

Training Researchers in Tanzania

- the Experience of the University of Dar Es Salaam

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Introduction

Within the overall aim of this conference, which is to identify efficient methods to provide quality research training based on cooperation with foreign institutions, the objective of my paper is to present Tanzania's experience in training her researchers. My focus of attention is on researcher training at the University of Dar es Salaam, an institution which I have been associated with since 1976. The paper starts with a general introduction of Tanzania, highlighting its underdeveloped status, dependence on foreign aid and overseas technical assistance, and the repercussions of these on university education and researcher training. I then briefly give an overview of the research structure and raise some issues regarding the type of research undertaken at the university, before discussing the experience of the University of Dar es Salaam in the task of training its researchers.

Tanzania: Underdevelopment and the Influence of Foreign Donors

Tanzania is a fairly large country which is situated in the Eastern part of Africa. It has a total area of 945,200 sq. kms., and a population of over 27 million people of whom 85% reside in rural areas and 15% in urban areas. With an annual per capita income of about USD 100, Tanzania is ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world, despite the fact that it has a wide range of

untapped resources, including arable land, wildlife resources and minerals. In a continent which is dominated by instability and ethnic fighting, Tanzania has since independence in 1961 enjoyed relative peace and stability, earning for itself a good image abroad. This distinction has encouraged many foreign donors to support the government through the provision of finances, technical assistance and fellowships for studies abroad to a good number of her citizens. Commenting on the magnitude of donor assistance to Tanzania, Carl Widstrand has noted:

"Donors have sunk more than USD 10 billion into Tanzania since 1970. Donor assistance has overtaken exports in value terms in the form of budgetary and import support and project and technical assistance financing" (Widstrand, 1992:15).

No other African country has received more foreign aid than Tanzania. Annual aid flows into the country have grown from USD 50-60 million in the beginning of the 1970s to more than USD 500 million in the late 1980s. Nowadays, the rate of dependency on foreign aid is so bad that the yearly "Paris Club" consultations among the country's main donors - and their USD billion aid package - can dictate anything to the country's leadership, as it is mostly donor funds which meet the running expenses of the government.

In the 1970s and 1980s, critical academics at the University of Dar es Salaam decried this heavy reliance on foreign aid, arguing that it undermines the country's capacity to pursue a development model in accordance with its aspirations, rendering Tanzania a trial case of plans which reflect the background and preferences of the aid donors rather than the needs of the Tanzanian people. Just as different donors have developed different plans for the country's 20 regions, at the University of Dar es Salaam one finds the Germans and the Swiss having disproportionate influence in the Faculty of Engineering; the Swedes and Americans dominate the Department of Economics; while the British and the French dominate the Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics.

Research collaboration between researchers from the North and their colleagues from poor countries like Tanzania is indispensable. One thing which concerns Third World researchers such as myself is the emerging "senior-junior" relationship between researchers from the rich North and local re-

searchers, which is caused by the poor conditions of the research profession in countries such as Tanzania. Nothing illustrates this poverty better than the erosion of university staff salaries which has occurred in Tanzania over the years. UDASA portrays the situation in the following way:

"In the late 1960s, when the first generation of Tanzanian members of staff joined the University as assistant lecturers, they earned an equivalent of USD 200 a month, a very modest salary by world standards. But they could still buy at least one book a month and subscribe to a scholarly journal. What is more important is that they could also devote all their time to teaching, debating and researching, which, after all, are their vocations. Two decades later, the same people, now promoted to full professors, and with much larger families, earn an equivalent of only USD 75. To make ends meet now they have to divide their time between the University and their informal paymasters: the pigs and chickens that they have to raise, the passengers in their taxis, and of course foreign consultancy donors. They no longer have the money to buy books or the time to read them and update their lectures or advance their teaching" (UDASA, 1991:15).

The above situation has contributed to the problem of brain drain, whereby more than 100 first and second generation Tanzanian lecturers and researchers have left the country. Some have gone to Europe and America, but most of them have sought employment closer to home in countries such as Botswana, Kenya, Swaziland and recently, South Africa.

Research collaboration between Northern researchers and those from the South is important to both sides. Whereas various reasons prompt foreign researchers to look for a "local contact" before they conduct research in Third World countries, to the local researchers research collaboration is important because it ensures continuing progress in professional standards and competence through attendance in international conferences and access to professional journals. This exposure ensures that they avoid being cut off from the international mainstream in their disciplines. However, the material gap between researchers from the rich North and those from the Third World threatens the very credibility of the latter. As it was put by Widstrand:

"...many years of donor influence and donor-imposed research projects and ideas have made the research community inclined to listen very carefully to donors and researchers have shown a great adaptability to suggestions, especially if there was a four-wheel drive in the offing" (Widstrand, 1992:4).

Recently University of Dar es Salaam academics have been forced to try to resist the increasing donor influence at their own university as a result of a shrinking state provision and financing of higher education. Under the sponsorship of a number of foreign donors, the university administration is attempting to institute major changes in the structure, functions and size of the university. Dubbed "Institutional Transformation Programme: UDSM 2000" the program aims at a rapid expansion of the university, and, guided by the philosophy of economic liberalization, to facilitate a market provision of university education. The academic members of staff have criticized this donor-imposed venture by arguing:

"...university education and scientific knowledge creation should not, strictly speaking, be treated as private goods to be sold in the market place. Like roads, sanitation or, indeed, national security, they are public goods requiring public funding. Universities, therefore, as instruments for education and scientific knowledge creation, serve not so much the individual citizens as the community as a whole. As instruments for the people, Universities ought to be accountable to them" (UDASA, 1995: 3).

The academics have cautioned that any restructuring of the University of Dar es Salaam must take into consideration its history and established traditions, as well as the country's conditions and the hopes and aspirations of the Tanzanian people regarding the role of their national university. They have reminded the university administration to distinguish between the changes which are initiated by the Tanzanians themselves, and which are in conformity with their aspirations, and those changes which are pursued under external pressure. Regarding the proposal to institute a market determined provision of university education, the academics make a point which is also worth quoting:

"The corporate-University-for-profit concept replacing a free, democratically controlled University, open to all citizens, will result into a University system of education that caters for an elite who can afford to pay at the expense of a socially provided University accessible to all. On the other hand, preoccupation with market driven services will result in the growth of differentiated demand which would favor high status and high private return fields of study like law, engineering, medicine and commerce" (UDASA, 1995: 4).

It is not yet certain which side is going to win. The market-driven side is going to win if the government does not intervene. The government side is going to win if the government intervenes. The market-driven side is going to win if the government does not intervene. The government side is going to win if the government intervenes.

creasing role of foreign donors, UDASA (1991) reveal the even more embarrassing fact that two thirds of the limited resources spent on education depend on external sources, thus eroding our independence and autonomy in learning and education planning (UDASA, 1991:14).

The Research Structure and Relevance of Research Undertaken in Tanzanian Universities

The research structure in Tanzania may be categorized into four main sectors, as suggested by Widstrand (1992): the universities²; the research organizations under the various ministries; private research; and consulting organizations. In this presentation, I am concerned with researcher training in only the first sector, and only at the University of Dar es Salaam.

The history of the University of Dar es Salaam goes back to 1961, when a small group of students were enrolled to pursue the Bachelor of Law degree, under the auspices of the University of London. After all the East African countries had gained their independence, they decided to create the University of East Africa, with colleges in Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, and Makerere. In 1970, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda decided that each country should have its own university, and so the University of Dar es Salaam was born.

Bearing in mind that the classical functions of universities are to preserve, transmit and enhance knowledge, and that one of the ways of enabling universities to accomplish these functions is through research and publication of research results, the authorities gave due emphasis to research and researcher training. The academic members of staff have gained recognition and have been promoted on the basis of their performance in teaching and research at the University of Dar es Salaam from the days when it was just a constituent college of the University of London, and afterwards the University of East Africa. However, the bulk of the research at the university is undertaken by the established research institutes such as the Institute of Kiswahili Research (language standardization, linguistics and literature); the Institute of Development Studies (teaching and research); the Institute of Marine Science (teaching and research); the Institute of Production Innovation (engineering consultancy, research and development); the Economic Research Bureau and the Institute of Resource Assessment. In order to highlight some of the issues which are related to the research undertaken by

these institutes, let us examine the rationale for the establishment of last two research establishments and comments made about their outputs.

The Economic Research Bureau (ERB) was established in 1965, as a research and consultancy organization specializing in economic issues. It works in close collaboration with the Department of Economics, with staff members in the two departments participating in both teaching and research. Over the years, ERB researchers have undertaken a number of research and consultancy jobs, publishing some of their work in international journals, and some of it in their *ERB Papers* series. There are conflicting views about the quality of research and consultancy jobs undertaken by the ERB. Widstrand is very harsh in his criticism of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science where the ERB is located:

"Research in the social sciences ...is not very outstanding. There is a lack of professional standards ...There are of course exceptions but the overall output is low and in many instances of doubtful quality" (Widstrand, 1992: 30).

Regarding the ERB itself, Widstrand (1992) is even more critical:

"There are indications that the intensive consultancy operation run by the ERB as well as by other parts of the social science faculty is not always producing the high quality products one would expect...It would seem that senior staff delegate the writing of papers to students and that similar studies or rehashed studies are delivered to various donors with small changes" (Widstrand, 1992: 33).

I believe Widstrand's impressions reflect the problems associated with the poor conditions of the research profession which were cited above. However, as we shall see below, most of the teaching and research staff at the University of Dar es Salaam have obtained their higher degrees at reputed universities abroad where professionalism is emphasized. It is unlikely that they would abandon all their professionalism and sink so low when they return to the University of Dar es Salaam. Some of them struggle, and continue to produce first class work in spite of the difficult conditions. But, as we noted before, a number of them have sought responsible positions outside Tanzania and distinguished themselves professionally abroad.

A more positive picture of the research output of the ERB is painted by Hansson and Mabele (1994). They support their views by quoting favorable reviews from the World Bank and Oxford University which speak of "a strong group of over a dozen Tanzanian professional economists capable of carrying out independent research and providing policy analysis" and that "the University of Dar es Salaam is among the best two in Africa".

Another example of a research department of the University of Dar es Salaam is what used to be called the Bureau of Resource Assessment and Land Use Planning (BRALUP). Years before the present global interest in sustainable development and environmental conservation was popularized by the 1972 Stockholm Conference, the Bruntland Commission Report (1987) and the Rio Conference (1992), BRALUP was conceived with the notion that "...nations, particularly the poor ones, must use their resources judiciously in order to achieve full scale development without detrimental side effects" (Evaluation Team, 1979: 12). The mandate of BRALUP, which was established in 1967, was to carry out research in the field of resource analysis, including population resources, land use and regional planning. Twelve years after it was established, BRALUP was reviewed by a team headed by Goran Hyden (then a social science advisor, Ford Foundation) with other team members coming from Clark University (USA), SAREC and the Tanzanian government. They commended BRALUP's work in the following words:

"The review team believes that BRALUP has been engaged in policy-relevant work, carried it out in a competent manner and had a definite impact on both official thinking and policy-making in Tanzania. It compares favorably with most other research institutions in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa. It has a unique competence in its inter-disciplinary composition and orientation" (Review Team, 1979: 5-6).

The Review Team recommended a faster localization of BRALUP's staff and its transformation into an institute reporting directly to the University Senate rather than being a bureau under the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Both these changes have been implemented and BRALUP has been transformed into the Institute of Resource Assessment (IRA).

In spite of BRALUP's and IRA's mainly positive image in Tanzania and abroad, some critics have argued that research organizations in Tanzania need to balance between commissioned research and consultancies on the

one hand; and independent and basic research on the other, if they want to retain their credibility in the academic world. Widstrand has criticized the "instrumentalist view of research", which presupposes that research must serve a particular political end:

"Independent and basic research has been marginalized, consultancies is the thing to do. This has led to degradation of the role of research, especially in the social sciences, and reduced the role of academics into serving short range, narrow objectives...The Government of Tanzania is, as is the case with so many African and non-African governments, thus preoccupied with the short term considerations almost to the exclusion of everything else. This short term focus contrasts with the needs of research, which is basically long-term in perspective and takes considerable time to build up" (Widstrand, 1992: 21-22).

The University of Dar es Salaam has tried to check the above deficiency by insisting that its academic staff should combine both consultancy jobs and independent research before they can hope to be promoted. The evaluation of staff publications considers this aspect, in addition to such aspects as whether the publications are joint or individual, or whether they are relevant to the staff member's area of specialization or not.

The Training of Researchers at the University of Dar es Salaam

The University of Dar es Salaam follows a very rigorous recruitment, review and promotion system for its academic members of staff, which include Research Fellows, Lecturers and Professors. Before a candidate is recruited into the first rung of the ladder (Tutorial Assistant), he or she is required to have obtained a very good first degree (First Class or Upper Second Class Division). Promotion to the second step (Assistant Research Fellow or Assistant Lecturer), is dependent on obtaining a very good Master's plus a good teaching and publication record. Thereafter, the staff member is expected to go on for a Ph.D. degree, monitored annually through the Annual Staff Review exercise gauging performance in teaching, research and publication.

In general, most members of the academic staff at the University of Dar es Salaam have obtained their higher degrees abroad, as illustrated by the following table covering three social science research institutes: The Institute of Resource Assessment (IRA) Institute of Kiswahili Research (IKR) and the Economic Research Bureau (ERB).

Table 2: Countries where Researchers Obtained their Ph.D.⁵

	IRA	IKR	ERB
Australia	1		
Denmark	1		
Germany	2	3	2
Norway	1		
Sudan		1	
Sweden	3		1
UK	1	3	
USA	2	5	1
Tanzania	1	2	1

The table shows that most of the researchers, including those of the Institute of Kiswahili Research³, obtain their higher degrees in the USA and Europe, and since the university has no funds to send these researchers abroad for training, it has to rely on the generosity of donors for scholarships and fellowships.

Drawing from years of experience with the Rockefeller Foundation, David Court (1994) has mentioned 5 ingredients of a successful fellowship program:

- (i) appropriate selection procedures
- (ii) relevant study institutions and programs
- (iii) conditions conducive for successful completion of the degree
- (iv) measures that ensure the prompt return home of fellows
- (v) a supportive professional environment after return

From my experience as a staff member of the University of Dar es Salaam and a recipient of two different scholarships, I will address myself to the last three.

Conditions Conducive for Successful Completion of the Degree

From my personal experience, these conditions range from a level of academic monitoring by the funding agency, to concern for the personal welfare

of the student. Academic monitoring, which should involve the funding agency, the student's supervisor and the student, ensures that when genuine problems such as the need for extension of stay and funding crop up, they can be dealt with sympathetically.

I need not repeat the difficulties of adjustment in overseas countries, as I assume they are familiar to most readers of this volume. However, I should mention that these days, an African student coming to Europe faces special adjustment problems due to a very hostile environment, thanks to the media coverage of problems which face the continent such as the war in Somalia, ethnic violence and AIDS. In such an environment, nothing can be more helpful than the provision for spouses to accompany the student abroad. In this connection, Danida Fellows are given 3 options: (i) one journey home for at least 14 days (ticket paid by Danida); (ii) visit by spouse in Denmark, provided his/her stay does not exceed 2 months (Danida pays for ticket and family allowance) (iii) bringing family to Denmark (Danida does not pay for their tickets, but pays a family allowance). In my case, I opted for the third option, after having experienced separation from my family in an earlier scholarship. However, I had to face a lot of problems to raise the money for their tickets, and to pay for the children's school fees in an English-medium school. As I was a member of staff on study leave, I might have received some assistance for the fare from the University of Dar es Salaam in the "good old days", but such assistance has been canceled these days due to scarcity of funds.

Prompt Return Home

This is a fairly straight forward matter for University of Dar es Salaam staff members on study leave. Before one leaves for studies abroad, one is already appointed to a position, and during one's absence the university pays a salary (small as it might be) and other benefits. Therefore, the student is legally bonded to return to the university upon finishing studies, or risk the penalty of repaying all the benefits accrued to them during their studies. Also, in a country like Denmark with strict rules regarding work permits, there is no chance of hanging around after finishing one's studies.

Supportive Professional Assistance

We have noted how problems such as salary erosion andt af thee

how the poor countries can retain their newly trained graduates, David Court has emphasized that in future, fellowship programs should assist the new graduates to maintain their careers:

"It is...pertinent, in conceptualizing a fellowship programme for the future, to take account of the work conditions and professional culture from which a fellowship recipient comes and to which he or she will return...In view of the perilous state of many African universities, investment in Ph.D. training will be nullified unless the means can be found to ensure that new graduates can maintain research momentum and professional advancement" (Court, 1994:141).

Some of the suggestions which have been forwarded in order to support the new graduates include annual research grants, travel grants to permit participation in international conferences, subscription to key journals and an occasional study leave to visit a center of excellence in the graduate's area of specialization.

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Notes:

1. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the position of the Institute of Resource Assessment or the University of Dar es Salaam.
2. Presently, Tanzania has only three universities: The University of Dar es Salaam (also incorporating the Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences); the Sokoine University of Agriculture; and the newly inaugurated Open University of Tanzania.
3. With Kiswahili as the national language, and the most widely spoken in the country, one would expect a greater number of Kiswahili researchers would be getting their higher degrees at the University of Dar es Salaam.