

Rethinking Of Improved Literacy Among Rural Communities Towards The Use Of Local Content As Open Learning Systems In Tanzania: Exploring The Elimu Kiosk Mode

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Review Article

Received: 16-Jun-2020,
Manuscript No. JES-20- 001;

Editor assigned: 19- Jun -
2020, PreQC No. JES-20-
001(PQ); **Reviewed:** 8- Jul -
2020, QC No. JES-20-001;

Revised: 8- Aug -2022,
Manuscript No. JES-20-001(R);

Published: 10-Oct-2022,
DOI: 10.4172/JES.8.6.005.

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Keywords: Elimu/Education
Kiosks; Adult Education; Open
Learning Systems; Rural
Livelihood; OER; Affordable
Education; Education at Door
Step; Tanzania

ABSTRACT

Education has generally been a cultural tool that is confined to the few, thus leaving out the majority fumbling in gross ignorance as they try to catch up with modern development. Most of these are the poor living in rural communities. While the educated men and women engage themselves in various socio-economic and cultural activities geared for the attainment of Tanzania's Development Vision and the Global Sustainable Development Goals the poor are left cherishing their unrealized dreams. This paper brings to view an effective strategy to bridge the gap between the unlearned and the learned by localizing Open Educational Resources (OERs) to suit specific needs of the people. A big number of people in rural areas have been engaging themselves in agriculture and other cultural undertakings but with little knowledge and skills on what they are actually doing or are supposed to do. Due to the nature of their daily activities, it is very difficult for them to access formal education and other skills through available formal systems. Therefore, the need to develop local content and other tailor-made educational programmes in open movable education systems (Elimu Kiosks). This paper is set to explain how this can become a reality.

INTRODUCTION

Education is perceived as one of the vital cultural and socio-economic transformative tools. In most cultures, including Tanzania, access to education has been taken as the basis for better life and wealthy creation [1]. As a response to this, the government of Tanzania has deliberately continued to invest in education. Efforts to merge formal education and productive work, was seen as an important prerequisite towards improved community livelihood [2]. Undoubtedly, education is needed in all sectors of production, localities and profession for quantity production and quality control. Due to its dual effects, all community members should be offered knowledge and skills that can both improve production and transform income and lives basically at the family level.

Obviously, most of the families' incomes, communities and the national income depend on the produces and revenues collected from socio-economic activities of the community adult members [3]. Therefore, in any socio-economic development agenda and policies, adults are the main focus. The ability to produce more and quality products and therefore shift from mere subsistence to surplus production with large investment requires skilled people.

As a response to improving education and production in Tanzania, many education policies and laws have been formulated and implemented [4]. However, most of education policies were in favour of formal education with emphasis on reading, arithmetic and writing thus ignoring the important part of imparting knowledge for immediate use. For instance, the establishment of Education Acts both of 1969 and 1978, the Decentralization Programme in 1972, establishment of National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA) in 1973, the Universal Primary Education (UPE), Education and Training Policy (ETP) 1995 and the Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP) and Secondary Education Plan (SEDP) all were geared towards improved formal education (pedagogical education).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Open and distance education as an open learning system has been superbly useful in supporting hard-to-reach rural communities in various parts of the World. It has enabled disabled (marginalized) communities and out of school children to access formal education and informal skills [5]. In Bangladesh, for instance, the open education system has been used to reach communities with special needs and those in hard-to-reach areas especially those affected by wars and cyclones [6]. Similarly, open and distance learning has been appreciated for its potential to ease the tension of massive hunger for primary and secondary education in Malawi [7].

In Tanzania, open and distance education can be traced back in the mid-1960s and early 1970s especially with the onset of Education for Self-Reliance. The implementation of Education for Self-Reliance [8], the Musoma Resolution and the establishment of the Institute of Adult Education in 1975 were the efforts to increase access to education among adults in Tanzania. Establishment of adult education curriculum and merging of education with work popularly known as Kisomo Cha Manufaa (functional literacy), were challenged for being too formal and less inclusive to adult learners. It was noted that few adult learners were enrolled in a programme due to limited time to attend formal classes.

More emphasis put on formal education and little support given to informal education may have substantially crippled the efforts geared to adult education in Tanzania. In most rural areas, adults as the workforce and the bread winners in most of the families, have less time and scarce resources to access formal education [9]. Similarly, adult communities have the core function of producing for subsistence and surplus, taking care of children, doing domestic chores and producing for national income development. All these undermine their ability to master reading, writing and arithmetic in Tanzania.

Today, the world has witnessed the power of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in narrowing and bridging the information gap/divide between the learned and unlearned both in rural and urban communities [10]. Development of local content through Open Educational Resources (OERs) may cater for individual and specific communities' learning needs [11]. Therefore, any effort to improve access to and use of OER among rural adult communities for their livelihood and economic transformation is deemed necessary in the 21st Century.

It is the matter of interest to hear that around the global, use of ICT related technologies and multi-media video teaching has proven to address the challenge of face-face and limitation of knowledge imposed by four-walls of classroom [11,12]. However, every local community in different settings has its own needs, history, cultural values, economic needs and challenges that must be met or addressed differently [13]. As a consequence, any attempts for empowering local communities must adhere to social contexts, nature of activities as well as technological advancement attained.

Moreover, adult communities in rural areas require knowledge on quality agro-production, animal farming, health, water, land use planning, management of disasters, marketing, project management, leadership, human rights, environmental management and conflict management skills among others. In regard to nature of life in rural settings where most people have no formal employment; their empowerment process calls for education system that is open, free and accessible to them all time without making them strain their meagre resources [10]. Hence, the use of local expertise, knowledge and content for development of movable education services (Elimu Kiosks) as OER will act as the reliable and sustainable gear towards cultural, political and socio-economic transformation.

Significance of the study

In its contemporary and revamped vision and mission to middle income and industrial state, Tanzania requires skilled adult community, information empowered and global connected human resources [4]. However, most adults in rural areas are still disadvantaged when it comes to accessing formal education due to various constraints. The fact that adults are occupied by numerous socio-economic activities along with having less resources makes it difficult to access and cover for the costs of their education. Thus, despite the government's efforts to support adult education through various programmes, most of them have made no impact to rural adult communities because very few adults accessed them [4]. For instance, about 5.5 million people in Tanzania were unable to access adult education between 2010 and 2014 [3]. Therefore, this study was intended to embark on this problem by disclosing the perception of rural communities on the implementation of Elimu Kiosk as an approach for rural livelihood in Tanzania.

Methodology

A case study design was used to allow the use of multiple methods which brought rich information for an in-depth understanding of the perception of rural communities on the use of Elimu kiosk approach in community open education systems in Tanzania. The study had two objectives: Assessing the needs of Elimu Kiosk approach as Open Education Resources (OERs) in rural areas in Tanzania and Analysing the potential challenges of implementing Elimu Kiosks approach as Open Education Resources (OERs) in Tanzania.

A combination of data collection techniques such as questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and documentary review were used to collect data. A total of 120 participants were randomly selected among rural communities. The use of multiple data collection tools with a randomly selected sample was meant to cross validate the study findings (Creswell 2012). Data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source data were generated through questionnaires and interviews, whereas the secondary source data were obtained from documents through documentary review checklist. Data collection instruments were validated and tested for reliability. Official permission for data collection was sought from the District Executive Director as a relevant authority. Participants of this study were contacted for their consent and their names were kept anonymous.

DISCUSSION

Perceptions of Rural Communities on the Use of Elimu Kiosk Model

This study revealed mixed perceptions and conception of Elimu Kiosk among the rural communities in Tanzania. The results presented in Table 1.1 below indicate that rural community were generally satisfied (average mean= 3.37) to use Elimu Kiosk model as the best approach for transformation of rural livelihood.

Table 1. Perceptions of Rural Communities on the use of Elimu Kiosk Model.

S/N	Statements	Mean	Std.Deviation
1. 1	Elimu Kiosk will minimize costs for formal education	3.78	1.112
2. 2	Elimu Kiosk is the education offered anywhere at any time	3.85	1.022
3. 3	Elimu Kiosk is education for all community members	3.15	1.145
4. 4	Elimu Kiosk is education for sharing cultures	3.73	1.945
5. 5	Elimu Kiosk is the solution for out of school community	3.48	1.232
6. 6	Elimu Kiosk will minimize distance to reach schools	3.58	1.012
7. 7	Elimu Kiosk is education for solving an immediate community problem	3.73	1.121
8. 8	Elimu Kiosk will help communities to own curriculum	3.83	1.123
9. 9	Elimu Kiosk will improve entrepreneurship and livelihood skills	3.26	1.267
	Average Mean	3.59	1.19

Education at doorstep

Data in Table 1 indicate that rural agro-communities named the approach as the solution for those walking a long distance searching for skills and knowledge (Mean=3.58). Moreover, data from the interview revealed that, Elimu Kiosks approach can best suit the sharing of knowledge and skills at a very close proximity to learners. During the

interview, one of the agro-pastoralists said that need formal education and professional skills to improve agro-productions and markets. However, the big challenge to me is time, resources and distance to reach schools and other community development centres. I would be happy if education were made open and available to everyone and everywhere.

The above verbatim quote indicates that rural communities have interest and need for profession and formal education. However, the great challenge is the availability of education at their doorstep which would serve as an alternative to long distance to formal schools. The current study findings provide answers to learners and other members of rural communities who had failed to access formal education from schools located in far distances. As observed earlier by UNESCO (2010) Tanzania is faced by student drop out due to the problem of long distances to schools. In the same line, the report by the Ministry of Education and Culture that more than 25% of the secondary school students drop out before finishing their secondary school studies asserts that, long distance from home to schools accounts for 50% of the secondary school students' dropout in Tanzania.

Inclusive education

The available data in Table 1 above, indicate that communities in rural areas perceive Elimu Kiosk as an education for sharing cultures and which has power to improve cultural integration (Mean=3.73). This perception was supported by the findings from semi-structured interviews. During the interview, respondents agreed that Elimu Kiosk approach would ensure inclusive education. Through Elimu Kiosk approach, all learners regardless of their disabilities and special needs have equal opportunity to access, share knowledge and disseminate skills obtained during the learning process. It is an approach which promotes sharing of cultural heritages, traditions, and policies within local communities.

The above findings suggest that Elimu Kiosk approach will open opportunities of knowledge and skills without social boundaries in Tanzania. As it was earlier observed by most of the disabled people in Tanzania are often among the poorest of the poor. Moreover, disability issues in various local communities in many ways are linked with poverty, awareness, vulnerability and equity. Alarmingly, few children in Tanzania, estimated below 1% with special need have access to primary education in Tanzania.

Education for livelihood

Community members appreciated that use of Elimu Kiosk is a relevant approach to promote local content and creation of employment. It was learnt that by using this approach, the local community would participate in development of local content; skills sharing that would suit them, their ethnicity and culture. Data from Table 1 above indicate that Elimu Kiosk has all the potentials to improve entrepreneurship and livelihood skills among the rural men and women in Tanzania (Mean = 3.26). It was further perceived that, Elimu Kiosks approach will produce relevant learners who can fit in the daily life of their own community. It is education that encourages cultural cohesion and not alienation. In today's rapidly evolving and globally competitive economy, knowledge on production, communication skills and marketing are needed for self-employment.

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) defines education for livelihood as education which is mainly designed to lead participants into acquiring the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary

for employment in a particular occupation, trade or group of occupations or trades. In the light of the available data and the definition of education for livelihood, it is now easy to argue that any locally made available education is the best for solving emerging problems at local setting. Therefore, Elimu Kiosks approach is the right tool for meeting emerging rural challenges in production, social issues, and health and environment sustainable education.

Education second chance at affordable costs

Majority of the community members in rural areas were very happy to access and benefit from education at zero costs. Quantitative data in Table 1 above indicate that Elimu Kiosk will minimize costs for formal education and distance to available schools (Mean=3.58 and 3.78 respectively). It was found that; majority of the rural dwellers praised the model as a sustainable solution for poverty stricken community poverty that had been deterred from attaining quality formal education. Moreover, Elimu Kiosk was perceived as education for second chance for children and other young men and women who had before failed to complete their formal education. Data in Table 1 above indicate that local community perceived Elimu Kiosk as a solution for out of school community (Mean= 3.48).

The current study findings align with those by the previous studies such as by Buckland (2003) who pointed out that high rate of repetition and students' dropout in education system of developing countries are cost drivers in education systems. In the same line, UNESCO advised that the developing countries and poor countries need an extra \$26 billion to promote and achieve the provision of education to targeted marginalized rural communities by 2015 and above. Therefore, Elimu Kiosk approach is one of the community owned models to achieve the provision of education to most of the rural education deprived men and women.

Challenges for implementation of elimu kiosks in rural tanzania

Despite the very fascinating supportive findings for the use of Elimu Kiosk as the best model for rural transformation and improved livelihoods, there are some challenges that need review. Some studies have named rural areas as a zone having various critical educational challenges. These challenges are as presented below:

Lack of teaching and learning infrastructures: During the interview, rural communities mentioned shortages of qualified people to organize and direct the process of local content development in Elimu Kiosk. Moreover, it was reported that even the available public secondary schools which would serve as reserves of knowledge, had insufficient teachers and limited resources. This is because most of the teachers who have been posted to rural areas do not report to their working places due to poor working environment. On this particular aspect, the current study findings corroborate with the previous report by HakiElimu which found a significant low number of teachers in rural area. The report clearly showed an alarming ratio of one teacher in a classroom of more than 40 students which is an unacceptable ratio. The same was reported by URT that some districts in Tanzania had few teachers and lack of classrooms compared with the number of pupils they had.

Lack of awareness among local leaders and community: The findings from semi-structured interview showed that local community leaders and some local government leaders had limited knowledge on the implementation of Elimu Kiosk model. In addition, some community members who were also parents were not aware of the power of using local content to promote formal learning and skills for a better rural livelihood in Tanzania. The above findings

are supported by Zhan who contended that the level of education among the local leaders and parents can influence the level of education and general community development. In the same line, Desforges commented that less educated parents are more likely to face liquidity constraints thus preventing their children from fulfilling their school potentials.

Problem of communication and inaccessibility of some areas: During the study, it was found that most of the people in rural areas and other remotes were faced by the problem of unreliable means of transportation and communication. It is also undeniable fact that a large number of populations in Tanzania live in rural areas which are not well connected by good infrastructural networks. They are characterized by periodic passable roads which may hinder sharing of expertise, skills and culture between local communities and experts. Again, some of the rural areas are not connected to electricity and mobile phones network thus it is very difficult for such communities to use some of the modern technologies to develop the local content and presentation to the general public as multimedia content.

Language barrier: The findings of the study indicate that some members of the rural communities had a problem of speaking and understanding Kiswahili or English language. It was further reported that in most communities, vernacular languages had a very significant impact on day-day socio-political activities and interactions. Despite the reality that the education policy in Tanzania requires pupils in primary school to be taught in Swahili and English language in secondary schools, in some rural areas, vernacular languages are dominant.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present study have provided answers to the main objective and suggested that Elimu Kiosk is one of the effective tools for rural community empowerment. Additionally, it can be concluded that, Elimu Kiosk as an approach can transform social boundaries and open opportunities for all people in sharing knowledge and skills. Moreover, Elimu Kiosk can transform community production; encourage healthy and developmental skills by zero cost in terms of resources, distance and materials.

This study therefore recommends the need to develop local content, open education materials for various modules that can foster culture maintenance, community health, agro-production, conflict management and entrepreneurship skills. In the current era of high advancement in information and communication technologies (ICTs), Elimu Kiosk approach can make local content developed in community multimedia laboratories and mobile Apps to enhance community learning in Tanzania.

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