The Pivotal Role of Teacher Motivation in Tanzania

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Abstract
In Tanzania, the integral role that teachers play in providing a quality education for students has been recognized consistently in government documents (e.g., Ministry of Education and Culture [MOEC] 1995; 2001). However, concerns about the quality of teachers and teaching in Tanzania persist (Massawe and Kipingu 2000; Kuleana 2001; MOEC 2003, 2004a; Rajani and Sumra 2003; Sumra 2004a; Davidson 2005). One factor that has had a significant impact on teaching quality is the lack of motivation among teachers. This paper discusses factors that contribute to this pervasive condition among Tanzanian educators and suggests policies and initiatives to raise teachers’ motivation levels.

1. Introduction
Since January 2002, Tanzania has committed to achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE), as laid out in its Primary Education Development Plan [PEDP] (MOEC 2001). This plan, which included the introduction of free primary education in the country, identified major reforms for the primary education sector in Tanzania for the five-year period 2002–2006. Though quantitative gains have occurred in the last three years in primary education in Tanzania—particularly in student enrolment numbers—the same cannot be said about the quality of education—the teaching and learning process that takes place within the classrooms and the schools.

The doctoral thesis upon which this article is based, Understanding and Improving the Quality in Tanzanian Primary Schooling (Davidson 2005), showed that though many factors affect the quality of education in Tanzania, a key factor—and one that largely has been neglected in government documents and plans—is teacher motivation. A pressing need exists for efforts to improve teacher motivation, primarily through improvements in teacher welfare. This need is fuelled both by the government’s moral obligation to improve teachers’ lives and by the very real possibility that a failure to address these problems will undermine the government’s attempts to achieve high-quality, sustainable UPE.

2. The Importance of Teachers
Numerous research studies have proved that educators play a pivotal role in ensuring high-quality education for students, regardless of the country in which they are teaching (Carr-Hill 1984; Riddell 1998; Motala 2001; O’Sullivan 2002; VSO 2002; UNESCO 2005). For example, the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO 2000, 20), to which Tanzania is a signatory, stated, “Teachers are essential players in promoting quality education.”

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The Tanzanian government’s official acceptance of the importance of teachers is most evident in its Education and Training Policy (MOEC 1995) and, subsequently, its PEDP (MOEC 2001, 9):

The teacher in the classroom is the main instrument for bringing about qualitative improvement in learning. Such quality is maximized where there is an enabling and supportive environment, where the learners participate actively in the process, and where pupils, teachers, and schools have opportunities for personal and institutional growth.

Despite the official recognition of the centrality of the teacher to quality education, teachers’ actual practices do not lend themselves to improving student learning. Research (e.g., Kuleana 2001; Massawe and Kipingu 2000; Rajani and Sumra 2003; Sumra 2004a) on teaching practices has found that:

- teaching approaches tend to be teacher-centered, not child-centered;
- teaching methods and styles often are limited, with “chalk-and-talk” lecturing the predominant style used;
- clear lesson objectives seldom exist; and
- performance on examinations has taken precedence over ensuring that students achieve the skills and learning required within the curriculum.


Overall quality of teaching was poor. Most classroom teaching observed was teacher centred. Children sit in regimented rows and little interaction with each other occurs. In nearly all the classes observed, few questions originated from pupils who were simply recipients of what the teacher was transmitting.

Many different, interrelated factors have thwarted recent efforts at quality improvements, including the rapid expansion in enrolment rates and the absence of classrooms and teaching and learning resources. However, the primary contributor is a failure to introduce actual quality-improvement initiatives.

To a certain extent, the dearth of reforms that have occurred in Tanzania can be considered a failure to turn plans into action. Though the following specific goals and outcomes were identified throughout the PEDP (MOEC 2001), the plan did not identify how these improvements were to be accomplished:

- Build people’s capacity in the education system.
- Improve pre-service and in-service training.
- Redeploy and increase the qualifications of existing teachers.
- Improve teachers’ styles and methods in the classroom.
- Enable teachers to use academically sound, child-friendly, and gender-sensitive techniques.
- Enable educational support staff, such as inspectors and district education officials, to support teachers.
- Employ extra teachers to accommodate increased student enrolments.
- Ask teachers to use double-shift and multi-grade teaching systems as an interim measure.
- Ensure an equitable and gender-balanced distribution of teachers.
- Increase teacher-to-pupil contact time.
- Attract higher quality trainee teachers.
- Have a minimum instructional week of 20 hours.
Though my research (Davidson 2005) recognized that improvements need to occur in teacher training and other related issues, these initiatives are unlikely to succeed unless the issue of teacher motivation is addressed.

3. Teacher Motivation

Classrooms can be built, additional teaching and learning resources can be provided, students can be taken to their lessons, school committees and communities can become actively involved in the teaching and learning process, inspectors and local education officials can offer adequate levels of support, and sufficient numbers of teachers can be employed to create learning-enabling environments. Further, efforts can be made to ensure that teachers are well-educated, highly trained professionals who are gender-sensitive advocates of child-friendly approaches and are able to work with large classes. However, none of these actions will ensure that teachers perform their duties.

Hence, teacher motivation becomes a critical factor. On one level, teacher motivation is related to a long list of variables, including whether or not an enabling environment exists and whether or not teachers are equipped to carry out their roles. However, at a basic level, teacher motivation is linked to how teachers feel they are being treated and to the way they perceive their own working and living conditions. For example, if a teacher feels that he or she is being asked to teach too many periods per week, the problem needs to be addressed, regardless of whether or not others in the education system perceive the teacher’s workload is too high.

Unfortunately, the need to prioritize the importance of teachers’ perceptions and the need to improve teachers’ motivation rarely are given the precedence they deserve. The VSO (2002, 1) report What Makes Teacher Tick? took a detailed look at teachers and their living and working conditions in developing countries:

> Academic and policy debates focus on teachers’ deficiencies, and seldom take into account the difficulties under which they live and work. The fundamental importance of the teachers’ role in ensuring effectiveness of education must be recognized, understood, and taken into account if these international efforts to achieve development targets in education are to be successful. Further, the rights of teachers must be realized in order to secure and strengthen their own commitment to achieving quality education for all.

Tanzania is no exception. Sumra (2004b, 2), in The Living and Working Conditions of Teachers in Tanzania, reported, “Although efforts are underway toward improving teachers’ professional knowledge and skills, far less attention is focussed on their material welfare.”

The near total absence of issues related to teacher motivation within government documents is evidence of the administration’s lack of concern. Though Tanzania’s Education and Training Policy (MOEC 1995) did have a separate section entitled the “Service and Working Conditions of Teachers,” which discussed the importance of teachers’ job satisfaction, irregular salary payments for teachers, lack of proper housing for teachers, the low status accorded to teachers, inadequate teaching facilities, and the need to enhance the professional and individual welfare of teachers, its successor, the PEDP (MOEC 2001), a more influential government document, made almost no reference to these issues.

The PEDP (MOEC 2001) does make reference to a deployment incentive for teachers—the need to provide housing for teachers, especially new recruits, females, and those who will be teaching in remote and rural areas. However, this reference is tucked away in the “Construction”
subsection of the “Enrolment Expansion” section of the document. The only other reference to teacher welfare issues is in a table in the annexes of the report, which suggests a commitment to allow for a 4 percent increase in teachers’ wages each year, but no explanation is provided.

4. Teachers’ Diaries
At the start of my research project (Davidson, 2005) I encouraged teachers to keep daily diaries of their work and personal experiences. The teachers were given minimal guidelines for their writing, except that their summaries at the end of the project should include information about both their working lives and their private lives. In the end, 10 teachers from three different schools made their diary summaries available for use in the author’s thesis. The original texts were written in Swahili and then translated. Extracts from four teachers’ diary summaries provided here are indicative of the motivational problems that exist in the Tanzanian primary education sector.

Teachers are the shining lights of educational departments or ministries throughout the world. However, here (in Tanzania), this very same unfortunate teacher is caused to despair by his leaders to such an extent that he is unable to carry out the work of teachers with determination. The environment in which he lives destroys hope and makes life unbearable. Teachers have no incentives to work at all and, even if these are present, they are given through the use of nepotism to those who know or who are known by their superiors. They are given no thanks or help with which to prepare for life after retirement. There are no loans available in the education sector to help those teachers who have retired. When the time comes for teachers to receive their pension, what follows is irritation and sorrow, as they don’t get it at the time required and some even die before they have managed to receive their retirement benefits. It is a sin to leave this teacher or this deceased person and his family in such a desperate situation—Ministry of Education, this is a cry for help.

Regarding life and work:
- The salary is not enough for the important needs of a worker.
- There is a shortage of important teaching materials, such as textbooks and supplementary books.
- A teacher is given too many teaching periods per week, especially when compared to the workload of teachers in towns.
- To have deductions made from the salary, without permission from the teacher, for things such as Mwenge (an official torch that tours the country), various contributions for special guests of the district or region, and for healthcare that doesn’t provide for anything, is wrong.

Regarding personal issues:
- Unable to send my children to secondary school as a result of a hopelessly small income.
- Unable to cover basic needs, such as a decent house or decent food or clothes, all of which are caused by the pathetically small income.
- Unable to get health care even though we pay contributions for this.

Suggestions:
- It would be good to value and care about the work of teachers.
- It would be better to increase teachers’ salaries.
- It would be good to pay extra money for the time and disturbance caused by trips to the district.
Teaching is a job that involves one person offering academic skills to another. The person that provides these academic skills is called a teacher and the person that receives them is called a student. In order for a person to become a teacher, it is necessary for him to undergo professional teacher training. This training is offered by the various educational teacher training colleges. The job of teaching is a good one because this teaching results in the training of a variety of experts. The main problem that confronts a teacher at present is that of not being valued as a teacher. There are many ways in which a teacher is poorly treated, which result in the job becoming difficult, such as:

- inadequate teaching aids;
- large numbers of students in each class;
- poor environments within which a teacher has to live and work, such as terrible housing and substandard classrooms;
- extremely poor benefits, with teachers in some areas not getting any at all; and
- ever changing policies of the education ministry. These days in Tanzania a new policy is born every day, which results in teachers being unable to understand the position of government with respect to these policies.

I started to write this diary on 5/22/2003. I have discovered that writing this diary is very important because it helps you to know why your life is progressing in a certain way. From when I began to write this until now, I have discovered that a Tanzanian teacher does a lot of work at once. For example, a teacher is at work teaching children at the same time he is studying (upgrading or improving his academic qualifications). Also, he has to do his household chores, such as cooking, washing clothes, and even farming. As a result of having all of these different tasks, you will find that a teacher is very tired and unable to carry out effectively his teaching role. As well as having all of these different tasks to perform, you will find that a teacher also is confronted with many family problems, such as becoming sick or having sick family members to care for. All of these issues contribute to a decline in the quality of education because a teacher is unable to prepare properly or to carry out his work fully.

These vignettes are typical of the issues that were raised by teachers during the research, which included interviews with 100 teachers, head teachers, and former teachers as well as other qualitative research methods. These comments provide insight into reasons for teachers’ lack of motivation.

5. The Key Issues
5.1 Salaries
All teachers, including those from both rural and urban areas, felt that their salaries were too small. Those surveyed (in 2003/4) generally agreed that a salary of Tshs 100,000 per month was the minimum required to lead a basic existence, with Tshs 400,000 per month an adequate salary to lead an appropriate lifestyle. The teacher pay scale at the time ranged from Tshs 70,000 to Tshs 120,000 per month, depending upon the teacher’s seniority and experience (Sumra 2004b).

When teachers were asked why they felt that they needed pay increases, it became evident that they were concerned about saving for things such as buying bicycles (which cost approximately Tshs 60,000), visiting their family homes (a cost of Tshs 50,000–100,000), purchasing their children’s uniforms and food, and sending their children to government secondary schools—a

3 At the time of the study US dollars 1 was equivalent to about Tshs 1,000.
very important aspiration because of the message it sends to the community. This isn’t to say
that teachers did not dream of owning a car, visiting Europe, or sending their children to the top
private schools for what they perceived was a better education. However, those were just
dreams; in contrast the aspirations most teachers identified were both modest and realistic.

5.2 Teachers’ Housing
Teachers generally were unhappy with their housing arrangements. As one teacher stated, “If
your house leaks at night and you can’t sleep, how can you teach?” The research showed that not
only were too few houses available to accommodate teachers, but that the vast majority of the
houses were in extremely poor condition. Teachers’ disenchanted with their living conditions
was intensified by the erection of so many brand new classrooms that were being built as part of
the PEDP project.

5.3 Benefits
Teachers made frequent references to the lack of benefits, particularly to the healthcare for
which they paid, but did not always receive; to the holiday travel money that was theirs by right,
but that hardly ever materialized; and to various problems with the transfer system. To
understand teachers’ grievances about the lack of housing and other benefits, two points need to
be expanded upon. First, because teachers’ salaries were so low, their needs appeared
monumental. For example, if they were paid fair salaries, then they would not be so desperate to
receive holiday travel money for visiting their families. Typically, teachers are unable to see their
family members for prolonged periods, because they often work in areas far from their family
homes and lack funds to pay for a visit. Second, many teachers felt that these benefits, including
housing, were their right. From a psychological perspective, if teachers—or anyone for that
matter—perceive that they are failing to receive something that is theirs by right, their levels of
motivation will suffer.

5.4 Status
Teachers concurred that they did not have the respect that educators had in the past. Their
perception was confirmed in interviews with members of various school committees during the
research project. From the teachers’ perspective, they felt that this lack of respect resulted largely
from being forced to live in poor conditions. Shoddy housing accommodations reduced their
status, which in turn lessened the respect that they were given in their communities. If teachers’
status indeed has seriously declined since Tanzania’s independence in 1961, when its first
President Julius Nyerere used the Kiswahili word Mwalimu (teacher) as his title, then the quality
of both current and future teachers is likely to decline given their level of motivation. In the
words of one teacher, “If you fill a car with petrol, but forget the driver, what will happen?”

5.5 Workload
Many teachers expressed concern about their workload, saying that they had too many periods to
teach, their classes were too large, and too many non-teaching activities needed to be performed,
most notably the marking of exercise books. These concerns, which could be categorized as
working conditions, were exacerbated by the four preceding key issues. Though the workload of
many teachers did not appear particularly high—partly because teachers were not always fulfilling
their expected or assigned roles and partly because teachers were, on occasion, engaged in other
income-generating activities—most teachers were not willing to take on heavier workloads
because they felt that they were not being treated fairly.
6. Conclusion
In Tanzania, strong evidence exists that the vast majority of teachers are unhappy with their salaries, housing arrangements, benefits, workload, and status within their communities (MOEC 2003, 2004a; Davidson 2004, 2005; Sumra 2004b; HakiElimu 2005). These poor living and working conditions have, over time, seriously eroded many teachers’ motivation to carry out their teaching and non-teaching roles in an acceptable manner. The situation in Tanzania is similar to that in many other developing countries, including Zambia, Papua New Guinea, and Malawi where “it was abundantly clear that teachers’ motivation is at best fragile and at worst severely deteriorating” (VSO 2002, 18).

In situations where the students per teacher ratio is increasing—in Tanzania, from 46:1 in 2001 to 59:1 in 2004 (MOEC 2004b)—and where serious concerns about the quality of pre-service and in-service teacher training exists, as well as about the calibre of the people who are choosing to become teachers (MOEC 2003, 2004a; HakiElimu 2005), teacher motivation must be addressed.

Focusing on teacher motivation, however, cannot be allowed to detract from the importance of ensuring that the quality of teacher education and the overall education system are improved. As Perry, Chapman, and Shyder (1995, 125) pointed out in their research on the quality of education in Botswana, “Singular solutions, such as providing more attractive worklife conditions, may be necessary, but are insufficient means of achieving changes in pedagogical practices.” By the same token, quantitative improvements in student access to education cannot be allowed to take precedence over these qualitative improvements.

Improving teachers’ working and living conditions is critical in improving teacher motivation—one of the missing pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of achieving high-quality sustainable UPE. To bring about these improvements, attempts must be made to improve the incentives that teachers receive in exchange for the hard work they are expected to undertake. Serious efforts also must be made to ensure that all teachers know the benefits to which they are entitled and that they actually receive them. In return, teachers should be made aware of their roles and responsibilities. Checks and balances need to be created to ensure that these are fulfilled.

Once these incentives are in place, teachers will enjoy greater status, have much higher levels of motivation and, in turn, become key players in implementing quality improvement initiatives that are essential if high-quality, sustainable UPE is to be achieved.
References


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