Book Review


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The purpose of this book review is to help people interested in policy issues, in other words, policy makers, administrators, managers and the public in general who are too busy to read long texts. The book review provides them with good policy formulation basics. Also, it draws a way forward with regard to the Msoma Resolution and policy issues.

The book, “Innovations in Higher Education" lucidly makes an overview of Musoma Resolution policy (MR); it attempts to explore the nature of the policy; the weaknesses linked with the policy formulation, their consequences in the implementation phase; Also, it clearly points out what happened in higher learning institutions to the students, lecturers and university administration; the University of Dar es Salaam has been a centre of discussion. In a nutshell, the book provides a productive experience and guidance to policy makers, politicians and the public in general on policy issues. The Musoma Resolution policy seeks to produce graduates who can integrate education with work, but also to expand primary and secondary education. However, the discussion in the book is centred on higher education, the university of Dar es Salaam.

The book is divided into five major sections, namely perspectives and approaches; Equity and deficiency issues; Policy tracer; Cost benefit analysis and the last section, Conclusion and implications. In each of the sections, there are subsections, but the last section. However, this article’s mode of discussion has not followed a section to section presentation, but steadily reflects the content of the book. This mode of presentation is adopted because in some sections concepts discussed fabulously resemble, therefore, the mode of presentation is adopted to minimise monotony propensity.

The book highlights approaches used in inducing innovation in society; the approaches include interpretive, Radical-humanist, Radical-structuralist and functionalism. To begin with Interpretive approach, which bases on collecting data from individuals and out of data draw meaning on the social phenomenon; the danger, in this approach is that, social reality may be distorted by individual biases. Radical-humanist approach, the primacy of which is to educate people on the nature of their problems; innovation is achieved through creating awareness and developing self-understanding of their environment. Indeed, this perspective perceives education as a tool of liberation and seems to have been employed by Paulo Freire, (1970) in his book titled “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”.

Radical-structuralist approach, perceives education as a tool of exploitation since its purpose is to inculcate a sense of obedience and respect to authority and distorts the spirit of creativity and self-starting attitude. So social relations change is primary whereas institutional structures are unimportant in achieving the objectives and goals of innovation. Lastly, functionalism perspective focus of which is on the importance of ideas in the innovation; according to this perspective the ideas must be realistic in relation to the issue under stake.

The book asserts that the genesis of educational innovation is consultation and participation of people, or given stakeholders of a policy. However, in low income countries political scene determines the success or failure of an innovation. In addition to that, the viability of a policy depends up on accurate analysis of needs, which is frequently ignored by policy makers; consequently, the policies are formulated superficially, resulting in mismatch between the policy objectives and the policy goals. In the book, it is argued that lack of participation hinders the implementation of the policy and it bars tapping of implementers’ knowledge in the policy formulation process. Therefore, education policy originates from key education stakeholders. Emphatically, the book puts it clear that the role of policy formulation should not be dominated by the party, government or president, but all people. The situation which was prevalent in the 1960s and 1980s, however, it is in gradual decline in recent years.
Before indulging into critical discussion of the MR, the book makes overviews of policy formulation models, namely Lindbloom model which is preferred by policy makers. It has limited alternatives to choose, which results in unscrutinised policy outcomes and lack of information.

The authors report that there is a propensity of solving all problems simultaneously focusing on immediate consequences while overlooking unprecedented consequences, as it was the case of Universal Primary Education in 1977 or the MR which made the University of Dar es salaam (UDSM) terminate the implementation of admission policy following the lack of applicants in some of the courses. This suggests that policy makers usually do not control future by past experience, but rather use local knowledge and skills thus, leading to repetition of mistakes. The perceived outcomes are expected to be achieved overnight and hence the workers have to work harder than ever in futile.

Three models of formulating a policy have been developed (through grouping policy formulation theories into three models) and pinpointed in the book; the first one is naturalistic model, which involves a sense of rationality and creativity. The second one is idealistic model, which focuses on steps without incorporating the inherent policy implementation. The last one is eclectic model, which endeavours to avoid the mismatch between the purpose of specific policy and implementation framework; the model has been observed as having multiple interpretations across government agents, and elitist sentiments among government officials.

Likewise, the book identifies the policy formulation activities (stages), namely initiation, reformulation of opinion, emergence of alternatives, discussion and debates, legitimization and implementation. In the initiation stage, is culminated by expression of dissatisfaction on the existing policy by education stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and sometimes stems from government or party. Reformulation of opinion, a compromise is sought through a discussion conducted, for a policy to accommodate pressing needs of people of diverse backgrounds and calibers thus, the discussion incorporates people of different cadres, namely politicians, professionals and experts; this results in a detailed analysis of the proposed innovation.

The next one is choosing alternatives, as stakeholders discuss several alternatives may be put aboard, however, some of them may be rejected and some may be accepted by the discussants. Another activity is discussion and debates; as a matter of fact a policy-making organ may comprise several diverse interests, which may need detailed analysis to address the interests or needs of all stakeholders. Lastly, legitimization and implementation, it is argued that the government officials and the party rank the proposed alternatives for implementation. In case of dissatisfaction, the process rekindles at national and grassroots levels, as participation of people cultivates compliance and responsiveness in the implementation. However, the book is wary of egocentric sentiment of a human being, thus asserting that some individuals may through their influence benefit more by the policy despite involving all people in policy-making process, as key actors compete for scarce resources available.

The book provides the Cuban and Chinese educational reforms. Cuban educational innovation has been pointed out as having four goals; the first is effective utilization of human capital and boosting the stagnant economy; the second is to shun away economic and cultural dependence from the U.S.A; the third is to replace capitalist class with classless and egalitarian society; the fourth is to make work as a challenging and creative activity. The innovation led to more enrolment. Success indicators were: number of students joining further education, but also technical, scientific and cultural education development. Education was for all and graduates were prepared to suit for a variety of labour; science and specialization were at the core in the Cuban innovation, which determined the graduates’ career. Other features include literacy campaigns, team work approach in teaching, universal university education and diminishing classes through giving education to women. Moreover, theory and practice were underscored; students were to go in rural areas to till land or to harvest and in urban areas to work in factories.

Education innovation in China is depicted as having a philosophy of education is “life and life is education”, which ignores life class and production struggle;-(use a full stop) theory and practice are off-focused and hence assumes that there are no classes in society. In China, education was for class struggle (economic status) and struggle for production (knowledge to struggle against nature); physical labour being integrated with academic endeavour was primary, thus formal education was to be pragmatic. As pinpointed earlier, students had to go in rural and urban areas to work with communities; this was made possible through part-time, full-time and spare-time schools. So, students worked with communities on weekends and on vacations. Therefore, education in China was to cater for the entire life, for enabling a graduate to set and pursue a goal, and lastly, to enable the recipients to judge their degree of success or failure and adopt new strategies and techniques.

The authors argue that the MR innovation was culminated by the fact that education did not liberate the recipients. Thus, in a meeting held in 1974 in Musoma, Tanzania, it was agreed that primary education be expanded and that in a three-year period every school-going-age child should join primary school. Moreover, secondary schools were to be expanded for standard VII leavers to join, and that subject biases in secondary schools were to be technical education, agriculture, commerce and home economics. It was also decided that a student who did not join university had to take part in production in the community, and despite good form six performance one needed positive recommendation from their employer. The key education success indicator was ability of a graduate to integrate theory and practice.

The authors critically examine the weaknesses of the MR policy. First, the policy was unclear, lacked standards of performance: Second, the innovation was top-down, main stakeholders were not involved in the formulation process. For instance, educational officials were not involved; third, policy objectives were not clear, indicators for success or
failure of the policy were not established; fourth, there was the problem of multiple interpretations of the policy; lastly, production works were assumed to down-grade the academic basics.

Also, the book pinpoints two main things that are worth considering in policy issues as tools of intervention in social and political structures. These include policy impact studies, which seek the results of the policy; implementation studies, which seek to know why results are the way they are. In addition to that, the implementation is said to be determined by: Firstly, policy resources and standards, which lacked significantly in the MR policy, such resources include fiscal, technical assistance, incentives and leadership. Indeed, incentives and fiscal resources are said to be key ones whilst regulations and standards are supplementary. In the MR policy, regulations and rules were set out, but were violated. For example, university admission criteria were violated by some students; they joined university direct from school. Also, the MR lacked adequate fiscal resources as it was introduced in the advent of economic crisis.

Secondly, disposition of implementers towards the policy, the implementers of the MR policy, or University of Dar es salaam lecturers reluctantly implemented it because mature age entrants needed remedial classes while there were no incentives. Moreover, they thought that mature age entrants would cause decline of academic performance; besides, form six leavers did jobs which did not correlate with their future studies.

Thirdly, as it has been pinpointed earlier that for a policy to receive corroborations from implementers, it is worth to involve them in the policy formulation process. Thus communication is a key variable in policy implementation although it was not considered in the MR policy-making process, which culminated in difficulties during policy implementation.

Fourthly, characteristics of implementing agency, the University of Dar es salaam was the only University in Tanzania, and its primary purpose was to produce high and middle level human resources and it produced white collar jobs graduates, bureaucrats and purely academicians, which led to conflict of objectives. So, the characteristics of implementing agency frustrated the policy implementation.

Fifthly, enforcement, for the implementers to adhere to the innovation, three ways are said to be effective, namely normative, remunerative and coercive. However, in Tanzania adherence is cultivated through socialization, persuasion and cooperation between government and professional power centres.

The book views that, University education was for promoting agricultural production and self-employment, to produce peasants and workers. It also describes the dominant policy formulation style, which was dominant paradigm where the implementers stand as spectators and docile participants in the policy formulation process.

It further argues that the origin of the MR policy was the need to merge theory and practice; as an alternative way for non-form six leavers to join university; as a way of reducing expenditure; to allow supremacy of the party over university education, and as continuation of education for self-reliance. The authors describe the impact of the policy as frequent crisis at the "Hill"; mature students were psychologically tortured through calling them names; due to age disparity, there was no free conversation between students and lecturers; some parents and women protested the policy because it was thought that two years in the field for women was a too long period; some students refused to join programmes thought to have no bright future despite positive recommendation.

The authors have shown that the MR policy failed to address the issue of equity in the aspects of: first, gender, in the MR women enrolment fell from 85 to 50 students due to lack of qualified working women; second, socioeconomic status, more students were from privileged families rather than from working class. Third, religious aspect, more Christians joined university than Muslims; fourth, geographical aspect, greatest number of students was from Kilimanjaro and Kagera regions while the lowest number was from Mtwar and Lindi regions, in Tanzania.

Furthermore, the book shows that there was capacity utilization in the University of Dar es salaam during the implementation of the MR policy, which was accompanied with internal inefficiencies, qualitatively and quantitatively. Moreover, the authors report that science and female students later were allocated inadequate resources and sometimes were set out, but were violated. For example, University of Dar es salaam was the only University in Tanzania, and its primary purpose was to produce high and middle level human resources and it produced white collar jobs graduates, bureaucrats and purely academicians, which led to conflict of objectives. So, the characteristics of implementing agency frustrated the policy implementation.

The authors further point out that, there were cases of lack of linkage between theory and practice although most graduates remained in their former jobs; however, administrative jobs appeared to double. And mature entrants assumed high positions after graduating due to their experience. Furthermore, authors have revealed some of the reasons that made graduates change their employers, which include professional recognition, work content, work conditions and better salaries.

Also, the book highlights some of the challenges the students encountered in the implementation of the MR policy. The challenges include lack of funds, text books and family obligations. Few students quit studies due to financial constraints, particularly, those who were highly paid before joining the university. Furthermore, it has been established that married students sustained their life through various strategies, some of which are: Sharing allowances with their families; staying off-campus to receive off-campus allowance; through 'poaching,' taking the meal of campus students; taking back their families to their home villages; the fourth term acted as a financial constraint relief to such students.

The authors have shown that inexperienced human capital commanded higher earning than their experienced counterparts. The authors conclude by arguing that making secondary education terminal and integrating education with
work were novel ideas. And that the MR policy was formulated with inadequate information, preparation and communication; there was no link between policy makers, implementers and educators. They further set out implications of the policy as: In future administrators should play the role of policy-making and policy research; politicians and rhetoricians ruin innovations in various life spheres like, economy, technology and so on; research should be conducted prior to introduction of innovation to oversee its repercussions; integration of work and education is a constructive idea, but it can not reduce costs as perceived in the MR. It is said that the policy was disbanded in 1984 due to lack of qualified applicants; most failures at the university were mature age entrants, and employers rejected to employ form six and four leavers on permanent terms.

The authors, have, with clarity reflected the nature of the MR; the way it was implemented, and the problems the policy encountered and how some of the problems were addressed. Lastly, they conclude by providing recommendations on how best innovations can be adopted without encountering countless repercussions. Although the authors have tried to maintain objectivity, there is a sentiment of biasness as they have said very little on the bright side of the MR, much focus has been lodged on the weak points of the MR. Despite this weakness, they have been very successful in giving the book the title that matches its content since they urge changing the mode of policy-making from centralized to decentralized, and from feelings-based to scientific (research) based policy formulation. This is really a rethinking of the MR, not only that, but also is an evaluative book, evaluating the MR policy. However, it is thought that it was better for the authors to throw their eyes to other territories of education such as mass higher education, which would have paved the way for successful introduction of mass higher education in Tanzania.

It can also be argued that following the rapid diminishing of formal sector employment in Tanzania, the MR policy is still needed today because integration between theory and practice is a viable idea. Education for self-reliance is of paramount importance today, than ever. Therefore, it can be argued that, a country like Tanzania can perpetuate education for self-reliance from lower level of education to higher education by introducing vocational subjects like tailoring, mechanics, masonry, carpentry and what have you. Fully furnished workshops for subjects should be built in all levels of education; students should specialize in one vocational subject through university level; teachers should be prepared to cater for the needs of each vocational subject. This is a rethinking of the rethinking of the self-reliance education, or rather policy. Through this, it is speculated that the propensity of graduates to rely on scarce white collar jobs can be buried.

Generally, the book is an indispensable source of relevant information to policy makers who have been depicted as overlooking the issue of participatory approach in policy-making, which results in implementation lag. However, the authors seem to have overlooked some of the issues such as:

Firstly, the authors assert that there was religious imbalance in university education, that Christians outnumbered the Muslims. This may not be true because it is speculated that even in the society the number of Christians is bigger than that of Muslims. Secondly, the authors have reported that regions like Kilimanjaro and Kagera were leading in having a bigger number of students while those of Mtwara and Lindi had the lowest representation, but they did not tell us the possible reasons for that disparity across regions. Thirdly, authors assert that children from privileged backgrounds were over-represented as compared to the ones from peasants’ cadre, or working class, but they did not establish the grounds for the situation. Fourthly, the authors argue that women enrolment fell from 85 before the MR to 50 in the MR due to lack of qualified women, it is speculated that this may not be the only reason, other factors may have contributed such as family commitments. Finally, the authors argue that some students did not abide by the University joining procedures, this may not be the case, that the students violated the procedures, but rather, it was because the implementers were reluctant to implement the policy, therefore, they (implementers) chose to violate the procedures. Moreover, some of the book’s sections have very similar contents, which may culminate in boredom to readers.