

TANZANIA  
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FEBRUARY 2018

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

DISCUSSION ABOUT CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TANZANIA

**On 17th of February 2018, the Civic Education Teachers' Association (CETA) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) jointly convened a teachers' workshop in Morogoro on current education sector reforms, their challenges and possible implications on teaching.**

The administration under President Magufuli has since 2015 introduced several reforms concerning the education sector, comprising, among others, changes in the curriculum and grading system as well as the introduction of "free education" policy.

The reforms were developed and established with relatively little consultation and involvement of teachers and other stakeholders, such as parents and pupils, which were in turn overwhelmed at times. The objective of the workshop was thus to inform teachers about said reforms, but also to offer them a platform to openly debate the implications of the changes on their work life. The workshop also included a group work exercise, which was designed to challenge the participants, in order for them to gain further knowledge about the reforms, their challenges as well as opportunities. The workshop and especially the group exercise were intended to strengthen the participants confidence and to encourage them to get involved in the reform process.

Augustino Mligo, from the University of Dar es Salaam who has moderated CETA-KAS events in the past, opened the workshop by

greeting organisers, presenters and participants and inviting them to sing the national anthem. He encouraged the teachers to participate actively, to speak freely and to discuss the matters on hand. Mr. Mligo handed over the microphone to the representatives of CETA, Justine Goodluck and KAS, Richard Shaba for their welcoming remarks to the teachers.

Justine Goodluck, Project Manager of CETA, highlighted the lack of civic education in Tanzania and identified it as one of the key problems of the country. Subsequently, he underlined the importance of his fellow teachers in the process, as he urged them to refrain from complaining about the situation, and in turn encouraged them to give guidelines to others, in order to "bring positive change and to be part of the solution." He further pointed out that the workshop is not intended to "shoot arrows and point fingers", but to inform teachers and give guidelines for them to pass on to their colleagues, students and parents.

KAS Project Coordinator Richard Shaba welcomed the participants and referred to the long history of the foundation in Tanzania and the cooperation between CETA and KAS, which have worked together since the founding year of CETA in 2003. He also called on the teachers to enrich the debates of the workshop, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges of the reforms on the school level and to possibly identify strategies to move forward.

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The first presenter, Dr. Wilberforce Meena, an expert on education reforms and the Tanzanian curriculum, spoke about the reforms, their underlying reasons and the intended objectives of the current system. He underlined the importance of moving from a subject/knowledge-based curriculum to a competence-based curriculum to account for changing needs of society and technological progress. Society has changed due to social and technological developments which should also be reflected in the education system. The aim of the new Holism approach (introduced in 2016) is to move from the textbook teaching to a more activities-oriented approach which entails exercises in- and outside the classroom. The intention is to foster the connection to real life situations and local issues. Soft skills ought to be nurtured and students shall be educated as 'global citizens'. Lastly, Dr. Meena questioned the grading system. In his view, students should be assessed according to their competences, particularly in reading, writing and numeracy shown throughout an entire school year, rather than solely on (exam-)grades which may be influenced by daily-based performance fluctuations.

Dr. Meena's presentation was followed by an open discussion, in which teachers were given the opportunity to debate raised questions. The participants questioned the possibility of implementing a competence-based curriculum in a limited timeframe; mentioned the issue of a lack of language skills of students, as well as teachers; discussed the real life applications of education and of mathematics especially; and scrutinized the situation pertaining to changes in primary school education.

Next on the agenda was the group exercise. The teachers were divided into eleven groups of circa 20 participants. Each group was given a question prepared beforehand by KAS and CETA. The questions were attributed to four overarching sections of

the education system which are as follows: 1. the current situation of education objectives in Tanzania; 2. education objectives and equitable development; 3. current education sector reforms and changes; and finally, 4. consequences of the reforms. The aim of the exercise was to challenge the teachers to fully understand the reforms and their implications on society as well as their work as teachers and possible ways to engage the reforms in future. The groups were able to discuss the issues for one hour, after which they were asked to prepare notes and name one representative for a small presentation to share their findings.



*Participants discussing during group work*

The group work and the presentation of results was intermitted by a lunchbreak and group pictures with the participants and the respective representatives of CETA and KAS. After lunch the different group representatives presented their findings to the other participants. These are summed up hereafter.

The current education objectives in Tanzania were identified as follows: strengthening the culture of the nation, education of experts and countrywide socio-economic development. However, the overarching sentiment throughout the groups was that Tanzania is lacking infrastructure and teachers to account for the number of students and to achieve the set objectives. Teachers lament the low motivation of students and a general low level of knowledge among pupils, which in

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turn lead to academic failures and a subsequent lack of innovative thinkers.

According to the participants, equitable development can only be reached by a coordination of policies and the involvement of experts in and stakeholders of education. Teachers voiced that the processes at the political level are put under constraint by a conflict between education departments and that the reforms and objectives do not necessarily reflect the reality on the ground. Specifically, teachers demanded a more relevant curriculum, better infrastructure and a set budget to meet the objectives. Furthermore, additional seminars and workshops for teachers and students should be conducted, the participants said, because the educational sector has to cope with socio-political and technological changes.

With regard to the reforms and changes in the education sector, the teachers pointed out, that the current (fee-)free education policy would not mean that education is entirely free. The cost of food and transport remains an issue of discussion, because of budget limitations. The policy ought to have been better explained, due to misunderstandings between policy-makers, teachers and parents, which also dampens their cooperation, it was argued.

Finally, the teachers raised the question of how the shift to a competence-based learning is to be implemented, saying active learning is difficult to implement, due to, among others, a lack of interest on behalf of the students. Therefore, teachers fall back into the teacher- and textbook-centered approach.

Novatus Mzaga, a representative from the Teachers' Association Tanzania (CWT), summed up the results of the group work without neglecting to give insights on the reforms from the association's perspective. Mr. Mzaga's remarks on the challenges of the reforms were that the curriculum reforms were made without substantial

consultation of teachers, but rather influenced by an elite-few. It was emphasized, that Tanzania is lacking infrastructure to provide quality teaching, exacerbated by a lack of teachers, especially in sciences, to cope with the number of pupils in a classroom. The above mentioned issues, in connection with limited trainings and seminars for teachers and with occurring relocations of secondary school teachers to primary level without proper training, would have a negative effect on the teachers' motivation, in particular at public schools.

However, Mr. Mzaga did not fail to also mention opportunities the education reforms have to offer. Fee-free education may help to provide every Tanzanian child the chance to education. The government provides loans for some exceptional pupils and also trainings and further studies for teachers may be possible under the new education reforms.

As the last part of the agenda, Moderator Augustino Mligo painted a way forward, again encouraging teachers to become active in civil society, to further educate themselves and to seek ways to support reform processes.

Justine Goodluck (CETA) and Richard Shaba (KAS) took the opportunity to give their final remarks and thanked the teachers for their participation. Finally, Safari Minja, Secretary General of CETA, concluded the workshop with words of thanks and gratitude.



Group picture with some participants, CETA and KAS