology should be used; microphone should be of good quality... **(Lecturer teaching CS course)**

Likewise, the lecturers teaching other courses advised their fellow lecturers to write books that fit Tanzanians context.

Discussion

The presented data have to be discussed to establish whether or not the findings of the study are consistent with previous findings (Adam, 2007). The challenges faced in the implementation of CS courses needed to be explored through research to understand better the teaching of the CS Courses in higher education institutions in Tanzania

The study findings are also consistent with previous studies. Despite this fact, most of the previous studies did not suggest the remedies to the challenges identified: lack of interest, poor language background and interference of other languages apart from English. With regards to the interests, Msangi (2008) has shown that the students do not have interest in the CS course. Mbowe (1994) has also reported the lack of the interest in the CS courses among students in technical training institutions in mainland Tanzania.

The literature reviewed did not find any recommended remedies. The findings of this study have also indicated that the students, lecturers and Ministry of Education and Vocational training showed little interest in the CS

Course. It was proposed that the lecturers can develop the interest of the students by teaching the importance of CS Course. The students, lecturers and Ministry of education were asked to develop interest towards CS courses.

In terms of poor language background, Komba (2008) observes that most of the students enrolled in universities have varied language background. Tanzanian universities realized the problem and started offering CS course to their students in order to minimize problems related to English language in communication in the academic setting. This study also reported more findings that not only students but also lecturers who are incompetent using English language: The study has further proposed various remedies to address the challenge of poor background of the students and lecturers. Some of the remedies include teaching the CS and English language courses from lower levels. Besides, one language should be used as a medium of education; the participants suggested that either English or Kiswahili can be used as medium of education.

The previous studies have reported that English language is a barrier in teaching and learning of CS course. As Komba (2008) states, most of the students in the higher education institutions are still unable to communicate effectively using the English language. Brock–Utne (2004) also explains that English language is a barrier to the students and teachers because it is a foreign and unfamiliar language to many Tanzanians. Therefore, some teachers code-mix, code-switch or translate when they fail to express themselves effectively. Similar ideas have been confirmed by Omary and Kimambo (1975). Moreover, Msangi (2008) emphasizes that the continued use of foreign language in education will culminate in the falling of education standards and poor performance of the students academically.

As reported by the findings of this study, it has been found out that teaching was sometimes done in Kiswahili. The problems that students had in communicating effectively using English language were attributed by the development of Kiswahili. The study further pointed out that not only Kiswahili but also other languages (like mother tongues) have been interfering with the use of English language as medium of instruction in Tanzania.

Contributions of the study

Overall, it can be said that this study has made important contributions to knowledge in the fields of communication, Communication Skills and Communication Skills course. For example, CS course faces an acute shortage of human resources especially the lecturers. As indicated by the findings, the lecturers who teach the CS course do not have required qualifications in terms of academic skills, experience, professional skills and professional development.. This is caused by the shortage or lack of higher education institutions that have specialized in the preparation/ training of the CS lecturers in Tanzania. Furthermore, CS is just a component in other programmes. Unfortunately, it is either taught for one or two semester only. As it was suggested, the teaching and learning of CS course should start from the lower levels and continue up the advanced academic levels awarded by the institutions.

Finally, it has been revealed that Tanzania government knows the problems that are facing CS course but 'politics' are dominating the issue. There are few investigations or researches in education. It was claimed that the findings of the studies are kept in the shelves. Similarly, the participants claimed that, the government officials are 'investing' in their stomachs. Therefore, the education sector has been side-lined. The meagre budgetary allocation was cited as an example.

Recommendations

In view of the findings, the following recommendations are made: first, there is a need of serious attention to the challenges in education sector. Tanzanians should address the problems of the students practically. It implies that planning and commitment are highly needed, especially after the consideration of how CS Course and English language are serving or affecting the people. The government is urged to appoint a task force that can review the existing system. This will indicate seriousness in addressing the challenges highlighted. This might enable CS course to serve its intended purpose.

Secondly, there is need to choose one language that can be used as a medium of education because what is currently happening is the fight between two famous languages, namely Kiswahili and English, for prestige.

Thirdly, there is a need to provide education on the importance of CS course due to its applicability in life. Such education can minimize the negative attitude of the students and lecturers towards the course.

Fourth, resources available should be considered during enrolment of the students. Such consideration can address the challenges relating to the large number of students.

Finally, there is a need to invest in research and development. Conducting studies is expected to address various challenges, especially those related to the curricula and the syllabi. Besides, structure of the CS course needs to be reviewed. There is a need to revise the syllabi, develop curricula and allocate more time to CS course.

Suggestions for Further Research

This section makes suggestions on areas that deserve further investigation. First it is suggested that studies on the applicability of CS course after graduation should be conducted. Some issues to address should include whether or not workers communicate effectively, the challenges faced in the organizations due to communication and how to address such challenges.

Second, it is suggested that a study on the teaching of other language courses should be conducted to find out the challenges experienced in teaching and learning such courses. The courses include Kiswahili, French and Germany, among others. It's also suggested that a study on the challenges facing learners, teachers and education institutions should be done.

Conclusion

The study investigated the challenges of the CS in higher education institutions. Generally, the study sought to ascertain the extent to which CS course is serving its intended purpose in Tanzania. The main issue was to examine the challenges of the implementation of CS courses and how such challenges could be addressed. In terms of teaching and learning process, this study has made significant contribution by revealing the challenges that have not been addressed in the previous studies. This is the challenge of inadequate or lack of infrastructure.

Importantly, the study has shed light on the lack of high education institutions that offer CS course as an independent programme from the certificate level to the PhD level. With reference to teaching methods, one of the key findings showed that the lecturers teaching other courses are considered a challenge to CS course particularly in terms of using English language as a medium of education. Based on the study findings, this is a new discovery. With reference to the background of the students and lecturers, the overall key findings revealed the interference of other languages like mother tongues and Kiswahili.

Finally, the number of students was among the findings to the study. In connection to the previous studies this challenge has not been highlighted much. Even the remedies for the challenge have not been suggested in the empirical studies.

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ANNEX-I

THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

	Cadre of Participants	**University-X**	**University-Y**	**TOTAL**
1.0	**Interviewing**			
1.1	1st year students	10	10	20
1.2	2nd and 3rd year students	5	5	10
1.3	Lecturers (CS Course)	1	2	3
1.4	Lecturers (Other Courses)	2	2	4
1.5	Heads of Departments	1	1	2
1.6	Dean (Academics Affairs)	1	1	2
	TOTAL	**20**	**21**	**41**
2.0	**Focus Group Discussion**			
2.1	1st year students	**6**	**6**	**12**
3.0	**Classroom Observation**			
3.1	Teaching of CS Course	1	1	2
3.2	Conduct of Exams	1	1	2
	TOTAL	**2**	**2**	**4**
4.0	**Curriculum Developers (MOEVT)**	**2**		