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REVITALIZATION OF EDUCATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN EDUCATION FOR ENHANCING YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN AGRICULTURE IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the backbone of the Tanzania's economy regardless of its low productivity. Several efforts have been put in place to improve the situation including introduction of Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) policy to guide Tanzania education system to produce graduates who are competent in agricultural production and other hands on activities necessary for community development. Regardless of its contextual, theoretical and practical relevance, ESR policy overtime lost its position in the education circles. A Dialogue Conference was organised in Morogoro for exploring stakeholders' views on the need for revitalization of ESR in education for enhancing youth involvement in Agriculture. Data were collected by voice recording and note taking while thematic method was used for data analysis. Majority of the participants perceived the relevance of reconsidering ESR since it helps to inculcate positive attitude towards agriculture, equip students with hands-on skills, source of self-employment, self-reliance and improve classroom learning. Challenges of revitalization were also elicited, like teachers' lack of knowledge and skills on planning and utilizing experience developed through the ESR, shortage of teachers and inadequate resources for implementation. Voices of stakeholders favour rethinking of ESR and therefore appropriate strategies should be considered in the process of revitalising ESR taking into consideration the highlighted challenges.

Keywords: Revitalisation, Education for self-reliance, Agriculture, Education, Youth

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the backbone on the Tanzanian economy accounting for about half of the national income and slightly more than half of merchandise exports. The importance of agriculture is further emphasized by the fact that more than 80 percent of Tanzanians depend on agriculture as a source of food and employment especially to the rural dwellers (FAO, 2005; World Bank, 2001). It is estimated that there are 3.5 million households growing crops only, 2.3 milling growing crops and keeping livestock and nearly 58 thousand households keeping livestock only (National Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Those who deal with crops play a big role on supplying food to the national (FAO, 2005). The main food crops grown are maize, rice, cassava, sorghum, sweet potatoes, bananas, pulses and wheat. While the main cash crops are coffee, cashew nut, tea, cotton, tobacco and sisal. Despite its importance agricultural production has been not convincing. For example the average national yield of

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maize, which is regarded as the main food crop, is 0.75 per hectare instead of 7.2 per hectare expected yield when recommended management practices are used (Agriculture Research Institute - ARI Uyole, 2006). Several challenges exacerbate the situation and these include lack of access to important services like agricultural extension, low adoption of recommended technologies by farmers, less engagement of youth (energetic group) in agriculture, just to mention few.

Various efforts have been put in place to improve agricultural production and productivity in Tanzania. These include engagement of youth, a group of people who are energetic with potential to enhance agricultural development. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2013) about 35 % of the 44 .9 million population of Tanzanians are youths aged from 15 to 35 years. With increase in population and expansion of education opportunities the number of young men and women seeking for job opportunities has increased. Available data show that out of 700,000 youths who complete primary, secondary and tertiary education enter the labour force each year but only 40,000 get employed into formal sector (National Youth Development Policy, 2007). The majority of the remaining group migrates to urban areas seeking for jobs and exacerbate rural-urban migration exodus that results in social dislocation and increased crime rates in urban centres and cities. This situation has been mostly exacerbated by the fact that most of the people especially the young generation (future farmers) have negative attitude toward agriculture despite it being the backbone of the country's economy and offering opportunity of employment. In addition most of the youth lack capacity to transfer school knowledge to real life situations necessary for self employment as it was during the period when the "education for self-reliance" policy was implemented in schools (URT, 1984, cited in Malekela, 1984).

During the implementation of "education for self-reliance" policy practical and productive activities (in farms or workshops) were included into school curricula as an integral part of the learning process. In addition, experienced adults (other than school teachers) were pedagogically involved in school learning activities (Nyerere, 1967). The aim was to integrate theoretical teaching with the acquisition of practical skills. In this way, educational efforts were aligned in tandem with national socio-economic development plans. Schools ran farms or workshops to meet educational objectives and contributed to own economy. School learning was designed and ran in such a way that it linked well with community needs and realities. As a result, school leavers (youth) had positive attitude towards agriculture and also acquired practical skills that assisted them to engage in community development activities. More importantly school graduates were better able to engage in agricultural production and other productive life in their communities.

Following political and economic changes in the mid-1980s, the "education for self-reliance" policy gradually lost its position in education circles due to lack of support from policy makers in spite of its overriding contextual, theoretical and practical relevance (Ahmad, Krogh, Gjøtterud, 2014). This has made school learning detached from community life and led to a number of challenges such as insufficient outcomes of learning in schools, lack of pupils' capacity to transform school knowledge to real life situations and decline in the status of, interest in, as well as positive attitude towards agriculture among youths Tanzanian society at large (Ahmad *et al.,* 2014). As a remedy, studies conducted by (Kadenyi and Kariuki, 2011; Twalo, 2010) call for transformation of the education system into one that enhances situated learning. Learning which enable learners to develop learning experiences that are directly connected to real-world issues, problems and contexts (life relevance). Based

on previous experiences, education for self reliance seems to be one of the best option (Ahmad *et al.,* 2014). A study was therefore conducted to assess stakeholders' views on the need for revitalising ESR policy in Tanzanian education for enhancing youth involvement in agriculture.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at Nyandira primary school located in the Mvomero District of Morogoro Region. Nyandira was selected due to the fact that it is one of the primary schools that has potential to practice ESR due to a number of agricultural development projects introduced to the community members around the school. The study employed a cross sectional research design that allowed collection of information at a single point in time (Kothari, 2004) from the group of people selected to represent the entire population. These were community members (parents), school committee members and all teachers from Nyandira primary school, ward education coordinator, village and ward leaders. Others were local government officials like agriculture, health and community development workers. The purposive sampling was employed to select the participants based on their roles and responsibilities that will allow the researchers to collect the required information. A total of 26 stakeholders were selected to participate in the study.

In this study qualitative information was collected by using dialogue conferencing, which according to Gustavsen (1996); Pålshaugen, 1998; Gustavsen (2001) and Bhana, 2002 it provides a platform for democratic engagement of participants to critically reflect on issues of their concern and develop solutions. Following Engelstad (1996) three stage work procedure, a one day dialogue conference (DC) was therefore organised in the study area. The first stage of the DC was setting an environment for dialogue whereby a brief introduction was made by the facilitator in respect to rationale of the conference (Plate 1). This was followed by establishing ground rules and participants familiarising with each other and with principles guiding the conduct of DC as presented by Gustavsen (2001). Then facilitators presented and clarified topics for discussion and there after small groups of six members were randomly formed for Focus Group Discussion (FGD), which was conducted in two phases.

Plate 1: A facilitator setting an environment for DC

In the first phase, each group discussed the concept of ESR, its relevance and need for revitalization in primary school education. Each group was moderated by a facilitator, and notes were taken by a rapporteur selected by members of respective group. Discussions were

held in Kiswahili language which is comprehended by all participants. Discussions in small groups (Plate 2) by using Kiswahili language allowed participants to engage in deeper dialogues and ensured that every participant had a chance to give out his/her views and therefore more voices were heard. On average the FGD lasted for two and half hours and there after each group was given time for reflecting on the conclusions they had reached before presenting in plenary session. Then the views were further presented (Plate 3) and discussed in the plenary session in order to reach a final position on participants' views.

Plate 2: Participants in FGD

Plate 3: A participant presenting group work

The second phase of FGD was conducted to solicit participants' perceived challenges that might face the process of revitalising ESR activities in primary school education. Same procedures employed in Phase One were adopted and in average the discussions lasted for two hours. Thereafter each group reported back for plenary discussion, where the challenges presented were further discussed in order to reach a final position on participants' views.

Throughout the DC, researchers captured information/data by means of audio/video recording and note taking that were later on analysed to generate information that assisted to capture the stakeholders' views on the need for revitalizing ESR in primary school education. Thematic analysis procedure (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was applied to analyse data obtained through audio recording after verbatim transcriptions. Four research team members made analysis independently and listed emerging patterns. Finally notes were compared and discussed among researchers and final list was made.

Data obtained from note taking was analysed following content analysis procedure (Krippendorff, 2004), which entailed identifying, coding and categorising the primary patterns in the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The procedures enabled sorting out and categorising data into different themes (patterns), and numerous cross-references among emerging themes. With the aid of literature and experience on the topic, researchers were able to identify final themes, which are participants' views of on the relevance of ESR and challenges associated with its revitalisation in Tanzanian context.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the study results that are presented under two sections. The first section presents the findings on the relevance and need for revitalization of ESR in the primary school education as perceived by participants, while the second section describes the

perceived challenges that might affect the process of revitalising ESR in primary school education.

3.1 Relevance and need for revitalization of ESR in primary school education

The study findings show that the DC participants perceived the relevance of ESR and need for reconsidering in primary school curriculum. They indicated that ESR helps to inculcate positive attitude toward agriculture, equip students with hands on skills, helps graduates (youth) to be self-employed, self-reliance, and improve classroom learning as described in the subsequent sections.

3.1.1 Inculcation of positive attitude towards agriculture

During the focus group discussions, participants indicated that currently most of people especially young generation (future farmers) have negative attitude toward agriculture despite of it being the mainstay of the country's economy and offers opportunity of employment. This is justified by the increased rural-urban migration exodus. It was informed during the focus group discussion that negative attitude towards agriculture is exacerbated by the fact that agriculture is no longer part and parcel of primary school curriculum. Drawing from their school life experience participants indicated that during their era they participated in agricultural activities through ESR, which helped them to positively perceive agriculture as a source of livelihood. It was therefore expressed that for young generation (school children) to perceive agriculture as a potential sector for individual and community development, agriculture activities need to be part and parcel of the school learning. This can be possible through revitalization of ESR activities, which proved to enhance positive attitude towards agriculture in the past years. This is in line with Taylor and Munhall (1997) who found that the use of agricultural experience as a vehicle for learning allows the curriculum to be made relevant to learners' prior experience and for possibly developing knowledge, positive attitude and skills identifiable as important nationwide.

3.1.2 Equipping students with hands-on skills, orientation and confidence important for self-employment

As explained above more than 80% of Tanzanians are employed in agriculture sector. Given the state of limited availability of employment opportunities in formal sector, agriculture has the potentials for generating more self employment opportunities to the majority compared to other sectors of the economy. Due to this fact the respondents asserted that ESR philosophy is more relevant in primary school curriculum today than it was during the time of its conception in the 1960s. This is because during that time graduates were more certain to secure employment in the formal sector than it is the case today where a small fraction of graduate secure formal employment or are able to employ themselves.

For graduates to be self-employed it requires hands on skills, knowledge and confidence. All these are to be acquired or developed through socialisation systems of the society. If the systems are not in position to develop these attributes self-employment becomes difficult. During the discussion participants further revealed that their participation in ESR activities when they were in school was the main source of their hands on skills, and confidence in performing agricultural activities they are doing today. To support this argument, one participant hinted that '*I am a tomato grower and a larger portion of my household income*

comes from the tomato enterprise, but the fact is that all the knowledge and skills I employ in the enterprise were fundamentally developed when I was in school through ESR' (FGD 2, farmer participant 5).

Implicitly the participants compared two periods which are, the period when ESR philosophy was practiced fully and the period when it was side-lined, and commented further that during the period of ESR, learners developed useful knowledge and skills and practiced what they had learnt from school beyond school walls. Nevertheless, during the period marked with little emphasis on ESR, learners may be acquiring more knowledge but they cannot benefit from the knowledge beyond school walls. For instance, they cannot employ themselves in sectors like agriculture which is potential to providing employment for many youngsters. One of the participants stressed that *'We the people who were luckily in school during "Ujamaa" time, by participating in ESR activities, we developed life skills and endurance that are important for self-employment. Even when one is formally employed, he/she does agricultural related activities to increase family income. But young people who are graduating today, YES, they may have more knowledge, but are short of life skills and endurance that could make them employ themselves for example in agriculture sector*.' (FGD 2, policy maker participant 3)

3.1.3: Improvement in classroom learning

Mental and physical engagement through hands-on activities is the prerequisite for developing inquiry mind. This condition cannot be satisfied if the learner is not actively involved in the learning process where every day experiences become the basis for constructing new experiences (Wilson, 1998). During the focus group discussions participants indicated that they were not very much sure how engaging in ESR activities could improve classroom learning, they were of the opinion that it may improve classroom learning since such arrangement make it possible for pupils to put in practice what they theoretically learn in classrooms. One of the participants, in efforts to explain how ESR activities might lead to improvement in classroom learning, remarked that "*Physical works make the brain active. If the brain of the learner is not active, learning efforts of that individual becomes difficult".* (FGD 2, policy maker participant 4).

This is in line with (Wilson, 1998) who contends that the human brain – and thus problem solving capacities as well as critical thinking are developed through hands-on activities. Likewise, Lieberman and Hoody (1998) found that pupils who participated in teacher-guided but pupil-managed projects showed significantly better performance in standardised tests in mathematics, science and language compared to non-participating pupils. This implies that pupils who perform activities that engage them both mentally and physically do better in their classroom teaching.

3.1.4 Improvement in social behaviour

As social being we learn from each other through various ways and influence each other better if we observe actions and learn from acting together in groups guided by experienced adults. Based on theoretical learning and understanding of our contexts, as individuals, we evaluate what we learn from others and analyse their appropriateness in own situation and thus customise the experience by modifying it rather than copying. This is very fundamental in maintaining own identity and dignity in a globalised world (Fals Borda, 2001).

Regarding improvement in social behaviour, participants were of the view that ESR activities in school provide opportunities for pupils to work together sometimes with experienced adults in meaningful and relevant contexts. Such arrangement enables them to see the value of working together but also the conditions that are necessary for cooperative work. Besides, they develop an understanding that every group member should be responsible for the performance of the whole group, and there are chances to learn from each other. Such orientation is important in developing a sense of commitment to collective responsibilities over individualism. Individualism habits are associated with such vices as corruptions which is detrimental towards community development. In this regard, educational efforts will not only be geared towards knowledge acquisition and memorisation of facts for passing examination with good grades but also on developing emotions and ideal values such as love, respect, morals and cooperating behaviours. These social skills are building blocks for a platform on which knowledge and skills developed through educational systems will appropriately be applied for the benefit of the whole society. Stressing on this perspective, Nyerere reiterates that:
'Education provided must encourage development in each citizen of three things; an enquiring mind; an ability to learn from what others do, and reject or adapt to their own needs; and a basic confidence in their own positions as a free and equal member of the society, who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains' (Nyerere, 1967).

3.1.5 Improve school-community linkages

School-community is an important part for the well-functioning of a respective school. Hobbs (1994) argues that children develop within multiple contexts, and development is optimal when effective connections and continuities among the major systems are created. In this context, school, family and community are considered to be sub- systems that influence and shape the whole system of learning, which in turn influence and shape the school, family and community sub-systems.

During the discussions participants indicated that involvement of selected parents and other community members in school learning through ESR activities stand a better position in improving ties between community and the school. This is further supported by Epstein (1996) who asserts that the work of most communities and schools overlaps and share goals and missions. It is therefore important for the school to appreciate and utilise the richness of the community to provide additional resources, knowledge and skills for learning. At the same time community members can benefit by acquiring new agricultural technologies in the process of their involvement in helping pupils learning through outdoor activities (Kibwika, Kyazze, Loga, Apolot, 2010).

3.2 Challenges for revitalising ESR activities in the school curriculum

During the discussion it was noted that, though participants perceived the relevance and need for revitalizing ESR activities in the school curriculum, several challenges seemed to affect the revitalization process. The challenges mentioned included teachers' lack of knowledge and skills to utilise experience developed by learners when participating in ESR activities, shortage of teachers at school level, inadequate resources for implementation at schools, and

lack of community members' awareness of the importance of ESR activities in the primary school curriculum (Table 1).

Table 1. A summary of participants' presentation on the challenges of ESR revitalisation process

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Few teachers vs many students	Inadequate manpower (teachers)	Parents are not cooperating with teachers to assist students to learn	Inadequate teaching and learning facilities and infrastructures
Unmotivated teachers	Infrastructure and facilities are inadequate	Some subjects are not taught because there are very few teachers	Learning environment is a challenge to both teachers and pupils
Inadequate teaching and learning infrastructure	Learning environment not motivating	Lack of facilities and related infrastructures	Pupils are not exposed to varied environments for challenges at cognitive level which may motivate them to have big dreams.
Parents not making follow-ups or being not cooperative with teachers	Parents' perception toward education and (importance of education)	Teachers are not motivated	

3.2.1 Teachers' lack of competences in using ESR activities in school learning

Analysis of the participants' contributions in the discussion shows that, although teachers are important stakeholders in the ESR activities they are not well trained in utilising ESR activities to enable learners to develop experiences to capitalise on during classroom learning. This is in line with Ahmad *et al.*, (2014) findings, which claim that one of the main challenges of the ESR policy implementation in Tanzania is that its pedagogical potential is not understood and therefore not utilised by the teachers. This is substantiated by the following statement made by one of the participants:

> *'We should remember that as teachers, we were not trained to utilise experiences/knowledge developed through outdoor activities in classroom teaching.'* (FGD 1, teacher participant 2).

Another participant, added that, "*Since the current curriculum for teachers' education does not equip teachers with skills and knowledge to utilise outdoor activities in learning, such training could be done through in-service training, but unfortunately we have limited budget for in-service training.'* (FGD 3, education administrator participant 4). This implies that for revitalization of ESR activities in the primary schools there is a need for government to consider reviewing teachers' education curriculum and budget allocation for in-service training in order to fill the identified gaps.

3.2.2 Shortage of teachers

Shortage of teachers at the referent school was another challenge that was pointed out by participants as a constraint to ESR revitalisation process. All focus groups mentioned this as a major challenge not only for ESR activities but for the whole teaching and learning process in many rural primary schools run by the government. For instance, at present Nyandira Primary School with a population of 732 pupils (standard one to seven) have five teachers. According to Nyandira Ward Education Officer (WEO), the school is supposed to have 19 teachers. This means the school has a deficit of 14 teachers. Due to this inadequate manpower, it will be so challenging for planning and supervising outdoor activities. This is because planning and supervision of outdoor activities place additional demand for manpower.

3.2.3 Inadequate resources for implementation at schools

School farms and or workshops are the iconic features of ESR for meshing theory and practice through concrete, familiar, and meaningful tasks in the efforts to prepare learners for life in the society as envisaged in Education and Training Policy (URT, 1995). It was reported during the discussions that, of late, although many primary schools have considerably enough land, they lack important infrastructures, facilities and equipments important for operationalising ESR policy. This is because government funds directed to schools are very limited and have specific areas of interest. In addition, the schools lack self-reliance projects, implying that they cannot earn money to buy basic farm implements and seeds, leave alone putting up infrastructures like animal houses.

3.2.4 Lack awareness on the importance of ESR activities in the school curriculum among community members.

Community members' awareness on school programmes is of paramount importance and lack of which is detrimental. According to participants, many community members in Nyandira are unaware on the importance of education in general and the essence of ESR activities in the school curriculum in particular. They perceive ESR activities as non-educational and wastage of valuable time which would otherwise be used for classroom learning. Others see ESR activities as a form of exploitation whereby pupils work in the farm and the yield are appropriated by teachers. This is summarised in the following comment made by one of the participants:

> '*ESR activities in school are perceived as teachers' economic business' (*FGD 4, teacher participant, 5).

This perception is in line with Nyerere's (1988) claim that the pedagogical potential of ESR activities was not understood by stakeholders and therefore not utilised by teachers. Instead, the emphasis was mainly placed on the economic gain that accrued from self-reliance activities because teachers, in some cases, used ESR activities as their own source of extra income. This kind of understanding coupled with lack of strong ties between schools and their communities could have resulted into creation of an image that ESR activities school were only benefiting teachers.

It was also noted that participants were not aware of the existence of agriculture as part of vocational skills subject in the primary school curriculum, the part under which ESR outdoor activities are designated. This situation demonstrates the lack of communication between a school and its immediate community (including parents). According to Epstein (1995), the work of most effective families and schools overlap and they share goals and missions.

Implying that for effective functioning, each party should be informed, involved and committed to work towards common goals and developing horizontal ties for improving teaching practice (Taylor and Munhall, 1997; Lieberman and Hoody, 1998; Ballentyne and Packer, 2009; Krogh and Jolly, 2012). This seems not to be the case in the study area, this demonstrate weak school-community linkage and lack of understanding on the importance of school-community cooperation in educating young members of the community.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper has presented stakeholders views on the relevance of ESR in contempory education in primary school. Generally stakeholders were of the view that ESR activities are helpful in inculcating positive attitudes towards agriculture, improving classroom learning and developing good social behaviours /skills such as cooperation and hardworking, equipping students with hands-on skills that are very important in making them cope with everyday life demands. Lastly, it helps in developing positive attitudes, skills and knowledge which would help them employ themselves and ultimately be self-reliant and strengthening school-community linkages. Besides, the participants highlighted challenges that might impede revitalisation of ESR in primary schools. These include: teachers' lack of knowledge and skills to utilise experience developed by learners when participating in ESR activities, shortage of teachers, inadequate resources for implementation at schools and lack of community members' awareness on the importance of ESR activities in the school curriculum.

Based on these findings, it is concluded that voices of stakeholders favour rethinking of ESR in Tanzania, besides the highlighted challenges. Most of the challenges facing ESR revitalisation process as per stakeholders' views are manageable, if the linkages between the school and the community becomes strong. Strong ties become foundation for developing mutual interests, positive perception, trust and relationship between and among the involved parties. Therefore appropriate strategies for re-introducing ESR activities should be considered while taking account of the highlighted challenges. The strategies include capacity building (for teachers and potential community members), awareness creation through training on the importance of strong school-community partnership, developing partnership programmes aiming at benefiting both the school and community, establishing needed infrastructures at school and in the community in order to use ESR activities as pedagogical resources as well as agricultural technologies dissemination pathway to contribute to community development. However, the revitalisation process should be participative, empowering and democratic in order to benefit from the ESR activities.

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