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Rural Vocational Education
in Tanzania

An Exploratory Research

By

R. Mshana and T. Bitu

Christian Council of Tanzania

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RURAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN TANZANIA
AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION:

The Christian Council of Tanzania, in cooperation with its Member Churches has been conducting since early 1975, an exploratory research into the pressing problems of rural vocational education in Tanzania. This research has been analysing in depth and breadth the existing problems, and the most important findings have been made public in a "Preliminary Report" that was extensively discussed in the National Workshop organised by the researchers held at Kicheba Village, Tanga.

This paper attempts to give a brief historical background of the study in section one. Section two concentrates on the organisation of the research embracing the nature of the research problem, the purpose of the research, time and people involved. Section three gives a detailed account on the process of familiarization used, the analytical framework and the stage reached by the research so far. Finally, a critical analysis of the entire research experience is given.

I. BACKGROUND.

Vocational education as it is presently known in Tanzania was introduced in the late 19th century by European Missionaries and later operated under the control of the Missionary Societies as well as the Colonial Governments. This formal educational system was imposed outside of the existing traditional education which was part of African tribal society. African Traditional education served the function of reproducing the various skills which were used in production and maintenance of the society. The Vocational educational system introduced by the Missionaries and the Colonial Government had an entirely different objective. The purpose of this education was to train a semi - skilled and skilled labour force which was used to facilitate the economic exploitation of the colonized country by the colonizers. It is this latter system which has survived the colonial era and which continues to dominate the vocational education sector in the post - colonial state.

The entire educational system of Tanzania takes both its form and structure from the material conditions imposed by the colonial society and its objectives of economic exploitation. These conditions continue to exist up to the present time, consequently, the educational system in Independent Tanzania remains virtually the same in structure form purpose as it was during the colonial era.

The colonial education system in general and its vocational component in particular was divided along class, racial, and sexual lines. Strong interlinkage existed between education and employment. The class and racial lines often overlapped but there were class distinctions even with racial groupings. These became even more prominent towards the end of the colonial era when colonialists recognized the need to train indigenous class to carry the activities of economic exploitation which they had begun. Thus the establishment of the post-colonial state saw rapid phasing out of the racial biases in education and further entrenchment of the class nature of the system as well as its sexual biases.

The class nature of the educational system in the context of an underdeveloped and dependent economy have produced a number of contradictions with which the system is finding it increasingly difficult to cope. Among the most serious of these contradictions is the growing number of Primary School leavers who fail to gain access to the small number of available places in secondary schools. Each year over 90% of the pupils who finish primary school are denied the opportunity to continue with such kind of education for which they were prepared psychologically and attitudinally. For them only the limited private and vocational education sectors provide the possibility for finding wage employment.

Vocational education is still linked to employment in specific occupations as it was during the colonial period, providing the

skilled labour requirements for various industries. But the wage employment sector in the underdeveloped economy of Tanzania is expanding very slowly, more slowly in fact than the expansion of the vocational education sector. In addition the feeling that vocational education is the last resort for obtaining wage employment for primary school leavers has created great pressure to increase the number of the available resources.

This pressure increased to such an extent that the responsible authorities were forced to take action in order to relieve it. The 16th TANU National Conference held in September, 1973 passed a resolution to expand technical and scientific education in order to speed up Rural Transformation. The government responded by planning to increase the number of vocational training institutions. Financing for these expanded technical education programmes was sought largely from national and international "development agencies" but funds were also solicited from other agencies, among these the CCT (Christian Council of Tanzania).

The Churches had been supporting large vocational education programmes in Tanzania for half a Century and were still under pressure to expand further. The existing schools, however have become a big financial burden for both the Tanzanian Churches and their European counterparts to bear. The construction of new training centres would require great financial inputs which would have to be carried almost entirely by the Donor Agencies of the European Churches.

In addition; the Churches' long experience in vocational education had shown them that the training which was offered benefitted only a privileged minority who in turn sought employment in the urban areas upon completion of their studies.

As a result the Churches were in the fore front in the search for "appropriate solutions" to the problems of rural vocational education. They helped to introduce the concept of "training

for self-employment" and to develop such programmes as the "Village Polytechnics" (NCKK - Kenya) and "Youth Brigades" (Botswana) to fit the concept. Yet even these programmes in spite of their intentions did not produce the desired results. The expectations of both the students and their parents are still that the training will lead to wage employment.

The failure of vocational education programmes to serve the needs of the rural areas together with the request of the Tanzanian Government in the financing of new programmes combined to encourage the Churches to make a thorough evaluation of the contradictions and problems of rural vocational education in Tanzania. In October, 1974, The Annual Conference of the CCT and its Member Churches unanimously decided to undertake this research. All pending requests for assistance to vocational schools were to be stopped until the research project was completed and the results made explicit.

The research, therefore, examined the system of vocational education in relation to the educational system in general but fundamentally in relation to the prevailing social, political and economical conditions of the country. Before entering the section on the organization of the research it should be noted that this research was undertaken by a group of people who had neither previous experience in such research work nor the requisite academic qualifications for such work. By going ahead with the belief that they could discover the roots of the problems on the basis of faith in the people and sympathy for their problems, the research became a liberating experience. It is the researchers' conviction that such research must no longer be the monopoly of social scientists. Having broken this myth, research teams composed of peasants, workers, students, evangelists in the villages were formed to discuss each stage of the research process. At the moment these local researchers are the basis for concrete action to change the

existing reality which they themselves have helped to unravel. Their functions will be shown later.

Although the research was carried out within an existing institutional framework, the CCT and its Member Churches which obliged the researchers to work within the a rigid bureaucracy, there was still an advantage, finally, of providing an institutional basis for research continuity and action.

It is important to note that the research was not complete by the writing of the report but that it is still going on even today, for what was discovered was simply a reflection of vocational education problems at national level. Deep study and analysis is the work of the research teams, now in the villages as shown in III. 4.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH.

For reasons of convenience the research team chose an approach that started at the centre level (Dar es Salaam, Dodoma) and worked from here to the periphery (village). Information was first obtained at the Ministerial and headquarter level in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma. The second one was a Regional one followed by the third level, the District. The fourth level was the village where information was obtained directly from the training institutions.

II.1. The nature of the research & Duration.

The vocational system in Tanzania and especially its rural sector has never been thoroughly researched before. Due to this the research was to be exploratory one. It was thought initially that a deep research on this field be a second step. Fundamentally, the research became documentary work, that was the systematic documentation of rural vocational education system with its activities and opportunities.

It was through the initial familiarisation with the problem area which shall be outlined in section three, that the researchers became aware of the inadequacy of the original research objectives and hence had to change them.

The original duration assigned to the research was one year but had to be extended by another year because of the extensive travelling involved, complexity of problems as well as shortage of permanent staff.

II.1.1 Aims and objectives of the research.

The original aims and objectives were defined as follows:-

- 1) To enable the CCT to promote - especially for the development of Ujamaa villages - programmes which have an educational skill emphasis.
- 2) These programmes should be of such a nature as to have a potential to be multiplied on an extensive scale by authorities with greater resources.

In order to achieve the above objectives the researchers were assigned with the following tasks:-

- 1) To establish an advisory group of individuals, knowledgeable about the issues and representing the important sectors of the state, Church and other agencies.
- 2) To become fully acquainted with the national policy on education and Ujamaa development.
- 3) To visit and study existing skill training programmes in Tanzania.
- 4) To visit skill learning programmes in nearby countries like the Village Polytechnics in Kenya and The Youth Brigades in Botswana.

- 5) To study research and written matter both National and International.
- 6) Finally to plan a National Workshop:
 - a) to outline findings
 - b) challenge the Churches to initiate innovation programmes and give ideas to what these programmes might be.
 - c) identify a limited number (2 - 4) of individuals a areas where such programmes might be developed.

II.1.2. Re - orientation of the aims and objectives.

The experience gathered from a review of the relevant literature, informal interviews and field trips increased the level of understanding of the researchers considerably. It provided evidence for the argument that the original "aims and objectives had been incorrect and misleading and needed re-orientation. Based on the more critical understanding, developed through familiarisation with the problem area, the new "aims and objectives became:

To analyse critically and contextually why the rural vocational education sector is not achieving its objectives of training skilled manpower on a mass basis for the villages by

- a) studying its socio-economic and political context.
- b) studying the history of vocational education.
- c) studying its organizational set up.

These new "aims and objectives" did not lead in the beginning to a change in the "direction of research (centre - periphery) nor did they affect the non-participatory nature of the Data Collection Methods." It was only after further politicization of the researchers that the methodologies were gradually changed into participatory ones.

II. 2. The Problem area

The problem area of the research broadly defined was to become the Rural Vocational Education sector and its historical, socio-economic, political and organizational context.

Historically the research had to trace the development of vocational education and especially its rural component, since the early days of colonialism it had to find out what function vocational education had under colonialism, what structures it produced, what problems it faced and how this affects vocational education today.

Socio-economically, the research had to find out the function of vocational education in social reproduction of society todate. See how it relates to the important sectors of Rural Transformation, Industrialization, Formal Education and Employment. See how it is affected by the dependent and underdeveloped nature of the economy and the class structure of the society.

Politically, the research had to consider the contradictions between political theory and political practice. See of what nature they are and how they affect vocational education.

Organizationally, the research had to consider the existing set up and its problems. See to what extent coordination and cooperation lacks. See of what nature the organizational set up is; what objective functions it has and how it affects vocational education.

Having undergone through the process of familiarization the research phprothesis was outlined as follows:-

II.2.1 Research Hypothesis

- a) The objectives of the rural vocational education sector, to train skilled manpower for the villages, cannot be achieved on a mass basis under the present conditions of economic

underdevelopment and dependency.

- b) Vocational education for rural areas neither serves, complies with, nor does it consolidate the policy of Ujamaa and self - reliance.
- c) The problems of rural vocational are structural ones reflecting the historical and material conditions of an underdeveloped and dependent society.
- d) The system of vocational education in Tanzania favours a minority who are socially and economically better off and helps to perpetuate social stratification in society.

The above hypothesis became a line of action for the researchers who set out to prove them with the investigation. But the process of doing so, it was necessary to work within a limited framework. At this point the researchers decided to call the areas not touched by research; limitations of the research.

II.2.2. Research Limitation.

Various limitations had to be imposed to the research in order to keep it in a homogeneous and manageable framework.

- a) Training objectives - limited to only those institutions training for the rural sector.
- b) Training levels - limitation was on the post-primary craftsmen - level whereby allowance was made slightly for lower and higher levels.
- c) Training subjects: with regard to training subjects the research limited itself to five major areas. These were Home economics and Domestic Science, Vocational subjects, Technical subjects, Commercial Subjects and Agricultural subjects. Emphasis was put on the vocational and Technical subjects which in practice very much overlap.

Training Authorities covered by the sample were TAPA, SIDO, CHURCH, Ministry of National Education and OTHERS. Location of schools were both rural and urban (smaller rural towns).

The following section attempts to show the process of familiarisation; a process which is the axis of the study, since it demonstrates on the one hand how researchers gained clarity about the problems of underdevelopment and on the other, how a correct analytical framework was obtained which helped to correctly define the problems of vocational education.

III FAMILIARISATION

Familiarisation at the initial stages of the research was mainly a process of studying problems, remedies on the educational "Crisis". It took the form of reading and critiquing, theories arising from other peoples practice books, manuals, journal and other relevant literature. Experience was also gained through informal/formal interviews with officials, students, peasants and workers. Field trips contributed positively to the research. From here the researchers attempted to gain their own analytical framework by critically reviewing the different theoretical frameworks used by other research projects. At this point it was necessary to ask a question "what is a correct analytical framework? For the researchers analytical and theoretical frameworks were used interchangeably. It was discovered earlier by the researchers that the way a researcher relates to the people he is studying and the manner in which he gathers information, how he uses it, all are derived from his particular conception of reality and causal effect. On top his particular historical class outlooks greatly affects his research work. As a result the different theoretical frameworks analysed by the researchers reflected the class nature of the authors and their unsympathetic concern on the exploited classes.

Familiarization helped the researchers to discover that the level of analysis used by bourgeois researchers provided no explanation of the causes of the problems of vocational education but simply described problems or explained phenomena. Having done that, such

researchers gave recommendations for reforms within the old structures and hence basically not attacking the rootcauses of the problems. Relating the above argument to the specific study of vocational education, it was discovered that all recommendations about educational reforms for the developing Nations, constantly being given by the International Agencies like the World Bank, UNESCO etc. through their researchers are not aimed at attacking the root causes of the problems but rather perpetuating the conditions for underdevelopment and dependency.

III.2. Analytical Framework

In order to obtain a correct analytical framework opposed to other frameworks already criticised by the researchers; there was need to study the historical materialist methods of investigation. It was necessary to be clear under which World outlook the researchers were operating. A fact was established that usually the exploited perceived problems differently by virtue of their position and that there was need for them to have their own way of analysing problems. Examples were sited with the research teams how landlords after doing research came up with recommendations that poor peasants could not raise production due to laziness and ignorance. It was concluded that if peasants were given a chance to give their recommendations, they could talk of how they are being subjected to long hours of work in the Land lords' farm and hence getting no time to produce for their own means of subsistence.

The researchers were convinced that no other method apart from the one derived from historical and materialist outlook that can genuinely serve to help the oppressed and the exploited.

Materialist theoretical categories like studying of problems at their phenomena, intemediate and essence were discovered and helped to build up a correct theoretical framework. Having collected a vast information through documentation, interviews, field trips and observation, the task was to distinguish between the

various levels of information. At the first level were those facts which portrayed only the most obvious and outward signs of the problem itself. The facts at this first level were called appearances. At the second level were other facts which were able to shed light on the reasons for some of the appearances but were unable to explain other appearances or to put all the facts into a concrete theory. These were called intermediate causes. Finally at the third level are the facts which could explain all of the above facts and establish a causal relationship among them. These were the rootcauses or the essence of the problems.

The researchers concluded that the appearances of the educational "crisis" were a result of the contradictions within the educational system (the intermediate causes) The Intermediate causes which are in turn derived from the Principal contradiction in society (essence) opposites rich and poor, exploiters and exploited. Hence, the problems of education were a result of the major contradiction the International financial capital on the one hand and the exploited workers and peasants serving the capital on the other. Thus discovery of secondary and primary contradictions in the society helps to give a clear understanding about the problems and how to resolve them.

In short the theoretical framework derived from the historical and materialist outlook helped to analyse problems properly. By viewing society from the historical and materialist outlook it was possible to see the contradictions inherent in society and hence the essence of the problems.

III. 3. Dissemination of the research findings.

As mentioned in the introduction, the research findings were discussed extensively in a national workshop held in a village. Villagers presented their papers which complemented to the findings of the research. These helped the workshop participants to relate

the findings directly to the prevailing conditions of a village. The research findings indicated clearly that the given problems are concrete results of definite conditions in our society. They were interpreted as structural problems of an underdeveloped and dependent society that has neither yet succeeded in disengaging from international capitalism nor resolved its internal class contradictions. Given such interpretation of the underlying root causes of the problems it becomes difficult to perceive of easy and speedy remedies since the nature of our economical and social relations need to undergo drastic change. It was realized that any reforms within the given system will eventually only serve the reproduction of the old system itself.

III.4. How to Change.

A question which was raised was "What next after the research at the national level has been accomplished?"

The researchers made it clear that they did not intend to impose remedies but want to provide the ground work for a better understanding of the problems, promote rational debate and facilitate remedial actions by the people directly affected. Recommendations and ways for implementation resulting from the research were formulated by a special committee of Church Officials who studied the Research report.

Since early 1976 concrete attempts are made to decentralize the research to the grassroots; i.e. basically to those people in the villages that are mostly affected by the problems of rural vocational education. Such strategy of grass root participation in research work developed out of the researchers realization that one can hardly research for other people, especially if he belongs to a different social strata and hence does not share their real interests. Secondly it was realized once research aims further than at the interpretation of a reality; i.e. at actions to change that reality, the people who suffer from that reality must be involved.

It was necessary to initiate local research teams in the Diocese and Synods. These are composed of direct producers like poor and middle peasants, poor village craftsmen as well as pastors and evangelists. What these teams are mainly doing is to concretize the CCT research done at National level in their local contexts. There are now 18 contact teams but very few are active due to problems ranging from bureaucracy and time especially when members are most of the time involved in production.

All existing teams still need more official backing from both Diocess/Synod and the Government in order to go about their work smoothly and easily. The entire concept of the grass-roots researching their own problems is not yet everywhere accepted and it has been very difficult sometimes to acquire their recognition in the village structures. Where they existed, suspicion persited from conservatives both religions and political. As a result the work of the research teams is carried on very slowly.

Regular seminars at national and local levels provide platforms for charting out correct strategies, acquiring the basic research tools exchanging experience and conceiving concrete actions. Experience from the previously held seminars proves that, turning the research to the grass roots is a correct strategy. Our involvement with these people has heightened both our revolutionary commitment as well as our revolutionary consciousness. Above all, the entire process is the very practice that our policy of socialism and self reliance is calling for.

III.5. Interpretation of the Recommendation to Practical Projects

Despite the continuing dialogue with the Party and the Government institutions on the recommendations of the research, the Church decided to go ahead with implementing those research recommendations that can be done with the human and material resources of the Churches. For this purpose another workshop was held in June, 1978, composed of research teams, Government Officials and research advisors.

The workshop combined theory and practice by allocating time for fieldwork in five villages thus giving the participants a chance to check the Official conclusions and recommendations once more against the concrete conditions in the villages. The Workshop came up with projects aimed at transforming our economic base. An action plan for the contact teams was formed to test for the viability of the proposed projects in their local contexts. On top two Church vocational schools and an area without a school were chosen to serve as pilot projects implementing the research recommendations. Meanwhile feasibility studies are being carried by the research teams within the selected pilot project areas, their functions are as follows:-

- a) To produce a careful analysis and interpretation of the rootcauses of the problems in Vocational Education in their particular area.
- b) To produce a careful analysis and interpretation of the rootcauses of the particular problems of Church Vocational Schools in their area and to become involved in the assessment of new vocational education projects.
- c) To acquire and master the methods of scientific research work and apply them for all basic research and evaluation required by the Dioceses and Synods for their development services.
- d) To develop long term strategies for action of the villagers and the Churches that can successfully attack the rootcauses of the problems in the local, national and international context.
- e) To develop particular short and long term strategies for the rectification of the problems in their Church Vocational Schools aiming at making these schools serving the rural masses and rural production.
- f) To embark on a permanent dissemination programme among the rural producers and the various levels of the Church leadership.

- g) To embark on a permanent conscientisation programme among the rural producers and the Church leadership that goes beyond the issue of rural vocational education but makes underdevelopment and its total liberation its main topics.

The above can only materialize through the active struggle of the team members themselves.

Paternalistic protection or support from the top can only help to make the teams dependent and submissive.

The outside protection and support is carefully weighed in the light of the teams in order to bring about fuller control of the villagers over their own reality and lives.

III.6. HOW HAS THE COMMUNITY BENEFITED.

It is premature to evaluate how far the people have benefited from the research. Infact, so far the process of forming these teams has not effectively been understood everywhere. With the understaffed research team at the CCT (2 members) level the work is so gigantic that quick results can hardly be achieved soon.

CRITICAL REMARKS ABOUT THE RESEARCH

It has to be noted that the method used by the researchers was branded unscientific, invalid and unrealistic. During dissemination of the findings researchers were accused by the vocational Education Bureaucrats of having no academic qualifications. The research was accused of being too political and dangerous. Some of the world Bank officials said the method used and proposals given were too unrealistic to the conditions of underdeveloped countries.

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The research teams were seen as composed of incapable ignorant people to enter into the field of research and as a result they face problems due to their confrontation with the bureaucracy. Reactionary elements combined force to discourage the approach. Even at this particular moment in time, policy makers on vocational education have completely ignored the CCT research and its grassroot strategy. The policy makers are comfortable with the reforms recommended by the World Bank and other Agencies.

Reviewing the situation as it is, how can one involve the affected people themselves in discovering their problems both objectively and subjectively? Is there any other way of building structures and strategies for action beyond interpretation of our socio-economic reality?

