

Enhancing Curriculum Reforms for Employability Skills in Tanzania: Stakeholders' Knowledge and Experiences

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Abstract

The study aimed to assess the role of stakeholders' knowledge, skills, and experiences in enhancing curriculum reform for employability in Tanzania, using the OECD Framework for Curriculum Reform as its theoretical foundation. A mixed-methods approach with a convergent design was employed, gathering data from 243 respondents. The findings revealed a statistically significant correlation between knowledge and skills ($\beta = 0.619$, $p = 0.000$), experience ($\beta = 0.354$, $p = 0.000$), and effective curriculum reform. This indicates that stakeholders' competencies are vital in designing curricula that meet employability demands. Additionally, stakeholders' experience plays a key role in identifying practical strategies for implementing job-oriented education. The study highlights the importance of collaborative efforts in curriculum reform to achieve meaningful and sustainable employability outcomes

Keywords: Curriculum reform, effectiveness, employability skills, experience, stakeholders and knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1961, Tanzania has undertaken several curriculum reforms aimed at addressing socio-economic challenges, particularly the employability of its graduates. The first major reform in 1967, inspired by Nyerere's philosophy of education for self-reliance, focused on equipping students with practical skills (Nyerere, 1967; Kassam, 2002). The second reform, introduced in 1997, sought to respond to global economic challenges, while the 2005 reform ushered in a competence-based curriculum intended to prepare students to participate and compete in a free-market economy (Nzima, 2016; TIE, 2013; URT, 2015). However, these reforms have had limited effectiveness due to the weak alignment between curricula content and community life (Nzima, 2016; Osaki, 2002). Much of the content introduced in the 1997 reform was considered irrelevant to both the learners' level and the national context (Mosha, 2012; Nzima,

2016; Osaki, 2002). The 2005 reform further exposed critical gaps between curriculum design and its implementation, particularly in terms of syllabi and textbooks (Mosha, 2012). Evidence suggests that one of the central weaknesses in these reform efforts has been the inadequate involvement of key stakeholders. The limited engagement of educators, industry experts, and community members has contributed to the development of curricula that fail to adequately prepare students for the labour market (Athuman, 2018; Opalo, 2022; URT, 2015; 2021). As highlighted in numerous reports, including those by UNESCO (2018), the URT (2015), the OECD (2020a), and Bonilla-Rius (2020), meaningful stakeholder engagement is a critical component of successful curriculum reform processes aimed at enhancing graduate employability.

Inclusive engagement in curriculum reforms has been debated, often linked to the knowledge, skills, and experience of stakeholders (Fullan, 2015). In Finland, for example, the curriculum reform process included knowledgeable and skilled stakeholders, such as teachers, principals, and researchers, who effectively addressed student needs (Lavonen, 2020). Mainga et al. (2022) highlighted that employability skills improve when stakeholders understand the skills employers seek. Limited knowledge may, however, prompt teachers to struggle to engage in reforms. There is ample evidence that suggests that curriculum reform often fails because developers lack awareness of social issues impacting students and communities (Bantwin, 2010; Wadja, 2019).

Tikkanen et al. (2019) and Sullanmaa et al. (2019) indicate that 62.5% and 61% of stakeholders had prior experience with curriculum reform. These studies, rarely provide evidence on how these experiences impacted the curriculum reform process which aligns with expectations. Aguas (2020) highlighted that the lived experiences of key stakeholders play a significant role in shaping curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the context of Ireland, stakeholders involved in upper secondary education curriculum reform were selected based on their prior experience with similar reform initiatives, underscoring the value of practical insight in driving effective educational change. However, existing studies have not explored how these lived experiences affect curriculum reforms specifically related to employability. This study assessed the role of these factors in improving curriculum reform in Tanzania.

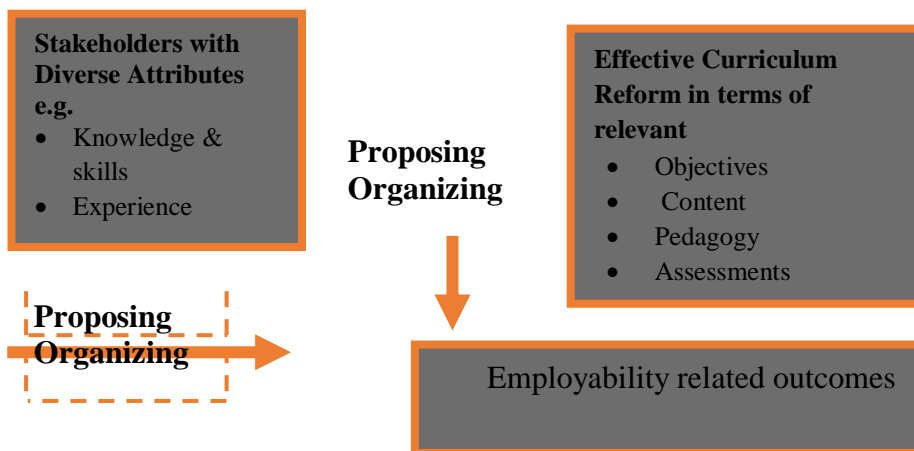
Theoretical framework

This study is based on OECD Framework for Curriculum Reform, developed by Viennet and Pont in 2017. Specifically, the framework emphasises that inclusive stakeholder engagement is crucial for successful curriculum reform. This engagement can be assessed by evaluating the capacities of stakeholders involved, which include their knowledge, skills, and experiences (OECD, 2020a; 2020b; Viennet & Pont, 2017). Engaging stakeholders with diverse competencies significantly enhance curriculum development by ensuring closer alignment with labour market demands (Viennet & Pont, 2017). As such, this framework is essential for examining how stakeholders' knowledge, skills, and experiences influence curriculum reforms aimed at improving employability in Tanzania. Inclusive stakeholder engagement and the strategic use of their expertise in both curriculum design and labour market practices can result in more relevant and responsive curricula, ultimately better equipping students for the demands of an evolving workforce. However, this framework has a potential weakness in universal application due to its uncertain applicability in other contexts. Despite this concern, the framework is a recommended guide for curriculum reform practices as it offers a valuable lens for measuring curriculum effectiveness. The following conceptual framework complements the theoretical framework by illustrating the relationships among key variables examined in the study.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1:

The effects of stakeholders' attributes on effectiveness of curriculum reform



More specifically, stakeholders at all levels contribute to curriculum reform by identifying and organising necessary changes in areas such as learning objectives, content, pedagogical approaches, and assessment practices. These reforms are structured in a systematic and coherent manner to align with the evolving needs of the labour market (see Figure 1). Overall, the knowledge, skills, and experience of stakeholders play a pivotal role in enhancing educational practices that equip graduates with the competencies required for labour market success, thereby strengthening their employability.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study adopted a mixed-methods research approach, recognising the complex nature of the world rather than relying solely on quantitative or qualitative methods (Cohen et al., 2018). This approach improved the credibility and robustness of the research findings through triangulation and complementarity. The statistical evidence was supported by qualitative explanation to provide a comprehensive understanding of how stakeholders' knowledge, skills, and experience enhance curriculum reforms for employability in Tanzania. The study involved a total of 243 participants, including university academics, teachers, tutors, and curriculum developers. In addition, 12 participants were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. These included faculty deans, senior researchers, curriculum directors, and executive officers from NGOs and the Association of Tanzania Employers (ATE). The interviews, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes, were conducted through face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and online platforms to accommodate participants' availability, and all sessions were recorded with informed consent. To ensure the validity of the research instruments, a pilot test was conducted with 30 potential respondents. Feedback from this process informed revisions that improved the clarity, relevance, and overall quality of the research tools. Also, Cronbach's alpha was employed to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire, yielding a value of ($\alpha = 0.840$). The study adhered to ethical standards and logistical procedures. Quantitative data collected through close-ended questionnaires were analyzed using three-way ANOVA and multiple regression methods as well as descriptively using frequencies and percentages and presented in descriptive tables. Qualitative data from interviews underwent thematic analysis and were reported as verbatim

quotes and narratives to provide deeper insights into the stakeholders' perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study assessed the role of stakeholders' knowledge, skills, and experiences in enhancing curriculum reform for employability in Tanzania. The findings were presented using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were analysed through three-way ANOVA and multiple regression methods, while background information was summarised using descriptive tables. Qualitative data were reported using verbatim quotes and narrative accounts to provide deeper insights into stakeholders' perspectives and experiences.

Background information of respondents

The study collected data on respondents' educational qualifications, curriculum knowledge, skills, and work experiences to understand their impact on curriculum reform effectiveness as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
Background information of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Educational qualification level	Certificate	13	5.35
	Diploma	11	4.53
	Bachelor' degree	76	31.28
	Masters	118	48.56
	PhD	25	10.29
	Total	243	100
Sources of knowledge and skills on curricula issues	Cert	13	5.35
	Dip	6	2.47
	BA	69	28.40
	P-Dip	1	0.41
	Cert + Dip	5	2.06
	Cert + Dip + BA	14	5.76
	Cert + Dip + BA + MA	2	0.82
	Cert + Dip +BA +MA + PhD	3	1.23
	Cert + BA +MA	5	2.06
	Dip + BA	33	13.58
	Dip + BA + MA	20	8.23
	Dip + BA +MA + PhD	5	2.06
	BA + MA	37	15.23
	BA + MA + PhD	3	1.23
	Post-Dip + MA + PhD	4	1.65
	BA + PhD	2	0.82
	Seminars, workshops and research activities	14	5.76
	Cert.+ BA	7	2.88
	Total	243	100.00
Working experience	Under five years	38	15.6
	5-10 years	69	28.4
	11-19 years	80	32.9
	20 years and above	56	23.0
	Total	243	100.0

Source: Field data (2024)

The study revealed that 90.13% of the respondents had educational qualifications ranging from bachelor's degree to PhD. Additionally, 58.02% reported acquiring curriculum knowledge and skills through multiple pathways. Furthermore, 55.97% had more than 10 years of working experience, indicating a strong foundation of expertise among the participants.

Effects of knowledge and experience on curriculum reform effectiveness

The study assessed the impact of stakeholders' knowledge, skills, and experiences on the effectiveness of curriculum reform. A three-way ANOVA examined how the education level, knowledge and skills sources, and working experiences significantly influenced the curriculum reform for employability.

Table 2

ANOVA Results for respondents' characteristics on rating scores

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Response ratings

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	47.915 ^a	53	.904	3.917	.000	.587
Intercept	464.961	1	464.961	2014.525	.000	.932
Education	2.575	4	.644	2.789	.029	.071
Sources	9.303	13	.716	3.101	.000	.216
Experience	9.466	4	2.367	10.253	.000	.219
Education * Sources	1.465	8	.183	.793	.609	.042
Education * Experience	4.550	7	.650	2.816	.009	.119
Sources * Experience	7.850	12	.654	2.834	.002	.189
Education * Sources *						
Experience	3.186	1	3.186	13.806	.000	.086
Error	33.697	178	.231			
Total	3055.360	231				
Corrected Total	81.613	230				

a. R Squared = .587 (Adjusted R squared = .437)

Source: Field data (2024)

Table 2 reveals that stakeholder education, knowledge source, and experience significantly influence curriculum reform effectiveness ($F = 13.806$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), underscoring the importance of inclusive stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, it was revealed that education level, knowledge and skills, as well as work experience of participants significantly influenced their rating scores ($F = 2.789$, $p = 0.029 < 0.05$; $F = 3.101$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$; $F = 10.253$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The analysis suggested that greater variability in curriculum reform effectiveness was more strongly influenced by respondents' working experience than by their educational qualifications or curriculum-related knowledge and skills ($F = 10.253$). On the other hand, stakeholders with practical experience in curriculum reform were more likely to offer relevant and actionable feedback, thereby making their engagement critical for

aligning curricula with labour market demands. These findings align with the OECD Framework on Curriculum Reform, which emphasises the central role of knowledge, skills, and particularly experience in enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of educational reforms (OECD, 2020a). The study also utilised multiple linear regression to analyse how stakeholders' knowledge, skills, and experiences affect the effectiveness of curriculum reform for employability as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3
Effects of knowledge and experience on curriculum reform

Model Summary^b			
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.865 ^a	.748	.739

a. Predictors: (Constant), Lived experience, Knowledge

b. Dependent Variable: Curriculum reform effectiveness

The ($R^2 = 0.748$) shows that knowledge, skills, and experience collectively account for 74.8% of the variance in curriculum reform effectiveness, significantly exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.26. This underscores the importance of engaging stakeholders with relevant expertise to enhance curriculum reform for employability.

Table 4
Knowledge and experiences on curriculum reform effectiveness

Model	Coefficients^a		
	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	
	B	Beta	Sig.
1 (Constant)	1.679		.000
Knowledge and skills	.379	.619	.000
Lived experience	.246	.354	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Curriculum reform effectiveness

Source: Field data (2024)

Table 4 indicates that knowledge, skills, and experience all have a positive and statistically significant relationship with curriculum reform. Among these factors, knowledge and skills exert the strongest influence ($\beta = 0.619$, $p = 0.000$), followed by experience ($\beta = 0.354$, $p = 0.000$). The differing effect sizes suggest a dynamic interplay among these attributes in shaping the effectiveness of curriculum reform for

employability. These findings underscore the critical role of stakeholders' knowledge in setting educational goals and organising curriculum components, as also highlighted by Walsh (2018). Results From the interviews regarding the knowledge, skills, and experiences in enhancing curriculum reform for employability skills was thematically analysed and presented as narratives and verbatim excerpts data as summarised in Table 5.

Table 5
Qualitative data analysis for knowledge, skills and experiences

Category	Theme	Description
Curriculum Reform effectiveness	Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures the logical organization of objectives, contents, and resources Assists in adapting relevant and functional skills for students
	Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aids in the identification of effective alternatives in the curriculum reform process

Source: Field data (2024)

Data from interviews, as presented in Table 5, revealed that stakeholders' knowledge and skills are essential for logically organising curriculum components. One of the senior researchers explained:

The skills that students acquire and grow in can be greatly influenced by an expert participating in curriculum reform. The professional knowledge that is brought to the table assists in ensuring curricula focus and ensures that the goals, contents, and resources are properly and logically organized.

The findings corroborate those of Walsh (2018), who emphasised that stakeholders with relevant knowledge play a critical role in effectively structuring key elements of the curriculum. In other words, knowledgeable stakeholders can organize a curriculum so that clear objectives are set, proper content is selected, and effective materials are provided to ensure effective learning experiences. Furthermore, it was revealed that stakeholders' knowledge and skills help adapt relevant skills for students by identifying valuable education trends and job market requirements. One of the faculty deans elaborated:

The reform of curricula can be more effective and adaptable to society and students' needs if stakeholders involved possess relevant knowledge in their fields of expertise. For example, the employment experts

facilitate identification of relevant and functional skills that are mostly demanded in the labour market.

The study underscores the critical role of knowledge in curriculum reform, particularly in aligning educational outcomes with the demands of the labour market. These findings are consistent with the OECD Framework for Curriculum Reform, which advocates for knowledge-driven approaches to ensure relevance and responsiveness in education systems. The framework also identifies the necessary knowledge and skills for successful curriculum reform adaption (OECD, 2020a; Lavonen, 2020).

In addition, it was revealed that stakeholders' experiences significantly influence the success of curriculum reform in terms of identifying effective alternatives for job-focused education. One of the employers commented:

Stakeholders with lived experience on job market can easily identify market needs and requirements to enrich the curriculum reform process. This ensures that the needs are effectively met.

The findings align with previous studies that highlight the value of experiences in curriculum reform (Mellegård & Pettersen, 2016; OECD, 2020b). As previously noted, in Ireland, stakeholder selection for upper secondary education curriculum reform was largely based on their prior experience (OECD, 2020a). This finding aligns with existing literature and reflects a growing consensus on the pivotal role of stakeholder experience in informing and guiding effective curriculum reform processes.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The study concludes that stakeholder engagement significantly enhances the quality of curriculum reform, particularly in aligning educational outcomes with labour market demands and improving graduate employability. It makes a meaningful contribution to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on how stakeholders' knowledge, skills, and experience influence the effectiveness of curriculum design and implementation. Additionally, the study supports and expands current theoretical frameworks related to curriculum development, especially in the context of addressing economic and employment needs in developing countries such as Tanzania. Moreover,

the findings offer valuable insights for policy formulation and educational reform by advocating for inclusive stakeholder engagement and collaborative approaches that integrate professional expertise and practical experience. In light of these findings, the study recommends the development of a collaborative framework that actively involves professionals with relevant expertise and experience to ensure the curriculum reflects national priorities and labour market requirements. Finally, the study suggests that future research could involve a broader sample, including students, to gain deeper insights into how stakeholder engagement shapes curriculum reform and enhances employability outcomes.

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