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THE IMPACT OF TEACHER-PUPIL RATIO ON TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: EXPERIENCES FROM TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper was to examine teaching-learning process in primary schools in Tanzania within the context of the impact of teacher- pupil ratio on the teaching- learning process with reference to two selected administrative districts in Dar es Salaam region, which are Temeke and Kinondoni, to represent the entire country. Tanzania has made a significant effort to improve the educational system through the Primary Educational Development Plan (PEDP). The government launched the Primary Educational Development Plan (PEDP) in 2002. This reform aims to show Tanzania's commitment towards the global education for all targets expressed by the international community in Jomtien 1990 and Dakar 2000. The main priority of Primary Educational Development Plan (PEDP) is to increase an overall enrolment of girls and boys. The country has been awarded and recognized for the attainment of the millennium development goals before the time frame of 2015. This incredible job on universal primary education enrolment has been due to the eradication of school fees for primary education. In 2001, primary school enrolment expanded to 95%. This reform has brought about a substantial increase in enrolment which in turn brings one important question to the fore. What are the effects of hasty enrolment on the teaching-learning of pupils in primary school?

Keywords: Teacher- pupil ratio, Interaction, Teaching- learning process and classroom management.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1948, when the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights was proclaimed, there has been innumerable policy statement aiming to substantially improve basic life for the benefits of the world. Education has often been regarded as both a means and ends in the quest of human

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rights and social development (Benjamin, 2005). By the 19th century, countries all over the world witnessed gradual achievement in compulsory education. The Jomtien, Thailand Education For All Resolution (UN, 1990), the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) were enclosed in these resolutions. The governments committed themselves to action for the change in favour of rightful status of the child in society and equal access to education and complete free and compulsory education of good quality by the year 2015 (UN Millennium Development Goals, 2000; World Education Forum, 2000). The Jomtien Education for All (EFA) was instrumentally in identifying international agreed targets for provision of education as a basic human right. Tanzania was a part of the Dakar, Senegal framework for action and international review of education progress made in Jomtien and has joined many nations which have ratified the United Nations convention on the rights of children (URT, 2003-204). The government of Tanzania in 1995 introduced a series of education reforms through the wider sector development programme in order to address the existing problems in the sector. However, it is the PEDP campaign which remains at the core of Tanzania's determination to achieve EFA. The government initiated series of policies and reforms to improve the situation in the educational sector with the aim of ensuring that, all children have access to good quality primary education (ESDP, 2004-2009). This was connected with the country's development vision of 2025, which envisages the total elimination of poverty. Thus, education is given high priority to educate and bring about socio-economic transformations. As it is explicitly stated in the vision 2025 document:

Education should be treated as strategic agent for mind set transformation and for the creation of well educated nation, sufficiently, equipped with the knowledge needed to competently and competitively solve the development challenges which face the nation. In this light, education system should be restructured and transformed quantitatively with the focus on promoting creativity and problem solving (URT, 2005).

In lieu to that, in 2002, Tanzania launched the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP). This reform aimed at upholding Tanzanian commitment towards the international Education for All (EFA) target which was articulated in the Jomtien Education For All and Dakar framework (URT, 2001). The targets of priorities were:

- **Enrolment expansion:** Focusing on classroom construction, teacher engagement, and teacher deployment.
- **Quality improvement:** Encompassing in-service and pre-service teacher training and teaching learning materials provision.
- **Management improvement:** Through a range of capacity building efforts (ESDP, 2002-2006).

To achieve this, the Government decided to exempt school fees and other mandatory parental contributions and established scholarships from the National Education funds to pay for the Education of disadvantaged children and HIV/AIDS orphans. The abolition of school fees and other contributions led to an increase in enrolment of children (MoEC, 2003).

The enrolment ratio in 2002 was 84.6% and 2011 it reached 105.5%. However, it was estimated that there will be 8 million children 7-13 years old out of the school system by the end of 2011. On the other hand, the primary school age population (7-13 years old) in 2012 is 8,378,759 while the actual enrolment of 7-13 year old is 7,707,046 and the total enrolment was 8,247,172 pupils (of all ages). Consequently, this would overwhelm the educational available resources.

Table-1. Primary Schools Enrolment of STD I – VII, 2001-2012

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
2001	2,474,344	3,407,244	5,881,588
2002	3,052,018	2,929,370	65,62772
2003	3,565,420	3,197,352	7,083063
2004	3,626,241	3,456,822	7,083,063
2005	3,855,712	3,685,496	7,542,108
2006	4,051,676	3,908,208	7,959,884
2007	4,215,171	4,101,754	8,316,925
2008	4,261,831	4,148,263	8,410,094
2009	4,248,764	4,192,789	8,441,553
2010	4,203,269	4,216,036	8,419,305
2011	4,159,740	4,203,646	8,363,386
2012	4,086,280	4,160,892	8,247,172

Source: Basic Education Statistics of Tanzania, [BEST \(2012\)](#)

There has been a fluctuation and decline in primary school NER as indicated in Table1. Despite the declining trend of the overall enrolment, the enrolment of age 7-13 years, which is the right school age has increased and reached 93.5% in 2012 compared to 91.5% in 2011. This implies that, the Government is in the right track of achieving the EFA target and MDGs of enrolling all children at the right age of 7-13 years old by the year 2015.

Expansion and Teacher-Pupil Ratio

A teacher in the classroom is a main instrument for bringing about qualitative improvement in teaching and learning activities. Such quality is maximized where there are enabling and supportive environments where the pupils participate actively in the process and where pupils, teachers and schools have opportunities for institutional growth. The pupil-teacher ratio in primary school in Tanzania was last reported at 50 and 76 in 2010, according to [Word Bank report \(2012\)](#). The primary school pupil-teacher ratio is the number of pupils enrolled in primary school divided by the number of primary school teachers (regardless of their teaching assignment). The official Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania (2010) indicates that, there has been a steady increase in pupil-teacher ratios in recent years from 1:50 to 1:60 in 2011. [BEST \(2012\)](#) indicates pupil-teacher ratios in some region in Tanzania are: 1:71 to 1:79 in both rural and urban areas. The government has set a target by the year 2002 – 2006, the teacher –pupil ratio should be 1:40, but this has not yet been achieved due to the inconsistency with the current primary school staffing formulas of eight teachers for seven classes in rural schools and nine teachers for seven classes in urban schools. The primary school teachers in Tanzania were last reported at 165856 in 2010, [Word Bank report \(2012\)](#). The primary school teachers include full-

time and part-time teachers. In line with Hakielimu report in 2008, the situation of teacher-pupil ratio is worse in both rural and urban. The classrooms are grossly overcrowded, even in the most favoured areas of capital cities, schools were found with 78-90 pupils in one classroom, while in certain rural areas figures were as high as 92 to 100. For example, Adumanani primary school located in Meatu Shinyanga where pupils go on leave when their only teacher falls sick.

Table-2.Teacher-Pupil Ratio Variations in Sampled Regions

Regions	Kagera	Kigoma	Lindi	Mara	Tabora	Tanga	Shinyanga
TPR	50	53	52	52	59	53	71

Source: Basic Education Statistics of Tanzania, [BEST \(2012\)](#)

Table 2 shows that TPR has increased from 1: 50.9 in 2010 to 1: 51.7 in 2012. This is an indication that recruitment of teachers has lagged behind the increases in enrolments in primary schools. The problem became more sensitive with the implementation of Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP). As a result of PEDP, to ensure that all children attend primary schools, user fees were abolished leading to a hasty increase in enrolment.

Research Questions

In view of the introduction, this paper was guided by the following three questions;

1. How do you explain the enrolment increases since the inception of PEDP?
2. How overcrowded classrooms do affects the teaching-learning process?
3. How do teachers manage academic learning time?
4. Which participatory strategies do teachers use in instructing the lesson?

Design and Methodology

The study was a case study of schools in two educational administrative districts. [Creswell \(2003\)](#) states that case study attempts to learn more about a little known or poorly understood situation. The focus is on the participants' perceptions and feelings of the event or situation and the study tries to answer the question of the experience. The study was mainly qualitative in nature although the elements of quantitative approach were employed in getting the base line. The data were collected, organized, cleaned and analyzed using native forms.

Selection and Sampling

The study was carried out in two administrative districts: Temeke and Kinondoni in Dar es Salaam region in Tanzania. These administrative districts were selected through non-probability purposive sampling method. Thus, since 2001, the number of pupils enrolled in primary schools in these administrative districts has doubled ([Hakielimu, 2002-2004](#)) and ([Municipals Implementation Development report, 2005-2006](#)). Hence, the sample is strategic as Temeke and Kinondoni districts represent a critical situation whether there are mechanisms affecting the teaching-learning process in the classroom as the result of hasty enrolment.

Ten school head teachers, twenty five teachers and forty students drawn from ten schools participated in the study. Purposive sampling was employed to select teachers and students. To achieve this end, the school head teachers were consulted to identify veteran teachers who had at least been working in the teaching career for the periods ranging between five to seven years. It was important to involve teachers with experience as they are aware of PEDP establishment and its effects to the teaching-learning process. Similarly, the purposive sampling technique was used in attaining respondents among pupils. This approach involved pupils with good understanding relating to the study. Convincingly, the selected pupils were among standard four, five and six.

Data Collection Instruments

The main data collection instruments were semi-structured interview and observation. The interviews were preferred to other forms of data collection as they enabled the researcher to naturally converse with the respondents. This allowed the respondents to freely express their feelings and experiences. The interviews also enabled the researcher to probe and prompt on answers given and this flexibility of interviews made it possible for the researcher to gather as much information as possible (Cohen, 2000). The interview for school head teachers and teachers was conducted in their respective offices, and the interview for pupils was conducted in groups of 2-3 pupils in the selected places around the schools. The observation technique was used to assess teachers' classroom activities, pupils' participation on the teaching learning process and pupils' sitting arrangement in the classroom.

Data Analysis

The analysis began with individual respondents, and answers from different respondents were grouped and presented per given question. Most of the data were qualitative in nature and were analyzed using content analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the teaching-learning process in primary schools in Tanzania within the context of the impacts of teacher-pupil ratio in teaching-learning process with reference to two selected administrative districts in Dar es Salaam region, which are Temeke and kinondoni, to represent the entire country.

The General Views of Respondents towards Primary Education Development Plan

The general stance towards PEDP among the respondents is perceived both positively and negatively with some important reservations. The enrolment figures are perceived as a positive achievement as more children are now having access to schooling. Further, PEDP has generated access to school for girls, which is positive. In addition PEDP has generated a considerable inflow of resources in absolute terms. For- instance the Development Grants and Capitation Grants (CG) (Beniamin, 2005). Development Grants are central government grants directed for construction units, such as classrooms, teachers' houses, pit latrines, water tanks, libraries,

laboratory, desks and other important furniture. The available official information indicates that Capitation Grants per pupil is US \$ 10 per annum. They are distributed to cover facilities repair, purchase of textbooks, teaching aids, pens, exercise books and administrative materials and examination papers. As a result new classroom has been constructed through government and community effort, more teachers have been employed; and textbooks are available in schools. The majority of respondents agreed that PEDP had created opportunities not only to schooling aspect, but also to the house hold income. Similarly, the participants pointed out that PEDP had come in the right time since it enabled pupils from poor families to access their constitutional rights of attending primary education. Generally, the majority of respondents viewed PEDP as the liberator of penury people. They advised the government to train and recruit more teachers so as to go hand in hand with the increased enrolment. Also, this group argued that the state should put more emphasis on the construction of teachers' houses and increase teachers' remunerations.

Despite the positive achievement of PEDP, other respondents agreed that funds located to PEDP were not enough and sometimes did not reach the school at the right time; as a result it was difficult to maintain the state of huge enrolment. Some respondents posed that, "*In the places resources do not go hand in hand with the enrolment; we need more funds to handle the increased number of pupils...*". All respondents agreed that the current situation was not impressive since most important resources both human and materials were not sufficient. These shortages in turn hamper the quality teaching-learning progress as well as quality education offered. One respondent maintained that, "*the worst situation of PEDP is the overcrowded classes, which in one way or another affects the teaching -learning progress*".

When the researcher asked the respondents on enrolment increases, they all pointed out that the number of pupils had doubled in all schools. They pointed out that it was a good sign of PEDP success in one dimension, though it was faced with other challenges. Their arguments centered at:

- I. Abolition of school fees and increases of awareness among the parent. One respondent noted that:
- II. *The school fees used to be a heavy burden for many families especially for poor families with many children. The school fees often forced poor families not to send their children to schools. Indeed, a school fee was a stumbling block for poor families to acquire education.*
- III. The majority of respondents noted that the media information and education campaigning were the key players undertaken to sensitize parents, village leaderships and other educational stakeholders.

Teacher–Pupil Classroom Interaction

The study sought to investigate the interaction between teacher and pupils and pupils to pupils in the classroom during the teaching-learning process. It was observed that the interaction between teacher and pupils was not effective due to a large number of pupils per class and sitting

arrangements. It was observed that pupils did not get enough individual assistance from their teachers during teaching-learning process. All pupils who were interviewed complained that they did not get enough individual help from their teachers.

Further, it was found that many pupils were afraid to ask questions to the teacher in front of a class containing 120 pupils. These caused difficulties for teachers in assessing the learning advancement and capacities on individual among other pupils. This in turn makes it impossible for teachers to pursue teaching adjusted to pupils' levels of cognitive development. The teacher noted that the absence of an individual help in the current classrooms was underlined by the fact that teachers did not even know the names of all pupils in their classrooms. The findings showed that classroom teaching strategies were more teacher-centered with low pupils' participations. During observation, it was noticed that 90% of lesson teaching activities were teacher centeredness. The researcher witnessed lecture teaching strategy for more than forty five minutes out of sixty of a double period lesson. Further, it was observed that pupil-pupil interaction was rare due to the fact that the classes were overcrowded something which did not provide a room for pupils to interact during the learning session.

Similarly, the assessment techniques employed by teachers and feedback to pupils had affected a large number of pupils in the classes. The majority of respondents emphasized that the situation was far from satisfaction. It was perceived that the feedback had deteriorated in line with the large number of pupils in the classroom. The partial feedback was only given through oral questions and on the board. However, it was discovered that it was too difficult to attain feedback from teacher to pupils and pupils to teacher due to a large number of pupils in the classrooms. The pupils are many for teachers to check the in understanding and sharing of the learning outcomes with their pupils. The respondents posed that it was the impossible to have effective assessment since there was no proper marking of pupils' academic works; as a result, marking had lagged behind substantially.

Class Size and Teacher-Pupil Ratio

The official goal of the Ministry of Educational and Vocational Training is that classes should contain the number of 40 pupils. Besides, the researcher observed that the target was far from being attained in line with the enrolment increase. There has been a substantial increase of pupils overweighing classrooms in place in all the visited primary schools. Based on interviews and observations, it showed that it was a normal situation for a classroom to contain 90 – 120 pupils. Unfortunately, it was observed by this study that in all visited schools, TPR differs from one school to another and from class to class. All teachers and pupils maintained that they would prefer small classes if this chance were at hand. The teachers agreed that quality teaching-learning process was affected negatively by the class size and overcrowding of pupils in a single class. One teacher commented that *"...In a class of 120 pupils, pupils do not get proper education."* Table 3 shows teacher-pupil ratio in sample primary schools

Table-3. Teacher-Pupil Ratio in Sample Schools

Schools	Number of pupils in each school	Number of teachers in each school	TPR
A	3087	48	1: 64
B	4012	44	1: 91
C	2747	47	1: 58
D	2678	38	1: 70
E	3476	47	1: 73
F	3874	48	1: 81

Source: Data collected from the field, 2012

Classroom Management during the Teaching-Learning Process

Classroom management is an important skill to be applied during classroom teaching-learning process so as to allow application of other skills (Bruns, 2003). The way the teacher handles classroom behaviours of pupils and the way he/she treats the subject matter determines what is going on in the classroom. Through proper classroom management and sitting arrangement, the teacher and pupils participate effectively in the process of teaching and learning and maintain order in the classroom. Basically, the majority of the interviewed respondents agreed that the discipline had deteriorated along with the enrolment increase, and this constituted serious problems in classrooms during the teaching and learning session. The way teachers control pupils' behaviours such as lateness, chatting, noise, teasing, fighting and other delinquent behaviours without interfering classroom schedules were observed.

It was observed that teachers were not capable of handling classes, but in one lesson observed at school B, two pupils came to the classroom late and the teacher stopped from teaching for some minutes and started punishing them. Thus, seven minutes of the lesson were used in administering punishment to those pupils. These pupils' disruptive behaviours caused wastage of time for learning time, since teachers spend a lot of time on disciplinary interventions. Hence, the time that was allocated for teaching is used for maintaining orders. All teachers agreed that the time for learning was lost due to disciplinary interventions. In the same token, time for learning was often hampered due to the lack of individual assistance, when pupils do not understand the concepts and do not get individual assistance from their teachers to solve their problems hence they get stuck. This means that they are physically present in the class, but mentally not learning. Another important component on time for learning is the starting of the lesson. It was observed that two teachers at school A and B entered their respective classrooms 15 minutes after the commencement of the lesson. Sadly enough, those teachers ended their teaching activities between 5-7 minutes before the lessons allocated time. Undoubtedly, such tendencies cause 20-25 minutes per day not to be used for the teaching activities. This is in line with what UWEZO research institute found in 2010 that, teachers in Tanzania were supposed to spend 5:30 hours per day in classroom teaching, but the reality is that, they are using only 2:20 hours per day in classroom teaching. This has been linked with pupils' disruptive behaviours caused by

overcrowded classes and lack of commitment among teachers. Photo1 shows the overcrowded classrooms in primary schools

Photo-1. Shows Overcrowded Classroom in a Primary School in Tanzania



Source: Field photo

Photo1: shows that there are large numbers of pupils in classes to the extent that others have to sit on the floor. The number of pupils in this class was 126. This shows how difficult it is for teachers to manage the classes in such worst situation with other pupils sitting very close to the chalkboard.

Teachers and Teaching Strategies

Effective learning depends on academic qualification, application of teaching strategies, teaching materials and healthy school environments. All observed teachers were academically qualified and had teaching experience of more than five to seven years.

The study observed that some teachers employed the lecture teaching method; they rarely applied questions and answers teaching strategy. [Beniamin \(2005\)](#) argued that, with lecturing method, pupils are pretty much omitted to their own capacity of understanding and in big classes it becomes more difficult for teachers to recognize slow learners. Some of the respondents argued that the use of lecture method was contributed by several factors such as overcrowded classrooms, and lack of motivation. Teachers were very conscious about the situation. They perceived the circumstance as leading them to use lecture method. Among the shortcomings of lecture teaching strategy is that individual difference is neglected.

Principally, in classrooms, pupils do differ in terms of understanding and social background that contributes to their lesson understanding. Although lecture teaching strategy favours fast learners, it contributes negatively to slow learners. In some sampled schools, teachers were observed being busy lecturing the classes containing not less than 125 pupils. The researcher sought views from one of the teacher on the usefulness of lecture teaching method. The

respondent answered simply that “*there is no other choice other than lecturing*”. This statement is similar to that of Mmbaga (2002) who confirms that large classes force teachers to use lecture methods rather than pupil-centered strategies to enhance learning. The teachers were also asked to explain their understanding on the interactive method that involves learners in various activities. All teachers responded positively that they understood very well, despite the fact that they were not using them because of overcrowded classes, shortage of teaching and learning materials, and time for learning.

Pupils’ Perception on the Teaching–Learning Process

The study explored pupils’ perception towards the teaching –learning process in their classes. Pupils were asked if they were involved fully in the teaching-learning process. Their concern seemed to centre around the clarity of instruction, participation and emphasis on understanding of the subject matter. All pupils who were interviewed agreed that they were not fully involved during the teaching–learning process. The pupils argued that teachers were not using teaching aids like pictures, and other real objects, and their explanations to some concepts were not clear. The pupils were asked whether their teachers give them homework. They pointed out that they were not given homework, but were told to do some revisions when they are at home. Similarly, teachers were asked as to why they do not give the homework to pupils. They commented that it was due to overcrowdness and time limit for marking the works and return pupils’ exercise books in the following day. However, the findings on pupils’ perception towards teaching–learning involvement were not contrary with what was observed in the classrooms by the researcher. It was observed that pupils’ involvement was very minimal; therefore, there was one way communication pattern from the teachers to pupils. Hence, it becomes more difficult for a teacher to prioritize slow learners.

Policy Suggestions

1. The government should create enabling conditions for locally initiated and designed quality improvement initiatives by identifying and re-distributing resources to primary schools that are severely under-resourced, under-staffed and have large numbers of enrolled pupils in classrooms.
2. The government should design strategies that enhance teachers’ capacity and interest to utilize available teaching-learning resources within and outside the school. These strategies should include organizing school-based training programs for teachers in the use of varied teaching-learning resources and teaching methods. Essentially, teachers should be sensitized to appreciate the impact of using participatory teaching and learning methods and techniques on pupils’ learning outcomes. The current school based seminars on participatory teaching methods and techniques are a step in the right direction, but if real the impact is to be achieved, a closer attention should be paid to the content, duration and timing of such training. Support supervision at school level should be a major component.

3. The government should oppose the attraction of access primary education for all and improve learning outcomes. The main point here is that the government and educational policy makers should make revision of educational policy that will focus on the capabilities of its learners, i.e. the skills, abilities and aptitudes of its graduates, because continuing with this trend of accesses to all will continue to hamper the quality of teaching and learning process. Hence, grandaunts will not be in positions of prospering in the world and more effectively contribute to national development.
4. The government should support teachers over infrastructures. It has put more attention to enrolment and classroom construction, but teachers' matters were forgotten. When you cannot have everything and trade-offs need to be made, priority should be given to teachers. It is internationally recognized that, the most important thing in teaching and learning process is the interaction between motivated, competent teachers and their pupils. The government should find the best way to motivate teachers in both career development and economic well being. Without motivated and competent teachers focused on pupil learning, all the reforms will not be achieved. If teachers are at the heart of education, they should also be at the heart of our educational policy and practice, budgets and political rhetoric as well.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to examine the teaching- learning process in primary schools in Tanzania within the context of the impact of teacher-pupil ratio on the teaching - learning process with reference to two selected administrative districts in Dar es Salaam region, which are Temeke and Kinondoni, to represent the entire country. The interest of the researcher was to evaluate hasty pupil enrolment in schools in relation to the quality of teaching-learning process. The researcher selected Temeke and Kinondoni administrative districts to find out whether there were mechanisms affecting the teaching-learning process resulting from hasty enrolment increases in primary schools within a short period of time. The general perception of respondents towards enrolment increase in primary schools was positive and has brought some improvements in access to education especially for girls. The main conclusion of this study is that the expansions of enrolments of pupils have negative effects on teaching-learning process in relation to quality of teaching-learning progress. Consequently, the first enrolment within a short period of time led to shortage of resources (human and material resources) which constitute troubles in the overall progress of teaching-learning process in primary schools. Therefore, teaching has become a practical of riot control with sticks falling regularly rather than the process of interactive learning. It was revealed that the teacher is the basic resource in education provision. It is true that even if the schools are flooded with all learning materials, it will not be possible to provide better education without teachers. Generally, with the data gleaned by this study, it is clear that Temeke and Kinondoni administrative districts, which represent the entire nation, are still far

from the global national targeted goals of providing quality teaching-learning environments in relation to provision of quality education.

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