

# EDUCATION, PRODUCTION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN RURAL TANZANIA

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## Introduction

Education has been seen by leaders in the third world countries as a tool, an important tool at that, of national development. In most countries education, at all levels, expanded greatly after independence. This belief of leaders that investment in education is going to lead automatically to national development appears to be misplaced. Despite increased investment in education, most of these nations find themselves in no better economic position than they were at the time of independence. This paper examines the role education has played in social change in Tanzania. As the prime concern of Tanzania's education policy has been with rural development, the paper will focus on the impact of education in rural Tanzania.

Tanzanian leadership since independence has been concerned with using education as a tool of social construction. This concern was clearly spelt out in the then President Nyerere's policy paper on education: Education for Self Reliance. This paper, published in March, 1967, along with the Arusha Declaration and another publication in 1967 by the then President Nyerere: Socialism and Rural Development, constitutes the blueprint for turning Tanzania into a socialist society.

## Education for Self-Reliance

Revolutionary political parties in a number of socialist countries, both before and after their revolutions, have initiated educational programmes for changing the consciousness, skills and organizations of their people. The process before the Russian revolution was primarily political and conscientizing. In Cuba, the revolution was followed by a mass literacy campaign. The aim of education in all such situations is that of remaking man according to a different mould from that in which he had been cast in the previous society. The process requires conscious, organized energy and unified goals and direction. Very often, this is provided by the party in power.

In the post 1967 period, Tanzania was engaged in a similar exercise. However, there are some fundamental differences between the situation in Tanzania and that of other socialist countries. In Russia, Vietnam, China and Cuba, pre-revolution education was part of a struggle by the oppressed classes to control state power. Education involved exposing the injustices of the existing system and discussing strategies for its overthrow. Education of necessity played a subversive role producing a counter-hegemony to the dominant hegemony. Education was very much part of the practical aspect of the struggle. In Tanzania, Education for Self Reliance came belatedly, after six years of independence. It was put forward by the group in power, not for subversion and overthrow of the state, but for the consolidation of the state.

The policy paper on education was a part of overall policies aimed at the socialist transformation of the society. Educational changes were aimed at creating a new man.

The education provided must therefore encourage the development in each citizen of three things; an enquiring mind; an ability to learn from what others do, and reject or adapt it to his own needs; and a basic confidence in his own position as a free and equal member of society; who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains.<sup>12</sup>

In Education for Self Reliance, Nyerere characterizes colonial education as emphasizing values contrary to those of socialist Tanzania. He argues that colonial education was based on the assumptions of a capitalist society that encouraged "the individualistic instincts of mankind instead of his cooperative instincts". Emphasizing that traditional African values were based on group, not individual goals, he declares that the colonial education "was a deliberate attempt to change those values and replace traditional knowledge by the knowledge from a different society". He further argues that colonial education was elitist, "designed to meet the interests and needs of a very small proportion of those who enter the school system".

In colonial Tanzania, only a handful of people received formal education, and those who did saw themselves fit only for employment as wage-earners in urban areas. Colonial education over-valued academics and despised knowledge obtained outside of its scholastic system. Colonial schools were a drain on the economic resources of Tanzania. Education took away the most productive segment of the population and the schools themselves were expensive to operate. Nyerere argued that Tanzania should develop socialist attitudes of cooperation, equality and responsibility in its system of education.

This changed role of education was to be achieved by reorganizing schools, restructuring the educational system and changing the actual content of learned information. Age of entry to primary school was to be raised from five to seven years so that primary school matriculators would be old enough to begin contributing to their communities. Primary schooling was to be considered terminal, complete in itself, not preparatory for secondary education. The role of examinations was to be reduced, and schools were to encourage productive activities to offset the costs of schooling and, by involving students in manual labour, teach them skills useful to the larger community. Rural schools were to become farm communities in which teachers and students worked together and shared the product of their labour. Nyerere's ideal school mirrored his vision of the ideal ujamaa village: it was to be a training ground for Tanzania's future socialist villagers.

To achieve the objective of education a number of reforms were initiated, among the most publicized and innovative of which was the introduction of 'self-reliance activities' in the school curriculum. Such self-help projects, generally agricultural in nature, were proposed with several purposes in mind: to overcome elitist conceptions of education and integrate schooling with village life; to engender a cooperative mode of living and to enable schools to contribute to their own upkeep. Briefly, reforms in education aimed at firstly, aiding in creating a socialist mode of production through improving the forces of production by providing school pupils with modern agricultural knowledge and skills and secondly, at inculcating the correct ideology necessary for socialist construction of the society.

How far have reforms in the education system succeeded in achieving these aims? Studies done in the wake of these reforms generally paint a rosy picture conveying the idea that, even if the ideal has not yet been reached, it is only a matter of time before a few adjustments in the system will bring it about. Most commonly cited problems are: misunderstanding by both students and teachers of the philosophical basis of the policy, persistence of the white collar complex and disdainful attitudes towards manual labour, poor project planning with little or no student involvement, and so on. Most authors see these as attitudinal or technical problems.<sup>3</sup> They see people themselves as the source of the problem but believe that they might be moulded with proper techniques.<sup>4</sup> My own research, however, reveals that the problems are structural and political, and technical changes alone will not solve the problem. Our understanding of the school and education is incomplete unless we site education in the total functioning of the society, especially linking with the economy. The link between what goes in school and what goes on in the village is very strong indeed. As a full discussion of the links between the economy and education will be out of place in a short article like this we will confine the discussion to findings at the village level, taking one village, Mswaki, as an example.

### **Mswaki Ujamaa Village**

Mswaki ujamaa village is in Handeni district, twenty-two miles west of Handeni. In 1971, the village was recognized as a development village. At that time, it included 40 houses and a population of 200. During the villagization program of 1974-75, the population increased considerably as nearby scattered settlements moved to the village. In 1984, the village had 318 households and a total population of 1,566. In November of 1975, the village was recognized officially as an ujamaa village.

Agriculture in Mswaki is governed primarily by the amount of rainfall. In good years, there is enough food to last for the year; but most of the time there are food shortages of varying intensity in the district. Maize is the primary food and cash crop grown by the peasants. Peasants cultivate their private plots besides providing labour for the communal farm. Communal activities in the village were started during 1972 at which time villagers agreed, during a famine, to start a communal farm as a condition

for receiving food aid. The farm production remained marginal and was abandoned as soon as the food situation improved and government pressure ceased. The second phase of the communal farm started in 1980, when as a result of pressures from above the village re-started the communal farm. The essential features of the communal farm production in Mswaki can be summarized as follows:

#### *Decision from Above*

In 1980, the government directed that every village should have at least 100 acres of communally cultivated farms. Handeni district authorities instructed all the villages to start such farms. The authorities also instructed that work on these farms was to be compulsory and directed that 75 per cent of the land was to be under maize and 25 per cent under a cash crop; in the case of Mswaki, it was to be tobacco. One of the essential features of communal cultivation is that central government directives and district by-laws regulate how much land is to be cultivated and what crops are to be grown. Government and party bureaucracies are responsible for seeing that directives are carried out.

#### *Emphasis on Cash Crops*

As stated earlier, maize is the main crop grown by the peasants. The government has been trying to make peasants grow tobacco but has encountered a great deal of resistance. Government officials in the village argue that the growing of tobacco is the only way to prevent the selling of maize and, thus, the creation of food shortages in the area. Peasants' reluctance to grow tobacco is understandable in light of the labour requirements of tobacco; tobacco requires three times as much labour as does maize. Peasants argue that utilization of labour on tobacco will leave them with no labour for maize, creating food shortages. The insistence on cash crops by the government is the result of dependent economy. The essential features of the Tanzanian economy is that nearly all the producer goods (machinery) have to be imported. This importation is made possible by foreign exchange earned through the export of agricultural crops. Establishing industries and improving agriculture through mechanization therefore depends heavily on continued export of crops.

This fact has implications at two levels. First, it explains the continued emphasis by the government on ujamaa villages to produce export crops. Second, it may partly explain why the government was unwilling to experiment with self-management. Any fall in the production of export crops was bound to hurt the fragile economy and especially prospect for industrialization. Having said this, it is quite possible that emphasis on foreign exchange may conceal the self-serving priorities of the class or faction of the class in power.

#### *Coercion as a Tool for Compliance*

As discussed earlier peasants resist growing tobacco. Apart from labour requirements, peasants also see it as an attempt to ensure total control by the state over the production process. Peasants argue that if they grow tobacco they have no choice but to sell in the official market and accept the government price since it has no utilitarian value to the peasants themselves. It cannot be stored as the leaves deteriorate rapidly, and there are no unofficial markets for it. Maize can be stored and consumed later or sold in unofficial markets fetching much higher prices than offered through the official markets.

For some unexplained reason, government response to peasant resistance appears to be harsher in Handeni than in other areas of Tanzania. Given the resistance of the peasants in Mswaki to grow tobacco, bureaucratic coercion is seen by the government as the only way left open for them. There is a by-law in the district that requires every household to cultivate one acre of tobacco, failure to do so results in six months imprisonment. During 1983, six peasants were sent to jail for not cultivating the required acreage of tobacco, yet in 1984 only 63 acres of tobacco were grown as compared to the 318 acres required by law. In the past, the government has tried to use the militia to intimidate peasants to grow tobacco. One old man in the village described events in 1980:

Wanamgambo came to our houses at five in the morning baning on the doors and asking us to come out. I had a kettle with water with me, as I was preparing for the morning prayers. One Mgambo asked me where my tobacco farm was. I said I will show it to him after I have said my

who could afford it bought exercise books from the village shop; others just sat around. The school has a radio, provided to listen to school broadcasts, but it has no batteries. There is no school library. There is no library, not even a modest one, in the village. The village receives no newspapers. There are no science equipment or mathematical sets in the school. As a result, most of the teaching, as the headteacher stated, "was theoretical". In such a situation, the quality, ability and interests of teachers becomes important.

Nearly all teachers have 'miradi' (projects) besides teaching. All have farms. Part of the farm work is done by hired labour and part by their own labour after school hours. One teacher who teaches carpentry in the school has his services in great demand. He makes doors, windows and other furniture for the village residents, especially for other government officials in the village. Another teacher is engaged in buying and selling maize. He travels to Handeni, hires a landrover and then buys maize, bananas or other food stuffs in surrounding villages to sell in Handeni. Often, he misses classes as a result of these business activities.

### **Response of Parents and Pupils**

Although it may not have been the intent of the educational reforms initiated since the publication of Education for Self-reliance, primary education in practice has become a preparation ground for peasants in a peripheral dependent capitalist economy. Both parents and pupils reject this role of the school. This manifests itself in two ways. First, there is a general apathy towards sending children to school and secondly those who finish schooling are unwilling to stay in the village to become peasants.

According to the headteacher, the main problem facing the school is absenteeism. There are rules laid down by the district authorities to ensure attendance. According to these rules, if a pupil is absent from school without informing his/her teachers, the headteacher is to contact the parents to find out the reason for the absence. If after several attempts the parent does not respond satisfactorily, the headteacher is to report the matter to the *Katibu Kata* who then takes legal action against the parent. Parents could be fined or sent to jail for failing to send their children to school. In 1983, six parents were fined for failing to ensure the attendance of their children in school. However, if a parent went to the headteacher and reported that despite attempts he had failed to persuade his child to attend, the pupil would be taken to court. Punishment for failing to attend school is six strokes of the cane. The pupil concerned is taken to the Handeni district jail where the whipping is administered. In 1983, there were 10 cases of pupils being whipped. Use of force has failed to make pupils attend regularly. For example, during the month of February 1984, the average attendance of 60 pupils registered in standard five was 19, i.e. on average only one-third of the class was attending school.

The average attendance of the standard seven pupils for the month of March 1984 was 69 percent. Every pupil in the class, except two, had been absent at least a day during the month of March; some for as long as the entire month.

Of 64 standard seven pupils interviewed only three (4.7 per cent) were interested in going to a secondary school. The majority of the pupils were expecting to leave the village after completing standard seven. This was true for both girls and boys. Most of these pupils cited the difficult life in the village as a reason for wanting to leave. One student, echoing the feelings of others, stated:

Life in the village is difficult. Here you are forced to do many things ... grow tobacco on your farm ... cultivate 1/4 acre on the village farm, grow your own food ... to do all these satisfactorily is really hard. Even when you work hard, you hardly get enough money to buy clothes.

One of the teachers held the following opinion:

One reason why most youths do not participate in village activities is because they do not like being told. They are ordered to do things. What the village leaders should do is to sit with the youths and plan their role in the village. They also find that they are expected to grow 1/4 of an acre on the communal farm, grow one acre of tobacco and have an individual plot for food... it is beyond them.

The coercive nature of the village leadership is not conducive for the participation of youth in the village activities.

It is apparent that both the parents and their children reject the role assigned to them; but the alternative is equally depressing. When asked what kind of jobs they would like to do in urban areas the pupils gave the following choices: work in factory, domestic employment, vendor, barmaids and so on. Nearly all the activities selected did not require skills. Sad though it appears for young people to aim for so little in life, the choices reflect the kind of jobs being done by their brothers and sisters who have finished schooling in previous years. The choices also reflect the current situation in this country which is that, with only primary education, one can expect to get only unskilled jobs for the minimum wage. Yet, even these are more attractive than life in the village.

It is clear, however, that the state is concerned about the number of youths leaving villages. In 1984, it was already becoming difficult to move to urban areas as a result of Nguvu Kazi campaigns. The identity card law passed recently could be used in future to control the movement of these youths.

### Teachers' Views on Parents

The apathy towards schooling is seen by the teachers to be the result of cultural backwardness of the Zigua.

Perhaps the headteacher best summarizes the attitude of the teachers:

One thing that makes my work difficult is that I have to spend a lot of time in other activities. I have to follow up on absentees, call their parents ... threaten to take them to court ... and still I do not succeed. In Kilimanjaro, where I come from, the teachers never take roll call because they were sure every one of them was there. Parents bribe teachers in order to get their children into school. Children walk fifteen miles to get to school. While here you have children living only yards away who do not attend. I think peer pressure is important. In Kilimanjaro, every family would have someone who had either gone to secondary school or to a University ... so they want to be like their brothers and sisters. Here they only aspire to be house servants.

Commenting on personal contacts, teachers said they had nothing in common with the peasants in the villages. One female teacher noted:

I do not mix with the women in the village. I would not even know what to say to them. If you visited their house, they would think that you were after their husbands.

There is very little, if any, mixing at a social level between the villagers and the teachers.

To summarise: in the functioning of both the village and the school there are features that are similar.

1. Authoritarian and hierarchical decision making. People in authority, Katibu Tarafa (Sectional Secretary) in the village and teachers in school, make decisions. Villagers and pupils do the work. There seems to be a belief that the greater the control over the labour process, the more productive the labour will be. Therefore, all decisions on production in the village, how much land to cultivate, what crops to grow, how to grow them and where to sell the crops and at what price are made from above. The same is the case in the school system. Pupils are being taught to distrust their own judgement.
2. Emphasis is on export crops, both in the village and the school.
3. As peasants in the village and pupils in school reject their assigned role, coercion is widely used as a tool to ensure compliance.
4. There is a feeling of superiority by those in authority, and resistance by the peasants and pupils is explained in terms of cultural backwardness. Surely, these were not the intended goals of Tanzanian socialism. In the next section we will attempt to give some explanation for this outcome.

## Conclusion

Pupils in Mswaki Primary School do not learn modern farming techniques that would improve their life in the village nor do they attain attitudes of creativity, self-confidence and self-reliance. As discussed, this state of affairs is the result of the dependent nature of the Tanzanian economy and the bureaucratic implementation of Education for Self-Reliance. Even in the given situation, the reform proposed by Education for Self-Reliance can be made more meaningful by organizing education in a different way.

First, the village government and villagers should be given more say over the education provided for their children. They should decide what knowledge and skills should be taught to their children. For example, villagers in a predominately pastoral areas may decide that schools should teach about improved cattle rearing about common cattle diseases and their treatment. Teachers should be answerable to the village government. At present peasants have no say on the recruitment, work and welfare of the teachers. Education should be made more relevant to the everyday lives of the peasants

Second, this would entail a change in methods of teaching. The village should become the school and the villagers should become teachers. In this way, the village farm could become a learning place for agriculture; the village milling machine could become a learning place for simple account keeping; the village dispensary could become a learning place for health of the village. Education should focus on the processes going on in the village. The separation between education and village life could thus be minimized and a sense of belonging to the village can be built up among the school pupils.

Third, implementing such changes would require a radical change in the way the teachers are trained. At present, to ensure uniformity of education throughout Tanzania, teachers are provided with a detailed syllabus, specifying what should be taught. Teachers' handbooks suggest in detail how each topic is to be taught. National examinations ensure that teachers do not deviate from the set content and methodology. Training of teachers basically involves 'deskilling' of teachers. Teachers are taught to 'conform' rather than be innovative and teach skills and knowledge that are relevant and meaningful to their pupils. New teachers training should 'reskill' teachers in preparing their own curriculum in view of the socio-economic conditions of the village in which the school is located. They should devise methods that are meaningful to their students. Teachers, in short, should become initiators rather than implementors of the education process.

## NOTES

1. J.K. Nyerere, Freedom and Socialism, Dar es Salaam University Press, 1968, pp. 231-250; 267-290 and 337-366.
2. Nyerere, *op.cit.* p. 279.
3. A.A. Lema, "Education for Self Reliance: Old attitudes die hard", Studies in Curriculum Development No. 3, 1973, pp. 29-46.
4. Lema, *op.cit.*; G.R.V. Mmari; "Attempts to link school with work: The Tanzanian Experience", Prospects Vol. VIII, no. 3, 1977, pp. 379-388; S.R. Nkonoki, "Achievements, Problems and the Task Ahead in Implementing Education for Self-Reliance". Tanzania Education Journal, No. 16, 1978, pp. 3-17; M.R. Beshu, "Education for Self-Reliance and Rural Development: Based on Study of Some Schools and Villages in Bagamoyo and Rufiji Districts", Mimeo, Institute of Education, University of Dar es Salaam, 1973.