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PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS IN TANZANIA  
1926 - 1976

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Education at  
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PAUL PETER GANDYE

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P.P.G.

## ABSTRACT

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Paul Peter Gandye

Ever since 1967 when Tanzania adopted the policy of socialism, the problem of examinations has been discussed. Since then some reforms have been introduced in the examination system by (a) the nationalization of the examination system and (b) the introduction of continuous assessment as part and parcel of what constitutes a student's pass or failure. However, despite these changes it is felt that there is still a need for a suitable examination system. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine, from an historical perspective the factors which influence an examination system with the view to having an insight into some of the problems connected with examinations. More specifically the study addressed itself to the following questions.

- (a) What role or roles have public examinations played in Tanzania's education system since 1926? The aim here was to establish why, despite criticisms, public examinations have continued to exist.
- (b) In the light of experiences elsewhere, what should be the nature and role of examinations given the present educational socio-political and economic conditions of the country?

- (c) What is more desirable for Tanzania; a public examination, an internal assessment or a combination of both?

It has been established that public examinations in Tanzania have largely played the role of selection despite the fact that they have been meant to certify that a candidate has completed a certain phase of education. In this "misuse" lies the source of criticisms that have been levelled against examinations generally.

Since in the Tanzanian context the need for selection examinations still exists, it has been recommended that efforts should be made to find better means of selection rather than the present use of traditional examinations whose predictive validity is questionable. In this regard, therefore, it has been recommended to explore the possibility of using aptitude tests.

It has also been established that there is a need to improve the efficiency of the present examinations by formulating clear and precise examination objectives derived from clear and precise curricula objectives. Consequently the need for close collaboration between curriculum developers and examiners has been stressed.

In the light of experiences in countries such as New Zealand, Australia, England, Russia, Cuba, China and Korea, it seems that Tanzania cannot completely do away with public examinations at this stage. The decision to introduce continuous assessment in the system of examining appears to be a step in the right direction but in order for the system to work successfully it is necessary to familiarise all concerned, especially teachers, with the basic techniques of testing and educational

measurements. There is also a need for an efficient system of moderation which seems to be lacking at present.

Finally the necessity for constant research into and evaluation of any changes in the examination system with the view to making it a more efficient tool of educational evaluation and development has been emphasised.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Tanzania is one of the few developing countries that have decided to change the education system inherited from the colonial days into one which is in line with the ideology and aspiration of the nation. The ideology which Tanzania has adopted is that of Socialism and in accordance with this ideology, the aim is to create a socialist society which is based on three principles: equality and respect for human dignity; sharing of the resources which are produced by the people's joint efforts; work by everyone and exploitation by none. [Nyerere: 1967, p. 5-6]

Hence the sort of education which is provided in Tanzania for Tanzanians must aim at the creation of a new man, free from the indignity he has suffered in the past. Above all it must produce a worker, since in a truly socialist state, which Tanzania has declared as its goal, every able bodied person is a worker. Furthermore it must inculcate the democratic ideals which are the guarantees of equality. Work and democracy are necessary because without them we cannot succeed in creating a society which is free from exploitation.

In order to achieve the above stated goals it becomes imperative to reform the education system in such a manner that the stated goals are achieved. One of the ways of devising such a system of education is to introduce new curriculum packages which are structured in such a manner that their contents are in agreement with the goals of the nation. However, introducing new curriculum packages is not

sufficient. Those packages must be translated into operational terms. This means that the teaching methods must conform with the aims of the new curriculum. Consequently the teachers already in the field must be re-orientated to the new system while those still in training must receive the necessary guidance which will enable them to implement the objectives of the curriculum when they graduate from the college. More important still, the assessment methods must also be reviewed. This means the examination system has to change. Also the consumers of the examination results must be prepared to accept the changes.

Although it is fairly easy to change the curriculum contentwise it is not very easy to define its objectives into operational terms. In the absence of well defined objectives it becomes difficult to implement it in the classroom. Also it becomes difficult to change the examination system to fit with the stated objectives.

Ever since 1967 when Tanzania adopted the policy of socialism, the problem of examinations has been discussed. In his treatise, Education for Self-Reliance, Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, questioned the nature and role of the examinations which Tanzania had inherited from the British. This debate has been going on ever since. While very few people would like to continue with the colonial system of examinations others would like the system modified by combining the final examination with some form of internal assessment. A few of them would even prefer the complete abolition of public examinations. However, steps have already been taken to modify the examination system.

In conformity with the Directive of the Party, since 1976 the weight of the final examination, which is a public one, has been reduced by 50 per cent. The remaining 50 per cent has been assigned to internal assessments by teachers. Also, since the education policy is to combine academic study with work, it has been decided to assess pupils' characters and attitudes to work as well. This is done by schools themselves and it is taken into consideration when passing the final verdict on the candidates' performance.

#### Purpose of the Study

Although some changes have been introduced into the system of examining the problem of devising a suitable examination system still remains. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine, from an historical perspective the factors which influence an examination system with the view to having an insight into some of the problems connected with examinations. More specifically, the study addresses itself to the following questions:

- (a) What role or roles have examinations played in Tanzania's education system/systems since 1926? The aim here is to establish why, despite criticisms, public examinations have continued to exist.
- (b) In the light of experiences elsewhere, what should be the nature and role of examinations given the present educational, socio-political and economic conditions of the country?



- (c) What is more desirable for Tanzania a public examination, an internal assessment or both?

#### Educational Significance of the Study

Although there are several studies on Tanzanian educational system, very little has been done in the field of examinations particularly at secondary level. And yet it is extremely important to study the place and role of examinations since they exert a very important influence on the whole educational system. Any changes in the examination system are likely to have great impact on the schools and society as a whole. Hence in order to plan for future needs of the educational system it is imperative to know, through study, the requirements that might have to be met as a result of changes in the examination system. Conversely any changes in the educational system will necessitate a change in the examination system if such changes are to be meaningful. For example, if the curricula change in a certain direction examinations will have also to accommodate this change. But any new system requires the training or re-orientation of those who are supposed to implement it. In the case of examinations, therefore, any changes will require the retraining of teachers and educational administrators in the new techniques of assessment. If for example it is decided to introduce new testing procedures, it will be necessary to train test developers. It may also be necessary to gear our teacher training programmes to the requirements of the new testing procedures. Even school administration may have to change accordingly. More important still, employers, parents and society

as a whole will have to be re-orientated to the new system. In short studying the examination system is necessary for educational planning.

### Definition of Terms and Delimitations of the Study

For the purpose of this study "Tanzania", unless otherwise stated, shall mean the mainland part of the United Republic. Also the study is mainly about Tanzania mainland although since 1973 Examinations have become one of the Union Affairs, that is to say, those affairs of state such as Foreign Affairs, Defence, Higher Education and so on which are the concern of the Union Government. Hence in this study nothing is discussed about examinations in Zanzibar during the colonial period although similar conditions obtained there as well.

"Public Examination", as used in this study, means the National Examinations which are set and administered centrally for students completing either Primary or Secondary Education. It excludes the Civil Service examinations which are conducted by the Civil Service Commission for promotional purposes of Civil Servants. For the same reasons examinations conducted by tertiary institutions are not discussed either, except where necessary, for comparisons only.

"Leaving Examinations", means those examinations whose aim is to certify that the examinee has completed a certain level of education.

The term "internal assessment", means the tests, exercises and/or terminal examinations conducted by schools as opposed to the final

examinations conducted by the National Examinations Council of Tanzania. Sometimes this term has been used interchangeably with "continuous assessment". But strictly speaking "continuous assessment" refers to both internal assessment and the final public examination.

"Curriculum" means all the learning experience provided by or under the auspices of a school. It also means a course of study (Pendaeli: 1976, p. 7).

#### Review of Literature

Although there are several works on Tanzania's educational system generally very few of them deal specifically with the problem of examinations.

For example, Cameron and Dodd (1969) give a good account of the development of education since colonial days but examinations are just mentioned on passing. Dolan (1969) concentrates on the educational development in the period prior to the adoption of Education for Self-Reliance. But he too does not dwell on examinations in detail. Similarly the works by Court (1970), Morrison (1970) and Mbilinyi (1972), are very good accounts of the educational system from the sociological, political and historical points of view but although examinations are mentioned they are not the main concern of the authors.

There are, however, a few studies which deal directly with examinations particularly at Primary level. Among those who have written on this topic are Honeybone and Beattie (1969) who

wrote on the system of examining in Tanzania. But their concern was not so much to do with the influence which examinations have on the education system but rather on the system of examinations as it then operated. Also the Primary School Leaving Examination (P.S.L.E.) has been the subject of two major reports; one by Vernon (1966) and the other by Beattie (n.d.). However in both cases the main problem tackled has been how to improve the system of selection to secondary education. Perhaps the most eloquent discourse on the problem of public examinations has been Nyerere's Education for Self-Reliance and also the Musoma Directive on the Implementation of Education for Self-Reliance. More recently Omari and Manase (1977) have given a good account of the effects of the Primary School Leaving Examination (P.S.L.E.) Nevertheless there is a glaring gap as regards the origins, role and influence of examinations generally. This study, therefore, attempts to fill this gap.

#### Primary and Secondary Sources for this Study.

The most useful primary sources for this study have been the Reports of the Department of Education for the years under study. However, the material had to be pieced together as it was not in a ready made form. This was perhaps the most difficult aspect of the research. Other Government publications proved to be useful too. Some of the documents such as Government files are with the National **Archives**. These too were very useful indeed and they have been cited in the relevant parts of the study. Newspapers and also some journals have been consulted. Several books on

examinations were very useful especially since they provided the needed comparative information on examinations. These too appear both in the text and in the bibliography. Lastly informal discussions with teachers, educationists, examination officers, university staff and pupils, provided some useful insight into the problem of examinations.

### Research Procedures

This study is predominantly historical. Hence most of the research work involved reading several original documents such as Government reports and files. Fortunately many of these reports are stocked in the National Library and also in the Library of the University of Dar es Salaam. Some of the rare documents including the Government files are stocked in the Tanzania National Archives (TNA) at Dar es Salaam both in original form and in microfilms.

The writer spent quite an appreciable amount of time looking into these documents which provided the necessary primary sources for this study.

Regarding the problems involved in the new examination system this writer has had the added advantage of being fully involved in the processing of the results of the examinations and the issue of certificates in accordance with the new procedures. Also the Examinations Officers of the National Examinations Council, including the writer, managed to visit all secondary schools and spoke to both teachers and pupils concerning the new system of examining. These visits were very valuable

because from the reports compiled by the officers it was possible to know what the teachers and students are thinking about the new system. On the whole it can be said that the new system appears to have been well received despite some problems here and there. It should be pointed out, however, that these visits were merely meant to monitor the feelings of both teachers and pupils concerning the new system of examining and also to clarify some points connected with examination administration. They were not specifically designed for the purpose of this study. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, they proved very helpful.

#### Preview of the Study

With regards to the layout of this study, it is divided into five chapters. Chapter I is the Introduction. Chapter II discusses the development of education and examinations during the colonial period (1925-1961) while Chapter III deals with the dynamics of examinations in independent Tanzania (1961-1976). It also discusses some of the policies which have been in force during this period. Chapter IV discusses the whole problem of examinations. Experiences in other countries are also discussed. The final Chapter attempts to give a summary of the whole study together with recommendations for change.

#### Background of the Study: The Country

The United Republic of Tanzania lies between 1 and 12 degrees south of the equator on the east coast of Africa. It got its name in 1964 when the

mainland (formerly known as Tanganyika) united with the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba.

Tanzania has eight neighbours. To the north are Kenya and Uganda while to the west her neighbours are Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi. To the south are Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. On the east her border is the Indian Ocean.

Tanzania mainland was under colonial rule for about seventy years. From mid-1880's it came under German rule and together with Rwanda and Burundi it was known as German East Africa. After the first World War it was administered by Britain as a Mandated Territory.

After the second World War Tanganyika remained under British rule but this time as a Trust Territory. From that time until 1961 when she became independent, she was known as Tanganyika. In 1962 Tanganyika became a Republic and was known as the Republic of Tanganyika. Then in 1964, as a result of the union with Zanzibar, she became known as the United Republic of Tanzania.

Tanzania has an approximate area of 886,265 sq. km. In 1974 its population was estimated at 14.8 million. The growth rate of the population was estimated to be 2.7 per cent per annum. The population density is, however, unevenly distributed. More than 94 per cent of the population live in the rural areas.

#### Education System

Formal education is provided at three main levels:

- (i) Primary Education
- (ii) Secondary Education
- (iii) University

Primary Education consists of 7 grades (usually known as standards). Secondary education usually takes 4 years to complete. However, there are several Advanced level or Higher Secondary Schools which provide a further two years of education leading to the National Form 6 Certificate Examination. The Education system can be summarised as follows:

- (i) Primary Education (Standard I-VII)
- (ii) Secondary Education (Form I-IV)
- (iii) Higher Secondary (Form V-VI)
- (iv) University (3 to 5 years)

Primary and secondary education is free. Also since November 1977 Primary Education is compulsory for all children aged between 7 and 12. As regards enrolment ratios since independence. (see figure I in the following page.

The education system is highly centralized, Hence the curriculum and examinations are also highly centralized. Curriculum development is under the Institute of Education while examinations are conducted by the National Examinations Council of Tanzania. Both institutions are under the overall charge of the Ministry of Education.

[see Appendix C.7



# TANZANIA EDUCATIONAL PYRAMID COMPARATIVE DATA FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS 1961, 1971 & 1976

KEY TO FIGURES  
1976 1971 1961

KEY TO FIGURES  
1961 1971 1976

LEVEL	1976	1971	1961	1961	1971	1976			
UNIVERSITY 1 <sup>ST</sup> YEAR	814	624	70	6	75	80			
SECONDARY FORMS: 6	1,591	1,240	251	25	196	255			
5	1,582	1,354	211	25	254	301			
4	6,360	5,274	1,121	482	1,770	2,346			
3	6,614	5,375	1,540	548	1,947	2,857			
2	6,748	5,426	2,514	1,019	2,197	2,673			
1	5,743	5,554	2,967	1,229	2,016	2,877			
PRIMARY STDS: VII			99,171	46,563	11,322	23,939	56,779		
VI			98,106	54,011	13,061	31,256	63,480		
V			106,066	63,300	14,737	39,308	73,454		
IV			117,118	82,396	65,152	30,239	55,850	85,680	
III			137,130	89,616	65,553	34,787	59,689	103,159	
II	236,305			98,954	67,647	41,345	67,636	191,412	FIRST WAVE — UPE
I	270,424			111,018	72,773	48,613	79,073	236,073	SECOND WAVE — UPE

**BOYS**

ENROLMENT NUMBERS IN THOUSANDS

**GIRLS**

SECTORAL PLANNING UNIT  
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

Figure I