

## **On becoming a ‘School of Education’: Our Mission as Educators**

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### **Preamble**

The current School of Education changed its name from the Faculty of Education, which it became in 1989. Before that date it had been a Department of Education within a large Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, tracing its beginning in 1964, along with a few other departments of that Faculty. On formation in 1964, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences was second to the very first Faculty of Law, which had been established along with the whole University College Dar es Salaam (UCD) in 1961. UCD became part of the federal University of East Africa (UEA) in 1963, continuing in this relationship until 1970 when it was broken up into three national universities, including the University of Dar es Salaam for Tanzania.

The University of Dar es Salaam experienced its first major reorganisation in 2008-09 which saw a number of changes, including a rescinding of the faculty nomenclature and a clustering of these into either ‘colleges’ or ‘schools’ within a three-tier structure of department → college/school/institute → university administration. As the year 2009 witnessed the inauguration or launching of the different “new” colleges and schools, it was the turn, on the 16th of May, for the former Faculty of Education to inaugurate and celebrate its new mantle as the School of Education. What follows is a collection of a few thoughts, observations and ideas that were put together by the author in what might be taken as a ‘talk’ as the ‘Faculty’ was wearing the new cloak of ‘School’.

### **The Transition**

As we are undergoing the transition from what we used to know as the *Faculty* of Education to a *School* of Education, we ought to ask ourselves what this means for the preparation of education professionals – in the light of the past, the present, and the future. For a moment, let us put the ‘*past*’ and ‘*present*’ aside, as the ‘*past*’ is already gone and is no longer with us and cannot be re-captured (let bygones be bygones). As for the ‘*present*’, it is already with us, familiar to us, we know it already. The major thing one would want to say is that, as far as the preparation of education personnel in Tanzania is concerned, we trained *very few* in the past; and, today, we have trained only *a little more than in the past*, especially since the mid-1980s. But, without doubt, we will need *many more* in the future than today. This fact cannot be disputed as we look at the national population growth trend, and even at the trend of constructing schools and colleges in the country! Secondary school construction has already come two steps closer from “within districts” and “within wards” that used to be the case in the 1990s and early 2000s to “within villages” and village communities! For exact or comparative quantities, a series of BEST publications [*Basic Education Statistics in Tanzania*] have been published every year by the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training since 1985. Looking at the figures for the number of teachers produced in the past and those we have today will corroborate what I have just said: the figures for the number of teachers are far below those for the number of pupils and students enrolled, with a frightening teacher-student ratio of as much as 1:50! This sheer fact suggests that even greater efforts need to be made to train and prepare more teachers – both for the new “Ward and Village secondary schools” and for the traditional ones in the districts and regional locations that still yearn for teachers.

Of greater interest to the occasion today is the *concept* of a *University School* of Education, why it should be a “School” and what its implication and obligations are for the preparation of education professionals now and in the future.

## **Conceptual Distinctions**

When we were little children, I am sure we knew only one meaning of a school—a set of buildings to which children (including you and me) went and in which we sat in classrooms to listen to the teacher, write in our exercise books, answer questions, sing together and, at a particular time, write our examinations. That is the school we all knew and praised and never forgot for all the good times they gave us in our growing-up experiences. A building or set of buildings specifically devoted to the conscious goal of formal instruction, together with the presence of personal participants in the very process—namely pupils and their teachers—is what came to be called, as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a school. This seems to have been the first and earliest meaning of ‘School’ as a physically identifiable structural setup.

But, long after that (i.e. long after the 16<sup>th</sup> century), we have more meanings of and references to ‘school’. A large group or shoal of fish swimming together in the sea, lake or river is another meaning of ‘school’. For sure, it is a meaning that takes its metaphorical semblance from the original concept of a collection of individuals having a common trade in life or a like-minded activity.

The third meaning, coming many centuries after the emergence of the early universities in the 11<sup>th</sup> century is: an institution within a university that is dedicated to instruction in a specialised field. With this thought in mind, a School of Law, a School of Music, a School of Astronomy, and a School of Education, among others, were sections within a university, specialised in “training” a body of scholars in one coherent subject matter, not only for mastery of the content alone but for subsequent *practising* of its imperatives. It is this latter kind of school that is the focus of our interest in connection with a ‘School of Education’.

### **Why a School, in this case, a School of Education?**

And why a School of Education at the level of a university and, in this case, at the University of Dar es Salaam? Was it a baptism by intention or by default? One would like to believe that it was a baptism by intention and choice. Any institution dedicated to instruction in a specialised field

with an overarching body of subject-matter is characterised among other things by these two distinctive icons:

- It is an institution *whose personal participants have the common and abiding goal of emulating and promoting the doctrines of a past scholar or group of past scholars who paved the way, and whose ideas or doctrines have been tested by time to be the best way for preparing and educating generations for functionality, survival and service in society.* Such pioneering scholars, in the case of education, would include the old Athenians Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (some 5 to 4 centuries BC) in the field of metaphysics, logic and ethics; the French Jean Jacques Rousseau, the German Friedrich Froebel, the Swiss Jean Piaget and the American William James in the field of child and educational psychology (in the period from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the Czech Johan Amos Komensky, the Swiss Johann Pestalozzi, the Americans John Dewey and William Kilpatrick in the field of pedagogics and didactics (in the period from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries). Such a ‘School’ would be seeking to demonstrate a longing for furthering those comprehensively over-arching doctrines in the way they not only impart the knowledge to the world but also in the way they have shaped the trainee’s world outlook and conduct through life; and, secondly,
- Such an institution would *consist of a group of persons with an intellectual drive that portrays or else focuses on a unifying belief and influence in terms of generic thought, work, professional obligation and style.*

These two characteristics define a university-level ‘School’<sup>1</sup>.

### **Implications for the Future of the School of Education at the University of Dar es Salaam**

What are the implications for the future of the School of Education<sup>2</sup> at the University of Dar es Salaam?

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<sup>1</sup> One may wish to check, for instance, on Law—and you will go back to the formulator of the Magna Carta in the 13<sup>th</sup> century; on Business Administration—and you will go back to the theories of scientific management by Frederick Taylor in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, etc.

<sup>2</sup> At this stage, let me suggest something – a bit of a digression: Recently, there was a raging debate among UDASA members on what “School” should be called in Kiswahili; for many thought it was belittling to call our newly

Education is not a single discipline but rather a complex of intimately related, interwoven and interactive disciplines that link it to all the humanities, the arts, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. Through such an affinity, “Education” integrates a large body of knowledge and provides the context for reflecting on the place, purpose and role of man in the universe. Thus, if philosophy is the ‘queen of the sciences’ – at least in its nature and method of seeking knowledge and truth, as was maintained long ago by our intellectual forefathers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and many others) - then education comes to its own as the ‘queen consort’ to philosophy in the practical yet aesthetic art of preparing man for his/her role and function in a constantly changing world and to be adaptable (from infancy through childhood into adulthood and then old age). The education process never ends until death; nor should educators stop shaping the young until they become those instruments and actors that will recreate the world in which they live. A School of Education will never abdicate this noble responsibility and duty.

More particularly for our School of Education, we have to be aware that we are preparing education personnel of various categories: mostly *school teachers* (maybe about 80%), but also *educational planners, educational administrators and school managers* as well as *educational psychologists* for the next generation of preschool teachers, *adult education planners* and organisers, and *physical education tutors, trainers and coaches*. While these different categories of educational personnel require specialist approaches, we should note that for all of them there are certain generic foundations they must be grounded in. For instance, all of them, irrespective of specialist professional thrust and destination, must be groomed in the philosophy of education. This is the eye-opener for all educational professionals in all the professional training schools we have ever known. Then will follow educational ethics at least for all would-be school teachers (the would-be ‘parent-figures’ to the school children). Without belabouring the point on the past or present gaps, I propose that this matter be given serious consideration as we review the curriculum for the newly initiated School of Education at the University.

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baptised University Schools “Shule” as if they were nursery schools (Chekechea) or just mundane primary or secondary schools. A Swahili professor coolly proposed a name of some sort; and people reacted fiercely. Can I say that the “School” referred to here is a *mature, professional* school: maybe a fitting Kiswahili term would be “**Shule Mhimili**” or “**Skuli Mhimili**” and, in our current case, **Shule Mhimili ya Elimu**, Chuo Kikuu cha Dar es Salaam – or Shule Mhimili ya Uongozi wa Biashara, etc, or else the same previous name of **Kitivo cha Elimu**, where ‘kitivo’ refers also to “fountain” or “source” of the professional learning being pursued! Let us consult the linguists for further ideas and guidance.

It is a truism that a nation's whole workforce in active service—whether in the public domain or in the private sector—is the product of the classroom teacher. The teaching profession stands out in society as the proudest, though humblest, single profession responsible for a nation's economy and culture. Without the teacher, all the presidents, prime ministers, ministers, economists, planners, physicians, lawyers and judges and all executive personnel in all organised branches of activity (in banks, production firms, industries and factories, and government) would not have been there. And they would not be there today if the classroom teacher, somewhere, somehow, had closed shop! This is talking collectively about classrooms everywhere in a country! Who can dispute this statement? People have spent all their lives and all their energies teaching others on so many subjects—how to write their name; how to behave and adapt to different situations; how to act responsibly in a responsible position; how to count correctly; and indeed how to become a person of the people we are supposed to serve. This is the teacher: a jack of all trades *and* a master of all!!

If we agree with this view, then the School of Education—and any school of education in this country and elsewhere—must keep certain things in mind:

- (a) That the School must *demonstrate the highest possible level of integrity* in its approach to preparing young teachers-to-be for their responsibility and service to the three clearly defined categories of clients, namely the *learner*; *society* and the immediate community; their *profession* and their *employer*—be it the State or the private other employer.
- (b) That it (the School) must *constantly experiment with old and tried as well as new ways, methods, strategies and tactics in pedagogy and didactics* so as to continue training the teachers-to-be more creatively, more inspiringly and more innovatively.

It was that great Czech educator, Johan Amos Komensky (1592-1670), progenitor of today's universal primary education, who, on the basis of his own experimentation and experiences in school teaching, instructed future educators and teachers to “Teach all things to all men” by

using creative and pedagogically sound methods. This instruction still stands today, in his books, especially *The Didactica*, written between 1628 and 1632 AD. It has inspired Schools of Education not only in Czechoslovakia (today's Czech Republic where Komensky hailed from) but also in the whole of eastern and western Europe. Since 1992<sup>3</sup>, UNESCO has actively publicised the ideas and methods of this educator, through a prestigious medal—the Comenius Medal—conferred on individuals, training colleges and university schools of education. It is incumbent upon us all—not least our new Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Educational Psychology—to be part and parcel of this movement of pedagogical interrogation, and of revalidating methods of teaching in the abiding struggle to animate teaching methodology.

I have always asked myself why I have never found a single master's or doctoral-level dissertation dedicated to a theme investigating the use or usability of any one of the *methods* of teaching!! Is it that these methods are all so perfect throughout all seasons and teachers use them so perfectly that they lead to the best results? I don't think so but my hunch is that we rather seem to take them—the teaching methods—more as routine. Yet we need to venture into this realm of interrogation. Let me quote a confession from a public celebrity of our times, Joseph H. McConnell:

The teacher's greatest obligations go beyond the routines of imparting knowledge. We assume that he has the tools of his trade – that he knows his subject. But we expect and demand much more from him. He should be an inspiration to his students – an intellectual and moral leader. He must fire their imaginations – expand their intellectual curiosity – and fill their reservoir with spiritual values. I don't think I could define how he accomplishes all this, but I know that great teachers do it.

- (c) That the School has to *emphasise strict professional ethics and a sense of professionalism in every approach to work and decision-making* in everyday life. This is something that is still posing a challenge in this world of widespread political corruption, where the teacher is sometimes tempted into doing “what the political bosses are doing”! *or* where the educational planner or administrator grants a certificate of registration to a community

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<sup>3</sup> On the occasion of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of this great thinker, theologian and educator.

secondary school built not in accordance with the architectural specifications quoted in the Ministry's Guidelines *but* simply because the school belongs to the politician's constituency!

- (d) That the School has to *educate its professional aspirants, by word and deed, in the virtues of continuous reading, self-study, discovery and research in order to reinvigorate knowledge and confident action*. This is what represents continuing education.

In this regard, we may wish to take a cue from Claude Fuess, one of the longest-serving teachers and headmasters at the Phillips Academy Andover (founded in 1778 in Andover in Massachusetts, USA, himself the 10<sup>th</sup> Headmaster of a then 230-year old boarding school). Upon retiring from the school after 40 years of dedicated service there, he aptly summarised it all:

“I was still learning when I taught my last class. ... (Fuess 1952)”<sup>4</sup>

My own view is that learning takes a whole life-time, meaning that it takes a long, long time; so long that from our initial exposure to training and ultimate induction, we continue for ever to learn new things, new ideas and new methods of doing things, in order to become more professional teachers. By the time of the change of guard — either through death or through formal retirement — some may have become really good professional teachers, yet desirous to learn still undiscovered truths and hence still falling short of professional perfection.

## **Practical Commitments to the Future**

So, what can we summarise as practical commitments to our School of Education, now and in the future?

### ***(1) Reviewing the School of Education Curriculum***

There is a need to rethink and review the overall curriculum in line with the professionalism that is central and expect of all categories of educational personnel (already referred to in connection with foundation courses). Let us first look at what constitutes *educational foundations*, i.e. the

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<sup>4</sup> *Independent Schoolmaster*. Boston: Atlantic/Little, Brown.



*basics*, and the rationale for this; and then start curriculum review and curriculum building from this point!!

## ***(2) Dedication to Teacher Professional Development***

In a thorough review of the wide-ranging literature on the subject, Eleneonora Villegas-Reimers portrays *teacher professional development* as

a life-long process which begins with the initial preparation that teachers receive (whether at an institute of teacher education or actually on the job) and continues until retirement.”<sup>5</sup>

Glatthorn, in an even more incisive tone, defines the process as “the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her [ways of] teaching systematically”<sup>6</sup>.

I couldn't agree with them more. The professional life of a teacher is, in an ideal situation, synonymous with the teacher's own length of career. And that career is supposed—and expected—to be a happy professional career of dedication not only to the young people in his/her charge, but equally to the subject of his/her teaching career [i.e. teaching of history, teaching of geography, teaching of physics, teaching of civics, and so on] and to the world of fellow teachers and educational colleagues in general. Teacher professional development is supposed to embrace all this in its objectives, design and actual conduct. I contend that this is one area for which the new School of Education will have to fight to get the attention of the authorities—i.e. the University Management and the Government—on issues concerning the duration of teaching practice, the probation and licensing of teachers after formal academic certification, and in-service career opportunities. The School of Education cannot ignore these issues and assume that they will be resolved automatically!!

## ***(3) Leading and directing the minds of the educational professionals to the dialectical issues of intellectual discourse.***

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<sup>5</sup> Villegas-Reimers, E (2003). *Professional Development: An International Review of the Literature*. Paris: UNESCO, page 8).

<sup>6</sup> Glatthorn, A. (1995). “Teacher Development”. In L. Anderson, editor, *International Encyclopaedia of Teaching and Teacher Education* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). London: Pergamon Press.

The School will have to direct the mind of the future teacher, tutor, educational administrator, educational psychologist or adult educator, to the dialectical issues of theory and practice of discourse, which constitute the said three-tiered process in creative and innovative thinking, namely:

- *Speculation* – in the sense of attempting to think widely and systematically about the universal context of a matter, say about the nature of man on this earth and his relationship with other creatures in space and time;
- *Critical analysis* – in the sense of unearthing problems and constraints to man's (in this case the learner's) optimal performance and existence; and
- *Prescription* or the *Normative* stage – in the sense of an action or series of actions to be taken, as well as the norms and standards of performance to be pursued or maintained.

By involving the student teachers in sessions of argumentation and disputation, the School, through deliberately scheduled staff-student seminars and classes, will be building in them a sense of practical knowledge and self-confidence for the future when they will have to recall such argumentation skills when interacting with their students and/or in wider fora long after their university days. Let us remember our own home-grown hero in this field of argumentation in the process of interrogating everyday assumptions. You remember this hero? Julius Nyerere: a great reader and learner, an enquirer, interrogator and a 'convincing persuader'.

While training in this area is the collective responsibility of us all, our new Department of Educational Foundations, Management and Life-long Learning ought to show exemplary dedication to this training task.

#### ***(4) Active Participation in Professional Associations.***

A teacher education institution, anywhere in the world, is necessarily a professional institution—over and above being an academic institution. It has to dedicate itself to tailoring the intricacies of a discipline, to which a student-teacher has been exposed, to making the bits and pieces of subject matter methodically deliverable to pupil learners. That's what makes our School of Education a professional milling machine, if you like, for the production of teachers and other educational personnel, and being a professional institution, it has its own characteristics and

obligations. While I have already referred to basic characteristics, it is sufficient here to mention one of several critical obligations:

- *Leadership in professional associationism.* The School ought to be at the forefront in the active formation of, and participation in, professional associations which touch upon continuing education, professional and career development opportunities and the socio-economic welfare of teachers and other education personnel. It should be noted that, in many countries, professional associations team up with Government in basic matters such as professional standards-setting, professional character/conduct supervision and regulation, as well as professional quality control and quality assurance with regard to entry and service within the profession. We may look across and learn from what the legal, medical, accounting and engineering professions in Tanzania [particularly these] do, *not only in elevating the status of the profession but also in moderating the professional conduct of their members.*

My humble question here is: What professional association has the Faculty of Education [now becoming a School of Education] belonged to in the last 25 years—whether inside the country or outside? I am sure since the untimely dissolution of the Tanzania Professional Teachers' Association (TPTA, in Swahili CHAKIWATA)<sup>7</sup> in 1994, the Faculty of Education has never belonged anywhere professionally as an institutional member and stakeholder in elevating the teaching profession.

#### ***(5) Taking an Active Interest in Teacher Professional Development Initiatives.***

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<sup>7</sup> This was established in 1984 by a group of dedicated, ardent and long-serving teacher professionals who, through a small volunteer secretariat and planning group, kept a dynamic schedule of seminars, training workshops and refresher weekend schools for teachers and other educational personnel elsewhere, along with familiarizing the wider membership with an agreed-upon folder of TPTA/CHAKIWATA rules and guidelines for teacher conduct, ethics and professional self-development. This small voluntary secretariat, which will be remembered for the good work they did, included William Kwalazi, Sylvester Mkoba, Geoffrey Mmari, Gomo Michongwe, Mishael Muze and Fulgence Swai. This 'belated' foundation date of TPTA/CHAKIWATA in 1984 should not be confused with 1962 for the Unified Teaching Service, which was not a professional association but rather a Governmental regulatory body for the profession (and did more to guard against professional associationism among Tanzanian teachers than otherwise, fearing the possibility of such a large teaching force becoming trade-unionized and aggressive).

By this, I am referring to some products of innovative work in the field of education—macro-institutional networks as well as micro-systemic formations for renewal.<sup>8</sup> For instance, with regard to the latter:

- Teacher resource centres (TRCs) were initially established by non-governmental organisations back in the 1980s because of the good they had demonstrated in other countries such as Britain and Denmark. They were subsequently encouraged by Government (through the Ministry of Education) in the 1990s. Today, we have about 600 district-based TRCs throughout the country, about 400 of which are members of an overarching Teacher Resource Centre Coalition (TRC-Coalition). We have a number in Temeke and other districts in Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and elsewhere across the country. These are professional teacher development innovations which the School of Education and its individual staff members ought to take keen interest in for the purpose of assessing their efficacy, as well as for giving professional advice and support for better performance and boosting teachers' professional skills.

Now am I overstretching the concerns and obligations of the School of Education? No, I don't think I am doing that. On the contrary, I am proposing deeds that will further endear the School to its stakeholders, sponsors, alumni and well-wishers. Somewhere in the Bible—and in both the Koran and the Vedanta by allusion—it is said: “You will know them by their deeds”. It is further said:

You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a candle and put it under a bushel but on a candle-stick, and it gives light to all who are in the house. So let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good deeds [works] and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5: 13-16).

[The *Father* here on earth, and in the context of this talk, is the University of Dar es Salaam!]

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<sup>8</sup> See, for instance: Villegas-Reimers, E. (2003). *Teacher Professional Development: An International Review of the Literature*. Paris: UNESCO; AKU/IED [Aga Khan University/Institute for Educational Development] (1998). *Report of the External Reviewers on the M.Ed (Teacher Education) Programme, July 1996 – June 1998*. Karachi: The Board of Graduate Studies; AKU/IED (2002). *A Report of the External Reviewers on the M.Ed (Teacher Education) Programme, August 01, 2000 – July 05, 2002*. Karachi: The Board of Graduate Studies.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, let me say that Rome was not built in a day. And, in fact, those familiar with ecclesiastical history will know that even the reconstruction of the great St. Peter's Basilica in Rome took 120 years from 1506 to 1626 (well over a century) — and even this was thanks to a “holy” invention of the concept of ‘indulgences’ and ‘an accelerated flight of departed relatives from Purgatory to Heaven’<sup>9</sup>, which raised quick money that enabled the church to be completed!

So, I know and admit that some of the ideas I have posed will need further study and reflection before necessary trial, while others will simply be accepted as a matter of good will. I don't expect to see a perfect angel immediately turning stones upside down. But I still pray that the new School of Education will try to translate some of these suggestions into practical action. Because it is in trying that we actually do, and in doing that we assess the results and eventually succeed in choosing the right options. We can't succeed by simply fasting and praying and waiting for manna to come from heaven. If we agree with this position, then let us all exhort the School and its scholars to abide the motto “*Ora et Labora*”.

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<sup>9</sup> Hurlbut, Jesse Lyman (1954). *The Story of the Christian Church*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.