

EVENT REPORT

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

TANZANIA

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KAY WESTENBERGER

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Teachers' Workshop on Education Sector Reforms: What are their Implications?

DISCUSSION ABOUT CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TANZANIA

On 04th of February 2017, the Civic Education Teachers' Association (CETA) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) jointly convened a teachers' workshop in Dar es Salaam on current education sector reforms and their implications.

Since the inauguration of the fifth phase government on 5th of November 2015, new reforms have been implemented in the education sector including changes in the curriculum and grading system, the introduction of "free education" policy as well as prohibiting students to repeat classes. Since the development and implementation of these reforms took place in a top-down approach from the government, key stakeholders like teachers and students were not involved in the process and rather were taken by surprise. Therefore, the objective of the workshop was to introduce and raise awareness of the recent changes and developments in the education sector on the one side and offering a platform for teachers to discuss and exchange viewpoints on the current situation, the reforms and their implications for the teachers' daily work life on the other side.

Augustino Mligo, from the University of Dar es Salaam and moderator of the event, opened the workshop by inviting all participants to sing a patriotic song together. Before giving the floor to the respective representative of the teachers, CETA and KAS for

their welcoming notes, Augustino Mligo addressed the teachers and encouraged them to actively participate and to recognize the event as their workshop and their chance to make a contribution. The important role of the teachers was also highlighted by both, the CETA-Project Manager, Justine Goodluck, and the KAS Tanzania Country Representative, Daniel El-Noshokaty. In his welcoming note, Mr. El-Noshokaty described the teachers as gatekeepers of education and pointed out their essential function to transfer knowledge. Whereas equipment is important, tables cannot teach. Teachers are the only ones who are capable of succeeding in the enormous task of educating the minds of the coming generations.



Father Dr. Charles Kitima on Developments in the Education Sector in Tanzania

In the first presentation, Father Dr. Charles Kitima from the St. Augustin University of Tanzania (SAUT), claimed education to be the life of the country, stating three main roles of education for Tanzania. 1. social capacity building by forming responsible citizens, 2. enabling people to promote their interests, for example in political or interest

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groups and 3. support economic development of the country by creating skilled workforce and allowing for productivity. Therefore, education should be linked to the economic vision of the country.

Father Dr. Kitima then gave a short overview of the various historical reforms of the education sector starting in the 1880s with German colonialism implementing a formal system of education for the first time. Besides the adaption of the British model, he referred to the 1960s' expression of 'Education to Rule' and 'Education for Self-reliance and Sovereignty' by Julius Kambarage Nyerere, founding father of the nation of Tanzania, preparing the country for economic and cultural independence. In the end, Dr. Kitima led his presentation up to present reforms and their challenges.

The two main challenges he mentioned are the poor quality of education and the poor financing. He sees a lack of planning for the reforms by focusing on education without considering the teachers and the quality of teaching. Expanding education to many more children without neither increasing the number of facilities, teachers and food for children nor having financing options for teachers' training, is leading to the challenges Tanzania faces today. According to Father Dr. Kitima, reforms should involve the teachers as experts on the field, parents, external experts and civil society organizations.



Dr. Richard Sambaiga on the role of education in Tanzania

The second presentation was given by Dr. Richard Sambaiga from the University of Dar es Salaam. By asking the question: "What kind of society do we want to inspire? What kind of Tanzania do we want to have?" he focused on the purpose of education for Tanzania. Quoting Julius Kambarage Nyerere, he addressed the need of education to adapt to different countries, societies and conditions like national priorities, aims and aspirations. Based on this argumentation, he demanded a reflective education system for Tanzania with the goal to prepare students for their life after school - "we educate for a purpose."

In this respect, Dr. Sambaiga referred to the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 with its goal of developing an open mindset and competitive spirit and of having the majority of the people in middle class. At the same time he questioned the realization of this goal as well as the proper preparation of the people by the education system in order to fulfil this vision. He concluded that it is important to understand and carefully manage challenges in the education sector, since changes at one level might affect all other levels due to the interlinkage of the various education stages from primary to university level. Hence, he called for participation of all key stakeholders and enabling an appropriate learning and teaching environment at all levels as a crucial factor to a successful education sector.

Responding to concerns being raised by the audience, Dr. Wilberforce Meena, Director of Curriculum from Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), referred to the reforms, stating that change in general is not a problem but healthy for the country. He then explained the procedure and challenges of creating an adequate curriculum, such as the young age of the pupils and their psychological development. He agreed on the importance of teachers' involvement and welcomed input from reflective and critical teachers for the

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process of developing the curriculum as well as text books.

The presentations were followed by a group discussion, providing room for the teachers to express their opinion about the current situation and education conditions as well as the reforms. The teachers participated actively in the discussion and expressed their satisfaction to get the opportunity and platform to raise their concerns.



A teacher engaging in the group discussion

Regarding the accusation which teachers often receive for the low education outcomes, a participant asked the question how teachers are supposed to perform under the given conditions including a lack of facilities and textbooks, class sizes of 120 pupils per teacher, no libraries and no development seminars for teachers. He further described a lack of attention from the government pertaining to the conditions of the students, such as hunger, poverty and poor living conditions at their homes.

The teachers jointly raised the complaint of not being involved in the reform process and not being heard by the government. As experts on the field, the teachers expect the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Vocational Training to listen to their concerns and take care of the issues teachers face every day. Until the government will also focus on and respect teachers, the quality level of education is stuck, so the conclusion.



Teachers engaging in Group Work

After lunch, the teachers had the opportunity to work together in groups. They sat together in ten different groups; each group being given a certain task to answer. The questions were focusing on three main aspects: First, the identification of general society and community needs and possible contributions of the education sector to meet those needs; second, the current reforms and changes and their actual contribution to respond to the needs and third, (further) reforms and the teachers' role in order to meet society and community needs. At the end, each group selected one representative who briefly presented the results of the respective group work to the audience.

The answers presented by the groups concerning the first aspect named important skills needed - ranging from basic reading and writing skills, respect for cultural values and ecological change, to developing self-confidence and critical as well as creative thinking - in order to meet society and community needs like a stable economy, a functioning infrastructure and community life based on freedom and profound civic rights. Moreover, current issues were addressed when the teachers agreed to the statement that graduates were "half cooked". The reasons mentioned by the groups included bad learning conditions, poor involvement of parents and a lack of motivation by students as well as teachers and no teachers' training.

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The second part highlighted individual aspects of the current reforms. The answers given by the teachers demonstrated a common disapproval of major reforms. The "free education" for example would lead to a higher number of enrolments but less quality of education, whereas the prohibition of repeating classes would risk an increase in the amount of school leavers, wasting human talents, so the teachers.



A Teacher presenting results from the Group Work

The last groups which were dealing with further reforms and the role of teachers called for a more answerable ministry and stronger involvement of teachers in reform processes and the curriculum development. They further proposed a more frequent participation of teachers in seminars and trainings in order to be able to fulfill their role as teachers adequately and to properly prepare students to serve the community.

In the closing discussion among all participants, viewpoints and experiences were shared across the different groups. Also the teachers expressed their wish for more events of that format. At the end, both speakers, Father Dr. Charles Kitima and Dr. Richard Sambaiga, gave final remarks pertaining to the aspects discussed. Thereby Dr. Sambaiga generally claimed that it is important to find proper means for an objective, and at the same time it needs to be defined 'what is the end'. Finally Safari Minja, CETA Secretary General, thanked the speakers and participants for their valuable contributions and closed the event.