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THE IMPACT OF ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION ON TEACHING AND LEARNING: AN EXPERIENCE OF TEACHER EDUATION IN TANZANIA.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION.

The Tanzania Vision 2025 sees education as a strategic agent for mindset transformation as well as creation of a well educated nation that can face the development challenges in the globalisation era. It is in this view that the government has initiated reforms in the education sector through formulation of Basic Education, Teacher Education and Secondary Education Master Plans of 1997, 2000, and 2002 respectively. The Teacher Education Master Plan (TEMP), for instance, is an integrated framework of training educators. It aims at strengthening policy formulation, professional development, monitoring and evaluation of teacher training and improving the quality of assessment and certification.

The discussion of the paper is based on the experience gained by NECTA in administering Teacher Education Examinations (TEE) to Certificate and Diploma in Education student teachers, in relation to the performance of candidates. It discusses the influence of assessment and certification on teaching and learning process in the context of Teacher Education System.

2.0 AN OVERVIEW OF TEACHER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

2.1 Assessment and evaluation are useful tools for monitoring and evaluating students' learning achievement as well as education system. They are also very useful tools for motivating learners and provision of timely feedback in the teaching and learning process. According to David F. B. (2002), assessment ´´is a process of ongoing formative and summative evaluation that should be easily understood, and embraced for what it can do to improve student learning and the quality of our institutions``. Whereas assessment deals with the process of measuring and analyzing performance to provide timely feedback in improving future performance, comparatively, evaluation deals with the process of measuring the quality of performance, determining whether the standards have been attained.

Therefore, assessment in Teachers' Colleges should not be a tool of only using achievement tests to measure the outcome in studies of teaching behaviours, rather it should also be used

to facilitate ways that testing might be used to foster teaching and learning instructionally. Assessment of student teachers should incorporate information and insights as an integral part of the ongoing teaching and learning process. It is in this view that learning and teaching process, including learning outcomes, should be facilitated by on-going curriculum development and assessment of learning achievement. There must be a strong and realistic drive to setting standards for achievement, and developing clearly defined methods of assessing learning achievement. Equally important, curriculum development reform should not start at national level, but at the classroom level where teaching and learning practices are mainly carried out.

2.2 The reform of Teacher Education Curriculum (TEC) in Tanzania in 1997, for instance, was a major step toward looking at the assessment of what learners need and how to assess them realistically. The former TEC put more emphasis on academics than on methods of teaching and assessment. As a result, student teachers were seen as revising what they had already learnt in secondary education level. The research conducted by the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) in 1989/1990 to all sampled government and non-government educational institutions, revealed that there was a need for reformation of TEC. That more pedagogical aspects should be included than theoretical ones. Thus, in 1992, the Government of Tanzania decided to reform the curriculum which must suit the demand of promoting teacher-professionalism. Though there are other reformations going on, the current TEC is now holistic and dynamic in nature. Apart from cognitive ways of learning, it also respects acquisition of world through intuition, emotion, and experience of learners.

2.3 In most cases, assessment of student performance in schools is forcefully carried out in order to meet the public stipulated functions of external national examinations. Teachers focus their teaching in view of the ultimate goals of selection of students to higher levels of education ladder or employment, certification and accountability of the teachers themselves. But, as far as selection of students is concerned, a large number of students are not selected to higher educational level due to government limited resources and places available at higher levels of schooling and employment. In so doing, students are not directed deeply into the habit of reflecting on their own knowledge resources in promoting their talents and skills,

rather they are guided to surface-learning by their teachers towards meeting the public goals through measuring mainly cognitive abilities by norm-referenced tests.

2.4 In assessing performance of students, cognitive and psychomotor domains are easier to assess the ability of students' knowledge and skills acquired, and more commonly used than assessing affective domain traits. The abstractness nature of the affective objectives, as well as their difficult way of assessing and predicting the future attitude change of learners, causes it to be overlooked. It is easier, for instance, to measure the students' abilities to compute simultaneous equations, rather than measuring their attitudes towards liking mathematics. However difficult it might be, yet affective objectives are very important in me asuring beliefs (the intellectual content), feelings and behavioural tendencies of students in improving the teaching and learning process.

2.5 Assessment strategies directed to the above named objectives should be imparted to student teachers during classroom work and in their teaching practice sessions. Their performance abilities should be assessed through exercises and tests, projects, and character assessment so as to collect, record, analyze the findings and keep the information needed for present and future uses. In assessing their character in Teachers' Colleges, attitudes like aptitude to teaching profession, responsibility, cooperation, and volunteering should be added in assessment schedule of character. Their acquisition of life skills should also be assessed because they have impact on their future career.

3.0 IMPACT OF ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION ON TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS.

3.1 While discussing the influence of assessment and certification on teaching and learning process, it is better to note that assessment and instructional goals should be congruent. Normally, the teacher aims at developing metacognitive abilities of students, fostering their basic natural qualities of mind and character, as well as socializing them into the practices of academic disciplines.

3.2 Assessment of student teachers has got several negative and postive impacts on teaching and learning process. Negative impact that is mainly influenced by assessment, is reflected in tests and examinations. Observations of examination irregularities reported to NECTA by examination Invigilators and Supervisers, depict the presence of cheating conducted before or during the administration of TEE. The reports reveal occurrences of some student teachers entering into the examination room with unofficial notes, or communicating tentative answers to one another, and some going outside the room frequently, to read their hidden notes. A basic question is why do they cheat? Obviously, they want to make any trick available for them, to pass the examination and obtain the best certificate at any cost. They were not well taught and prepared for the questions in front of them. In most cases, they attained surface learning during their course of instruction, rather than deep learning. They are also afraid of failing because the assessment they got during the course of instruction was directed to revision of past papers, and probable topics likely to appear in the final examination. Hence, due to lack of alternative assessment strategies, "much of the task of schools and the external examination system is to select the talented few who are to be given advanced educational opportunities and to reject the majority of students at various points in the educational process'' (Bloom, 1970, pg.48).

Another cause for this negative effect is that the number of questions and exercises given to student teachers do not cater for all student teachers' abilities. This is because cognitive abilities are likely to be more assessed than psychomotor and affective abilities. Alternatively, policy issues with regard to assessment and certification has a negative impact on teaching and learning process. In Tanzania, for example, with effect from 2002, there is a policy to upgrade 56% (62,000) of all qualified Teacher Grade C/B to Teacher Grade A level by the year 2003/2004. It is unrealistic to think that such a big number of teachers can effectively be taught and assessed effectively within 4 to 5 year period. What few classroom teachers can easily do is to teach the targeted group hurriedly, in order to cover the requirement of the syllabus content, forgetting the use of alternative assessment strategies during the course of teaching, and also overlooking the issue of provision of quality education. It is no wonder that in such a situation, assessment and certification will have a

little, if not no impact on teaching and learning process. There must be more assessment strategies of making it a success.

3.3 On the other side of the coin, good assessment strategies and certification have a positive impact on teaching and learning in terms of instructional planning, provision of feedback, promotion of what and how to teach and learn, identification of student teachers with special needs, programme evaluation and accountability. Assessment encourages context of meaning, critical thinking and problem-solving. This is because it is usually used to check on prior knowledge, provide feedback, and engaging students in self evaluation. It has influence on opportunities for feedback, improvement, revision, identification of strengths and weaknesses and areas for improvement. It is non-judgemental, frequent, and congruent with the instructional goals. Assessment also helps to keep the learners aware of their acquisition of skills and knowledge, change of their attitude and behaviour toward learning, retention of useful life skills and other competencies. In assessment, good items or tasks are the ones which drive home reasoning capacity of students, and are rich enough to involve them in talking about a problem solution, so that they can gain experience with explaining and evaluating their own thinking.

3.4 After the reformation of the TEC in Tanzania with effect from 1997, followed by NECTA's new TEE formats in 2002, the above noted gains from good assessment are now being realized in Teacher Education. TEE formats, for instance, specify objectives of examination, rubric and content of examination, an outline of topics and subtopics to be examined from the syllabus, and table of specifications. By using them, student teachers are able to study on their own in the library and at home. They are not worried with the external examinations, because of the introduction of alternative assessment strategies which put more emphasis on observations, demonstrations, projects, oral presentations, portfolios, work samples, and character assessment. The use of the above named assessment strategies in the classroom is regarded as student teachers' classroom continuous assessment data which carries 50% of the final examination marks. Furthermore, the introduction of one year internship period for teacher trainees has also created room for more alternative assessment and certification procedures. It is encouraging to see that Teacher Instructional Programmes

and assessment are now directed toward student teachers' needs and pedagogical skills in relaton to teaching profession.

3.5 School Inspectors' Report, TEE results and Examiners' Report on the Performance of Candidates (ERPC) of 2002, show that student teachers have changed their learning behaviour towards deep learning and understanding, relative to the previous years. That the reformation of TEC and TEE formats have made it possible to the teachers to devise a more open-ended performance tasks to ensure that the student teachers are able to reason critically, solve complex problems, and apply their knowledge in real-world context. It must be noted that the teacher trainees who used the new NECTA TEE formats were tested for the first time on May 2002 examinations, and on November 2002 for the second time. According to NECTA Examinations Results Statistics (2002), Grade A Teacher Certificate Examination (GATCE) for May and November 2002, show that there is an improvement in teacher trainees' Education subject performance. As seen in Table 1 below, Subject Grade Point Average for three Education subjects below, except Foundation of Education, have relatively improved from good to better performance. This is an indication that reformation of TEE formats in assessing student trainees has resulted in improving the Education subject GPA as well as learners' abilities on the teaching and learning process.

Table 1 Four Education Subjects Comparative Performance Using Grade Point Average (GPA): Grade A Teacher Certificate Examination Results for May and November 2002

Month & Year of Examination	**May 2002**	**Nov 2002**	**May 2002**	**Nov 2002**	**May 2002**	**Nov 2002**
Education Subjects	**Candidates Present**		**Candidates Passed**		**GPA**	
Ed.Psychology,Guidance and Counselling	2,802	2637	2,828	2695	2.46	2.28
Ed.Research, Measurement and Evaluation	2,697	2524	2,828	2695	2.94	2.75
Foundation of Education	2,808	2664	2,829	2695	2.16	2.91
Curriculum and Teaching	2,812	2181	2,829	2695	2.62	2.18

In addition, School Inspectors' Report also reaveled the use of running records and portfolios in the classroom situation which assist in bringing a better job of capturing what is important to measure and at the same time, work more smoothly in blending assessment with ongoing instruction.

3.6 Certification as an endorsement by a profession body that a member of that profession has attained a specified level, helps candidates to join for further education, training and employment at different stated levels. Certification as an outcome indicator of a person's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other potential abilities, helps in placing the concerned person in a proper higher course of instruction. Probably, the better the position one holds by using certificate, the better influence of deep-learning one acquired during the course of study, and in the teaching and learning process at large. It is well stipulated in the Education and Training Policy (1975, pg.16) of Tanzania that "the basis for certification of teacher trainees shall be continuous assessment, Block Teaching Practice and final written examination".

4.0 CONCLUSION.

The culture of assessment requires knowledge of the goals and objectives to be accomplished, assessment tools that measure outcomes linked to those goals, and a mechanism for timely feedback that ensures that improvement can occur within the next circle.

It has been noted that assessment supports teaching and learning process. Its impact can be realized through using classroom continuous assessment procedures in terms of its form and content that promote thinking and problem solving skills. It should be based on oral questioning, observations, collections of student works, significant tasks, projects, demonstrations, and students' self evaluations. In this case, teachers are expected to engage themselves into a systematic analysis of the available evidence in the classroom situation. Similarly, it all depends on how alternative assessment can be used in classrooms and how it is regarded by teachers and student teachers. There must be a change of mind of relating

alternative assessment to instructional goals. A change that must help in involving student teachers to accept and set themselves in deep learning, acquisition of ability to assess their prior knowledge, resolve misconceptions, as well as resolve areas of confusion by using problem solving skills.

Therefore, assessment strategies to be applied in classroom situation, should be used to promote teaching and learning, rather than merely keeping scores on how much learning has taken place. It has to focus on the processes of teaching and learning by assuring that all its formative and summative procedures have been adhered to, in classroom situation and during student teachers' single lesson and block teaching practice sessions.

5.0 SUGGESTIONS.

5.1 Teachers should make use of alternative forms of assessment such as observations, demonstrations, clinical interviews, projects, oral presentations, portfolios, work samples, and character assessment.

5.2 Assessment and certification to student teachers should act as motivation to learning. They should not only reflect to what they are expected to know, but also to what they would like to know and their abilities of expresion of what they know.

5.3 There should be a deliberate move to all educational institutions to help classroom teachers attend refresher courses on assessment as related to promotion of teaching and learning process.

5.4 The challenge ahead is on how best we can influence classroom teachers to be able to design and use alternative assessment tools that can measure performance and foster the teaching and learning process. They must focus their teaching culture to student-centredness and students'-ability oriented.

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