

School-Based In-service Training Program: The Audacity of Hope for Teacher Professional Development in Tanzania

Allen Rugambwa, Angelista Joseph
Mwenge University College of Education, P.O. BOX 1226, Moshi Tanzania
rugambwaallen@gmail.com, angellasw@yahoo.com

Keywords: In-service Training, School-Based Training

Abstract. One of the most intriguing issues in Tanzanian education sector is the consistent low performance of students in national secondary school examinations. Studies conducted in 2012 by Laddunuri [1] and Hakielimu [2] indicated the shortage of in-service-training opportunities for teachers as one of the major reasons for the dissatisfying students' academic achievement. According to the studies teachers fail to attend in-service (INSET) training programs because of high registration fees.

This paper shares the experience obtained from the ongoing INSET program in northern Tanzania. The program is called School-Based Training. SBT takes place in 40 secondary schools in seven districts and three administrative regions, namely Kilimanjaro, Arusha, and Manyara. It was set to provide INSET to more than 2000 teachers by the year 2016. It is conducted as a joint project between Mwenge University College (MWUCE), Asante Africa Foundation and AfricAid.

The paper explains how the program is implemented to bring change in teaching practices among secondary school teachers from teacher-centered to learner-centered approach; and ensuring the program is affordable and sustainable.

1. Introduction

The success of the national curriculum depends very much on its proper implementation and needs proper knowledge for teachers as the implementation agents. This owes to the fact that education is largely a matter of a learning process that involves interaction between teachers and learners. When this interaction works well, real learning takes place. However, teachers can only facilitate real learning if they are well trained pedagogically and psychologically. When they are enabled to do their job effectively, their students are also enabled to learn effectively [3].

In Tanzania, as it is the case elsewhere, teachers get trained in teacher colleges or universities. Pre-service training, nevertheless has been proved inadequate in its nature due to the fact that knowledge is broad and it is always changing. Regardless of how well they were trained, regular INSET for teachers is inevitable. Teachers need INSET for improving their teaching competences. Knowledge changes with time, and teachers' knowledge need to be maintained in order to go hand in hand with observable changes [3].

School-Based Training Program (SBT), discussed in this paper, provides forum for teachers to share professional knowledge and experiences, solve their teaching challenges, as well as engaging different stake-holders in finding ways to support INSET of teachers.

1.1 Context

In Tanzania, INSET as a form of Teacher Professional Development, is defined as a process of improving teacher's acquisition of greater competence and efficiency in discharging her/his professional obligations in and outside the classroom [4].

It is also accepted in Tanzania that INSET for in-service teachers is essential in maintaining quality instruction in the classroom. INSET program provide teachers with a venue in which to share ideas and solve teaching problems [5]. A study that was conducted in six districts in Tanzania in 2008 revealed that teachers believed in-service teacher professional development has a number of advantages. These include getting more skills, gaining confidence and competence; enabling teachers to move with changes in science and technology; and improving the standard of students' performance [4].

Despite this shared perspective of the significance of teacher's INSET in-service professional development, INSET opportunities for teachers in Tanzania are very limited. For instance Mulkeen's study in six Sub-Saharan countries, including Tanzania, showed only percent of teachers attended INSET [6]. Laddunuri [1] and Hakielimu [2] had 23 and 33.5 percent of teachers who attended INSET programs in past five years respectively.

Planning for teacher professional development in Tanzania is largely influenced by the finance. Although teachers consider INSET significant, its implementation is constrained by the limited financial resources [4]. SBT Program, not only intends to improve access of teachers to INSET but acts as a model of teacher professional development program which is cost-effective and sustainable, and which can easily be replicated in any secondary school in Tanzania.

2.0 Findings

The authors of this paper are the coordinators of SBT program. The information shared in the paper derives from field experiences and the review of the program's documents. These include minutes of the meetings, monitors' field reports, quarter reports, and annual plans of the program.

2.1 Change in teaching practices

SBT program is an extended form of Teaching in Action (TIA) Program. TIA is a seven year old INSET program that trains teachers mainly on learner-centered pedagogy (LCP). Through TIA, teachers are equipped on how to use a variety of active and participatory teaching strategies, improvisation and use of low cost teaching resources, teaching and assessing a large class, and leadership skills.

After one-week of TIA Workshop a group of trained resource persons (called guardian teachers) go back to their schools and train fellow teachers on the selected TIA topics according to the their professional needs. This process of training is referred to as SBT. Usually for each project school SBT session takes place once in a month and it is two hours long.

Through SBT, in 2013, about 600 teachers and 40 heads of schools have been brought into alignment with LCT approach as opposed to the ineffective teacher-centered approach. Moreover, about 10,000 students are encouraged to ask and answer questions in classrooms, to think more critically, and solve challenging problems. Teachers engage students in active learning through teamworks. They encourage them to develop independent study skills, to express their opinions on debatable issues, and share knowledge through classroom presentations.

2.2 Sustainability of the program

The span of SBT program sponsorship from Mastercard Foundation is only three years. With this fact in mind, the program was launched with in-built mechanism of making it sustainable even beyond the sponsorship period. The sustainability mechanism involves a number of strategies.

First the program trains well the guardian teachers. These are expected to coordinate the program at school level and at cluster level. This means that after three years the guardian teachers – who are carefully chosen based on their teaching competence and experience, level of education, and commitment – can take over from program’s facilitators and successfully manage the program at their schools.

The guardian teachers are currently supervised and mentored by Mwenge University lecturers who are the program’s facilitators. These facilitators (or SBT Monitors as they are called in the program) attend school-based workshops (SBWs), conduct feedback sessions with guardian teachers, and observe classes to assess the level of the implementation of LCP at different project schools.

Another way of ensuring the sustainability of the program is engaging different secondary education stakeholders in its implementation. SBT Program coordinators actively engage the heads of schools (HOS), school managers, district education officers (DEOs), and community leaders in developing guidelines on how the program can be facilitated and financed in the future. Interaction of program coordinators is mainly through school visits, meetings with heads of schools, frequent interactions with DEOs, and meetings with school community leaders. All these interactions aim at discussing the implementation of the program and solving emerging issues.

Moreover, the program was introduced to the Tanzania’s Ministry of Education and Vocational Training by ITT Project leaders. The aim was to seek the support of the ministry in the implementation of the program. The engagement of these stake-holders in secondary education, so far, is working perfectly. There is a growing sense of ownership of the program among HEOs and DEOs.

2.3 Cost-effectiveness

SBT program is implemented to ensure its cost-effectiveness. The sustainability of any teacher professional development program is guaranteed if it is cost-effective. Cost-effectiveness is defined as a [project analysis] tool that compares expected outcomes and the costs that will be incurred. Presumably the programs with best results relative to costs are the ones that are most attractive for adoption [6].

The desirability of the expected outcomes of SBT program is undisputable. The program builds school-based teacher support system under which teachers can obtain professional guidance and support on pedagogical and content issues. It reinforces LCP in schools through which students will actively participate in learning process, and engage in critical thinking and inquiry. The outcome of this is the improved students’ academic achievement.

With reference to the costs, SBT Program is relatively less costly. This is evidenced by comparing its unit cost (the cost of training one teacher) with that of TIA Workshop – which is a good example of a traditional INSET program. One school-based workshop of about 20 teachers cost 130,000 TZS (about 82 \$). Every school is expected to conduct at least 6 SBWs per year. This is equal to the number of training days of TIA Workshop. Therefore, each school needs 780,000 TZS to run the program in one year. This is equal to the unit cost of 39,000 TZS (\$ 25)

On the other hand TIA Workshop cost about 23,000,000 TZS for 50 teachers in one week (six days). This figure creates the unit cost of 460,000 TZS (\$ 288). Therefore, SBT is really cost-effective on that aspect.

3.1 SBT Program Challenges

The Program may sound easily implemented and smoothly achieving its objectives. However, there are a number of setbacks to its fast track implementation.

Resistance to change: several teachers and heads of schools are pessimistic towards the

significance of LCP on student learning as well as the significance of SBT on teacher professional development. For instance there was a case of one head of school who prevented the implementation of the program at his school until when he was visited by the school's SBT monitor.

Strongly built incentive system in Tanzania Education Sector: Teachers expect stipend in almost everything they do outside their normal school routines. One or two teachers in almost every project school will ask why the program doesn't pay *sitting allowances* to teachers during SBWs. In one school, teachers boycotted the SBW because the program doesn't offer stipend.

Another challenge is the fact that some heads of schools are ready to allow SBT Program to take place in their schools but *don't want to commit themselves in setting policies that would support LCP* versus teacher-centred pedagogy. This is well understood in a country where teachers, for many years have been the *providers of knowledge* to students and not *facilitators of learning*.

There are *other associated challenges* such as remoteness and poverty of schools; very busy school timetables and calendars that leave little room for SBT; and shortage of teaching and learning resources needed for facilitation of LCT.

3.2 Lesson learned from implementing SBT Program

Challenges will always be there and one should not fear to face them. One important to note here is that it doesn't take a single day for people to accept changes in their lives. One needs to convince them on the significance of the proposed change.

At first program coordinators were not sure if the heads of schools and DEOs would support the program. Different from these fears, HOS and DEOs are friendlier and very supportive to the program than it was previously thought. They are ready to own the program and share the cost of its implementation at their schools.

Moreover, teachers have considered SBT program quite significant to their professional growth. Several interviewed teachers in program schools, have differentiated SBT from traditional programs in three aspects. One, SBT facilitation is learner-centred. It gives room to participants to interact and exercise what they are trained in. Two, the concepts presented are relatively new and useful for their profession development. Lastly the teachers attend the program sessions seeking knowledge and not stipend.

The third lesson is the necessity of patience when implementing SBT program. Many project schools have started adopting LCT as the teaching approach that should be employed by all teachers. However, the implementation of SBT Program and achievement of its goals in schools are gradual. There are several structures (mental, financial and managerial) that need to be changed for the program to be successful. This takes time. This lesson has reinforced the belief that TPD is not an event but a process whose goals are achieved with time [1].

3.3 Current Achievements

Despite the short time of SBT implementation, there are several achievements. First, the program has involved all teachers in reflections about their teaching styles and other professional growth needs. It is the forum for professional change. It has also successfully engaged HoS and DEOs on discussions about cost-sharing and owning the program in future. Third, it has provided contextual satisfaction of professional needs of teachers in program schools. Moreover, SBT implementation has proved its expected cost-effectiveness.

3.4 SBT program expectations

Despite the short-time achievements, there is more expected from the program. This includes

bringing change in teaching methods in schools from teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred approaches. The program will also improve students' participation, interest and responsibility in their learning process. This will improve students' academic performance as measured by national, regional and school examination scores. Moreover, SBT will train a bigger number of in-service teachers in a relatively short time.

4.1 Conclusion

Audacity of Hope were the words used by US Senator from Illinois, Barrack Obama during Democratic Convention in 2004, to imply the "hope in the face of difficulty, the hope in the face of uncertainty" but not the "blind optimism". It's the difficult hope but yet achievable and inevitable for achieving one's goal. Similarly to SBT, the program isn't such easy to implement but it is inevitable. Tanzanian government can't afford training all in-service secondary school teachers. This paper calls for all education stake-holders: schools, parents, NGOs, religious and education institutions, local and central government to work together to give teachers more access to professional growth opportunities. The easiest way is initiating and supporting SBT programs in their capacities.

Let's learn from the efforts made by MWUCE, AfricAid, AAF, HOS, and DEOs in Northern Tanzania in implementing SBT program. They have shown that, despite the challenges, SBT is implementable, and significant for TPD and student learning. It is a TPD model we should put our hopes on. It is the audacity of hope for teacher education in Tanzania.

References

- [1] Laddunuri M. M. (2012). Status of School Education in Present Tanzania and Emerging Issues. International Journal of Educational Research and Technology Volume 3 Issue 1 March 2012: 15- 20.
- [2] Hakielimu (2012) School children and national examinations: who fails who? A Research Report on the Relationship between Examination Practice and Curriculum Objectives in Tanzania. Dar es Salaam. www.hakielimu.org/publication_download.php?en=235 retrieved on August 24, 2013.
- [3] WEF. (2000). *Enabling teachers to enable learners*. Dakar. Issues Paper Strategy 1.8 http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/en-conf/coverage_sessionI_8.shtm (24/08/2013) [3]
- [4] Komba, W. L. & Nkumbi, E. (2008) Teacher Professional Development in Tanzania. CICE Hiroshima University, Journal of International Cooperation in Education, Vol.11 No.3 (2008) pp.67-83.
- [5] Mulkeen, A., Chapman, W.D., DeJaeghere, J.G., Leu, E. (2007) *Recruiting, Retaining, and Retraining Secondary School Teachers and Principals in Sub-Saharan Africa*. World Bank Working Paper no.99 African human development series.
- [6] Levin, H. M., and McEwan, P. (2000) *Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: Methods and Applications*. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.