

# Pre-primary Education Policy in Tanzania: Does it Meet the Educational Needs of Newly Naturalized Refugee Children?

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## Abstract

Over the past five decades Tanzania has hosted over two million refugees, about 200,000 of whom have been naturalized as Tanzania citizens. Children from this group face numerous challenges within the mainstream educational system. This paper considered education policy in Tanzania, with a specific focus on access to quality pre-primary education for children of naturalized refugees. It analyzes relevant policy documents published from 2006 – the year before Tanzania started its latest refugee naturalization phase, to 2016. The 2014 Tanzania Education and Training Policy (ETP), the Pre-primary Curriculum, and the Pre-primary Schools Guide give the most focus to pre-primary education. Three National Five-year Development Plans considered all levels of formal education, except the pre-primary level. Findings revealed that policy documents articulate a commitment to providing equal educational opportunities for all people, regardless of their background, acknowledge existing problems with the educational system and make sensible recommendations. These include abolishing fees in all public schools; increasing flexibility in the choice and use of languages of instruction; decentralizing of program management and accountability; and, recommendations related to curriculum issues. However, the associated working documents do not suggest specific strategic and implementation plans to meet the intended goals, nor do they prioritize increasing educational participation for naturalized refugee children.

## Keywords

Pre-primary education policy, naturalized refugees, Tanzania pre-primary education, refugee education

## Introduction

Reducing disparities in educational participation and achievement between pupils from advantaged and less-advantaged groups has been a priority for many societies in recent years. Hence, many countries endeavor to provide unbiased, high-quality education to all (Lewin, 2007; UNESCO, 2015). The inclusion of children

who are socially and educationally disadvantaged in terms of language, poverty,

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ability, ethnic minority status, uncertain civil status, or who have special learning disabilities been a safe-haven for freedom fighters, refugees, and other immigrants from both neighboring and far-off countries (Akaro, 2001). The well-known and the most dominant immigrant group have been naturalized refugees of Burundian origin Center for the Study of Forced Migration (CSFM), 2008.

One of the most important roles of education policy is to ensure that all children from all backgrounds have equal access to quality basic education (Britto, Yoshikawa, & Boller, 2011; UNESCO, 2007). Once in Tanzania, naturalized refugees and other immigrant children can obtain access to education provided under the existing education policy alongside children from the local majority [Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), 2014]. However, information about the extent of access and the quality pre-primary education they receive is not known. Against this background, this paper analyzes pre-primary educational policy with a focus on education provision for naturalized refugee children. More specifically, it:

- 1) explores how the educational needs of pupils of naturalized refugees and from other disadvantaged groups are addressed in Tanzania's existing education policy; and,
- 2) investigates how the educational needs of naturalized refugee pupils are addressed in existing action plans and strategic documents.

## **The Education System in Tanzania**

The system of education in Tanzania is categorized as pre-primary, primary, secondary, and higher education (United Republic of

Tanzania-URT, 2014). However, compulsory basic education covers only pre-primary through to lower secondary levels. The pre-primary level covers one or two year(s) of schooling enrolling children aged 4-5 years, primary level is supposedly to take six years, though practically it takes seven years from grade one to seven. At early primary level - grades one and two, the child is equipped with basic literacy skills required for further education development which includes reading, writing and arithmetic.

Further, after primary level, children need four more years for lower secondary level – marking the end of compulsory basic education cycle. At this level, students sit for examination to advanced secondary school level. Having successfully completed advanced secondary education, the students join college or tertiary level of education leading to the award of a diploma or bachelor degree. The award of the bachelor degree enables one to join for higher degrees such as Master and/or doctorate degrees.

## **Tanzania Education Policy Context**

Over the years, education scholars have established that formulating and implementing education policies based on solid empirical evidence is a major factor in improving and promoting standards in education systems (Eurydice, 2017; Pearson, 2015). Evidence-based education policy is more inclusive, and may lead to a better understanding of what works in which context, and thus improve educational practices (Dowda, Pate, Almelda & Sirard, 2004; Rao, 2006). Societal needs are rapidly changing due to changes in technology and immigration (Dowda et al., 2004; Eurydice, 2017), and the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of current educational systems (Eurydice, 2017). However, a caution should be noted, especially

when dealing with sub-Saharan Africa, where limited empirical evidence exists. In recent years, there have been grievances raised over Western methods being too often transferred to the Global South without considering the context (Engle, et al., 2007; Vargas-Baron, 2015).

Data driven education policies are considered efficient (Grundy, 1994) and have been proven to be more fruitful in low-and-middle-income contexts where they increase participation of all groups across societies (Mtahabwa, 2015; Vargas-Baron, 2015). In formulating evidence-based education policy, there are two dominant but related routes countries choose to take. Some countries have compulsory legal requirements to conduct impact assessment and they invite educational stakeholders in the process of planning, piloting, implementation, and evaluation of any new policy or major shift in the policy direction (Eurydice, 2017; Grundy, 1994). Other countries do not have such legal requirements, and opt for internal and external knowledge brokers (experts) to interpret empirical evidence and mediate between empirical evidence providers and policy-makers (Eurydice, 2017). Tanzania follows the second route. However good it may seem, using empirical evidence to develop pre-primary educational policies in most sub-Saharan developing countries such as Tanzania, is a laborious and resource-intensive task, thus almost non-existent (Mtahabwa, 2010).

In Tanzania, education policy is typically formulated by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST), ideally in collaboration with different education stakeholders, although there is no legal requirement to involve them. Generally, the MEST, through its Department of Policy and Planning uses its own team of policy experts to formulate education policies for various levels of education (URT, 2017). The team proposes

policy changes, and then consults the broker - in this case, the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) which then summons such education stakeholders as teachers, researchers, parents, and school inspectors to discuss the proposed policy. The drafted policy may be sent to the various education stakeholders, who comment on various sections. There is no other way, formal or informal, to consult stakeholders in educational policy formulation in Tanzania.

### **Global Contexts of Refugees**

The humanitarian problem of refugees came to the fore during the First World War, when the first wave of global refugees was displaced (Ongpin, 2008). Refugees can be categorized into two groups – internally displaced persons (IDP) and cross-border refugees. Worldwide, there are currently an estimated 14.7 million IDP, sometimes referred to as domestic refugees (Alix-Garcia, & Saah, 2009). Cross-border refugees are those who move from their respective home countries to seek asylum in neighboring countries. It is estimated that, by 2010, there were about 43.7 million forcibly displaced refugees globally, about half of whom were in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East (UNHCR, 2014; 2016).

Countries have coped with the problem of educating refugee children by making decisions that reflect three different types of refugee civil status: (i) voluntarily repatriated; (ii) resettled in the third country; and (iii) locally naturalized or integrated (Akaro, 2001; Warner, 1994). Voluntary repatriation is done when stability in the refugees' home country has been restored; resettlement in a third country normally involves moving from refugee camps, usually in the third world, to a more developed country, where refugees are often offered full citizenship (Crisp, 2004; Ongpin, 2008).

Local integration or naturalization is a process whereby a refugee is legally offered citizenship in his or her asylum country (Akarro, 2001). Ideally, a naturalized refugee is expected to enjoy almost all the civil rights and privileges accorded to citizens of that country (Crisp, 2004). There are legal and social processes a refugee must undergo for naturalization. Most governments use education as a tool to integrate naturalized refugees fully into their new society (Center for the Study of Forced Migration (CSFM), 2008). Tanzania coped with the problem of refugees by adopting naturalization, resettlement in third countries, and repatriation. In this paper, the focus is on naturalized refugees who were locally integrated/naturalized into Tanzanian society.

### **The Contexts and Civil Status of Refugees in Tanzania**

For the past fifty years, Tanzania has been a safe haven for and home to almost two million refugees who fled their countries for political or economic reasons, or because of civil war [Tanzania Ministry of Home Affairs (MoH), 2014; UNHCR, 2013]. Most come from such neighboring countries as Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Rwanda, and Somalia, as shown in Table 1. The first wave of refugees, commonly known as the first case-load, came to Tanzania in 1972 (CSFM 2008; UNHCR, 2010). This group was initially settled in different parts of the Kigoma region, especially in border villages along Kigoma and Kasulu towns. About two-thirds of them were later moved to Ulyankulu, Mishamo, and Katumba settlement areas in the Tabora and Katavi regions, while the rest remained in villages among the local majority, as “self-settled refugees” (CSFM, 2008)

By 2010, the first case-load refugee population had risen from 150,000 to about

240,000, while the self-settled population had grown from about 55,000 to 90,000 (UNHCR, 2014), some 72 percent of whom were born in Tanzania (MoH, 2014). A distinctive feature of the self-settled refugees was that they did not receive any kind of assistance from the UNHCR, apart from meeting their educational needs. This was financed through the government of Tanzania (Ongpin, 2008, UNHCR, 2014). The second wave of refugees (or second case-load) came to Tanzania throughout the last decade of the 20th century, and was settled in camps in north-western Tanzania (UNHCR, 2014). However, some illegally moved from those refugee camps to urban areas across Tanzania and beyond (Chaulia, 2003; CSFM, 2008).

By 2008, peace and stability had been officially restored in almost all neighboring countries that had experienced socio-political upheaval, and the second case-load was repatriated, or resettled in a third country (CSFM, 2008). The government of Tanzania and international donor agencies had to seriously consider long-term solutions for the first case-load of refugees still in settlement areas, as well as the self-settled refugees. This group was considered distinct, due to both the length of time they had been in exile in Tanzania (more than half were born in Tanzania), and their economic benefit to the country (Kuch, 2016; Ongpin, 2008).

In 2007, Tanzania announced its readiness to naturalize those who wanted to stay (CSFM, 2008). However, the 1972 self-settled refugees were not included in this program until 2010, when the government sorted out their civil status by naturalizing them (Chaulia, 2003; MoH, 2014; UNHCR, 2012). This study focuses on how the current educational policy in Tanzania addresses the educational needs of children from the first case-load self-settled naturalized refugees.

Table 1

*Population and location of settled naturalized and camped refugees*

Region	District	Camp/Settlement	Nationality	Refugee Population	Natives population In regions with refugees
Kigoma	Kasulu	Nyarugusu Camp	Congolese	63,728	2,127,930
		Nyarugusu Camp	Burundian	4,153	
		Nyarugusu Camp	Mixed Nationality	212	
	Spontaneously settled in villages		Burundian	90,227	
Tabora	Urambo	Ulyankulu	Burundians	77,239	2,291,623
Tanga	Handeni	Chogo	Somalis	2,117	2,045,205
Katavi	Mpanda	Katumba	Burundian	88,733	564,604
		Mishamo	Burundian	77,791	
<b>Total population</b>				<b>404,200</b>	<b>7,029,362</b>

**Source:** Tanzania Ministry of Home Affairs (2014); NBS, (2012)

### **The Policy and Practice Dialect of Educating Naturalized Refugees in Tanzania**

The primary objective of Tanzania's 2014 ETP was to ensure that children from different backgrounds have access to appropriate educational services (URT, 2014). It directed state action by providing overarching guidelines that set and shape the education system. According to the ETP, pre-primary education is intended to provide children with learning experiences that will best promote their development, learning, and readiness for primary school (NAEYC, 2009; URT, 2014). In the context of the current study, quality pre-primary education refers to both structural and process domains of quality services which reflect and relevant to socio-cultural needs of children in low-income country (Britto, Yoshikawa & Boller, 2011; Matafwali & Nunsaka, 2011). Practically, it is crucial that education policy consider what is individually and culturally

appropriate (Kagan, 2006). Naturalized refugee children, like their local majority peers, differ in terms of strengths, personalities, preferences, and approaches to learning, as well as in their pace across various domains of development. As Tanzania is a signatory to such international treaties and commitments as CRC and EFA, its existing education policy and even its "next door" strategic documents are likely to be positively influenced by such global initiatives.

In Tanzania, the policy of educating naturalized refugees began to take its current form in 2000, when the UNHCR released CRC guidelines regarding the provision of education to children of refugee backgrounds (UNHCR, 2000). The creation of more educational opportunities for naturalized refugee children was based on the claim that children fleeing their home country are typically traumatized, and the routine of schooling is critical for their long-term psycho-social health and life normalization (Retamal, Devadoss & Richmond, 1998). The

CRC emphasizes all children must have equal access to high-quality education, regardless of their backgrounds, gender, or their parents' socioeconomic status (SES) (United Nations, 1989). To contextualize and implement the CRC, Tanzania enacted the Act Number 21 of 2009 popularly known as Law of the Child Act, which emphasized increasing access to education for all social groups (URT, 2009), including naturalized refugee children.

However, by 2010, almost 300,000 children aged between five and eight years were not in schools in Tanzania, and almost 70 percent of those were either from a refugee background or were IDPs (MoEVT, 2012). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2012), the total population of pre-primary-aged children (five- to six-year-olds) in Kigoma (a Tanzanian region with the highest number of self-settled naturalized refugees) was 176,183, about 35 percent of whom were enrolled in various pre-primary schools. In the same year, the population of pre-primary-aged naturalized refugee pupils in Kasulu and Buhigwe- two districts with the highest number of self-settled, newly-naturalized refugees in the region was about 40,000. However, only 18 percent of them received pre-primary education (MoEVT, 2014). Against this background, the current study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How is information about the educational needs of pupils from naturalized refugees and other disadvantaged groups addressed in Tanzania's existing education policy?
- 2) How are the educational needs of naturalized refugee pupils addressed in existing action plans and strategic documents?

## Method

### Criteria for Documents Selection

Pre-primary education in Tanzania was accepted and adopted as part of the formal education system in 2015 (URT, 2014). As such, there are a limited number of documents related to pre-primary education as a sub-sector, or to naturalized refugees as a social group. Thus, to obtain rich and valid data for this study, government-issued documents released by Tanzania government for official or academic use that addressed education or issues related to education were selected and explored for information related to pre-primary education policy. The documents selected included the 2014 Tanzania Education and Training Policy (ETP), the Pre-primary curriculum, the Guide for Pre-primary schools, the Tanzania Long-Term Perspective Plan (LTPP) 2011/12 to 2024/25, and three Tanzania Five-Year Development Plans (T5YDP) (2006/7-2010/11; 2011/12-2015/16; and 2016/17-2020/21) (TIE, 2014; URT, 2006, 2011, 2006).

### Methods of Analyses

To understand changes in educational policy, and to identify major trends and issues in pre-primary education (Ezzy, 2002; Patton, 2009), the 2014 ETP was descriptively analyzed, and selected words in strategic and working documents were counted to indicate their importance. A descriptive policy analysis process describes the development process of policy under scrutiny (Patton, 2009) hence identification of the existing flaws. By using multiple sources (policy and action plan documents) and two different data analysis approaches (descriptive and word count), researchers can clearly understand the policy context and implementation atmosphere, thus

enhancing the quality of their findings (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2012).

As noted earlier, in most sub-Saharan countries, there are various forces that necessitate the formulation of or changes to educational policy (Mtahabwa, 2010; Vargas-Baron, 2015). However, such changes do not necessarily reflect grassroots' educational needs (Mtahabwa, 2010). As such, descriptive text analysis of policy documents was chosen as the most appropriate method of analysis, for it allows researchers to discern the meaning of the text, discover the larger picture under which the policy was formulated, and capture its larger hidden meaning (Patton, 2009). This enables researchers to deconstruct policy texts, to understand the meaning and significance of what was being communicated through the document (Grundy, 1994). Specific focus was on language used and context interpretation, to understand the social and educational issues (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2012) of naturalized refugees and other minority groups in Tanzania.

The word-count method is useful in that it unobtrusively allows researchers to explore, in a non-reactive way, how action plans and other strategic documents consider and prioritize the educational needs of minority disadvantaged groups (Hsieh-Fang & Shannon, 2005). The extent to which an issue is articulated in policy and associated documents indicates how educational policy weighs that issue (Grundy, 1994). Themes were left to unfold and develop naturally from the data (Ezzy, 2002). The criteria for selection of the counted words were those related to: (i) inclusive educational practices for immigrants, ethnic minority groups, and/or the marginally disadvantaged; (ii) pre-primary education, or (iii) immigrant or civil status. These criteria allowed flexibility and

deep understanding of the contexts (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012; Patton, 2009) in which immigrants and disadvantaged groups access education in Tanzania. The words selected for counting were: *ethnic minority*, *disadvantaged group*, *naturalized refugees*, *inclusion/inclusive education*, *integration* (in education or society), *equality*, and *equity*. The number of times each word was mentioned in each document was counted and noted. As such, the selected method was appropriate to answer the research questions of this study.

## Results

This section first offers a critical descriptive analysis of the 2014 ETP document, and then a more quantitative analysis of the implementations and action plans documents.

### Analysis of 2014 Education and Training Policy

Following the implementation of structural adjustment programs, from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, Tanzania pursued a liberalization policy, in which education was offered on a cost-sharing basis. Pupils' parents had to pay school fees and make "other" contributions, such as laboratory costs, and school uniforms; while the government employed the teachers, and paid capitation grants to cover schools' administrative and recurrent costs. The 2014 ETP abolished payment of school fees and "other contributions" in public schools (Policy statement 3.1.5) to ensure pupils from poor households and other marginal groups can more readily access education.

The Policy also established compulsory free basic education, by replacing the former education cycle. This included two years of pre-primary, seven of primary; four of lower

secondary, two of senior secondary, and three plus years of tertiary education. On the other hand, the new education cycle had one (or two) year(s) of pre-primary, 10 years of primary and lower secondary, two years of senior secondary, and three plus years of tertiary education (Policy statement 3.1.2-4). By establishing compulsory free basic education that ranges from pre-primary, through primary, to lower secondary, all pupils from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to have access to educational skills, knowledge, and attitudes that may enable them to break the vicious, inter-generational cycle of poverty.

However, it should be noted that, though the policy document seemed to focus on increasing access to educational participation, it did not adequately emphasize education quality. As noted earlier, increasing the number of children who attend schools does not guarantee their learning (Uwezo, 2014). Indeed, education quality is of critical importance, especially at the pre-primary level, as the higher a program's quality, the more enduring its impact (Aboud, 2006; Britto, et al., 2011). To ensure fairness and sustainability, existing educational policy should focus on equitable access to high-quality pre-primary education for children from diverse backgrounds (Li, Wong, & Wang, 2010).

Before the new policy (Policy statement 3.1.2) was enacted, pre-primary education in Tanzania was neither compulsory nor part of the formal education system (MoEVT, 2014). Afterward, every primary school in the country had to establish a pre-primary class for children above five years of age. As it was both free and a recognized part of formal education, it was likely more children would access pre-primary education services. Given the advantages of investing in pre-primary education, especially for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, self-

settled naturalized refugees would benefit tremendously from this policy. However, no provision was made for children below four years of age, whose educational and developmental needs were left to families and communities.

The new ETP ended several-decades' debate on whether to use English or Kiswahili as a medium of instruction. The policy clearly articulated the flexible use of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction in all public pre-primary and primary schools, which should also "properly" teach English as a subject (Policy statements 3.2.19-20). For over a century, Kiswahili has been used as a tool to unite Tanzanians, and is considered a key reason why Tanzania is peaceful, stable, and enjoying unprecedented economic and social progress. Flexibility in the choice of the educational medium of instruction is likely to increase multicultural understanding and inclusion.

The policy directed that there would be special language programs for pupils from minority groups who lag behind in mastering Kiswahili, the language of instruction, to ensure naturalized refugee pupils not only go to school, but also learn. Also, mastery of Kiswahili would help them more easily blend and integrate into the larger Tanzanian society and culture.

The policy also established a clear division of power and responsibilities between the Ministry of Education, the President's Office, regional administrations and local governments (formerly under the Prime Minister's Office), and regional, district, and local education authorities (Policy Statement 3.5.1-3.5.3; section 5.2). By decentralizing educational management and administration, the voices of marginal and minority disadvantaged groups could be better identified and heard. The devolution process also increased local control over educational

resources, meaning naturalized refugees were more likely to access quality education.

As naturalized refugees come mainly from war-torn countries, the new ETP is contextually appropriate, in that it introduces peace management and conflict resolution studies into the curriculum (Policy statement 3.7.1). Given the traumatic mental and physical experiences of many naturalized refugee pupils, this approach should help them mend the deficit, and ease their integration into Tanzanian society.

However, the implementation of an ambitious policy that aimed to overhaul the entire education system would undoubtedly face some challenges. For example, the policy stipulated that the Ministry of Education was responsible for formulating education policy, and for teacher training, while the Ministry for Regional Administration and local governments were responsible for employing, monitoring, and managing teachers. Such a division of power and duties between two unrelated ministries could pose unnecessary bureaucratic challenges that might make teachers' administrative and management issues everybody's business, and hence nobody's duty. Further, while the decentralization process may increase access to quality education by tailoring educational policy to local population needs, it poses a serious risk to how efficiently that policy is implemented. This is because in Tanzania, decentralization has long been linked to corruption and lower efficiency due to lower local institutional capacity, while central institutions have proven to be more efficient.

### **Analysis of Strategic Working Documents and Action Plans**

In Tanzania, education policy is formulated by the Ministry of Education, while policy

implementation and day-to-day education management, monitoring, and delivery are the responsibility of local government authorities. In such a context, selected cross-sectoral documents were analyzed by counting selected words to understand and interpret policy implementation settings (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2012). As figure 1 shows, the number of times a word or phrase appeared in a specific document was counted to determine its place and significance, in the context of pre-primary education in Tanzania.

In 2015, the Tanzania Pre-primary Curriculum was developed in response to a dramatic decline in academic and non-academic skills in preceding years. The curriculum focuses on the three R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic), and presents a sequence of instructions, experiences, and goals based on the 2014 ETP. In the document, *equity* was mentioned 3 times, *disadvantaged groups*, *equality*, and *inclusion* were each mentioned 2 times, and *ethnic minority*, *naturalized refugees*, and *integration* were not mentioned at all.

The 2015 Guide for Pre-primary Schools is a government circular that sets standards for establishing pre-primary education in Tanzania. Developed to reflect new ETP directives, the Guide requires all public and private pre-primary schools to meet a set standard of quality. In this document, *ethnic minority*, *disadvantaged group*, and *inclusion* were each mentioned 3 times, *equity* and *equality* each were mentioned 5 times, and *naturalized refugees* and *integration* were never mentioned at all.

The Tanzania Long-Term Perspective Plan (2011-2026) is a strategic directional roadmap for Tanzania's drive to become a middle-income country. The 15-year plan provides a link

between the Tanzania's 2015 Long-term Development Vision and its short-term strategic and implementation Five-year Development Plans. The document seems less focused on pre-primary education in general, or on minority disadvantaged groups. In the section on human capital development and social services, under which the education sector is categorized, *ethnic minorities* were mentioned 2 times, while *naturalized refugees* and *integration* were not mentioned. *Disadvantaged group*, *equality*, and *inclusion* were each mentioned 2 times, and *equity* 3 times.

The Five-year Development Plan is a governmental implementation plan that reflects the country's development agenda, considering overall development goals, policy objectives, sectoral initiatives, Long-Term Perspective Plan benchmarks (2011/12-2025/26), and key findings of the Review of Vision 2025 (United Republic of Tanzania (URT) 2012). In this study, three consecutive Five-year Development Plan documents, spanning financial years 2006/7-2010/11; 2011/12-2015/16 and 2016/17-2020/21, were analyzed.

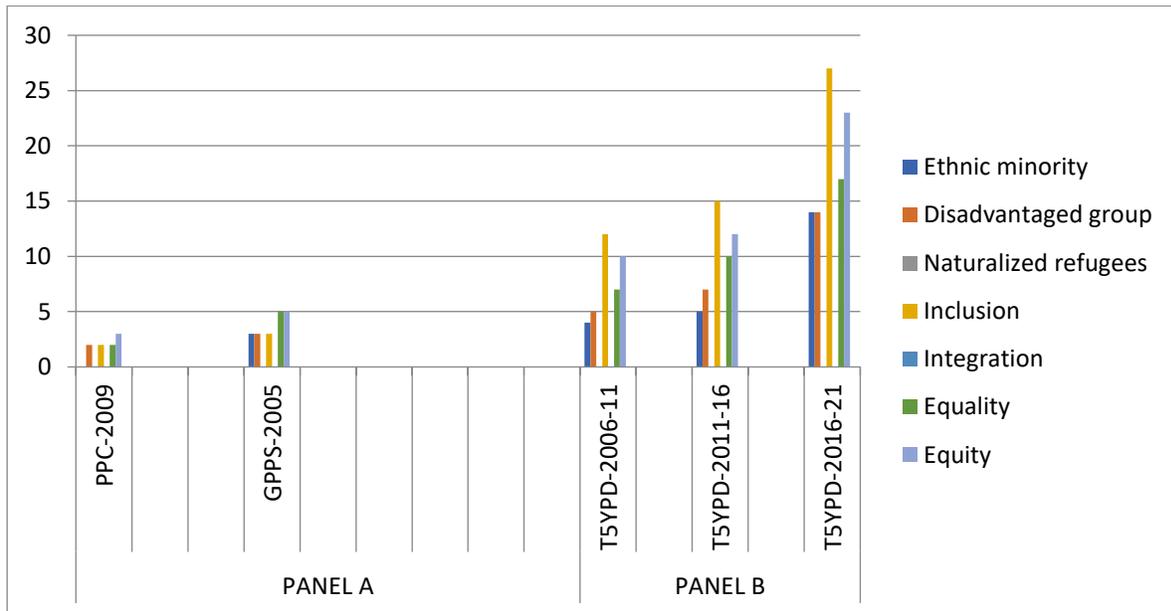
The 2006/7-2010/11 Five-year Development Plan was the new government's blueprint for massive expansion of Tanzania's macro-economy, and of educational opportunities in the country. Its overall mission was to improve living standards through increased participation in the economy and in education. To that end, decentralization of education was set as a key strategic goal. In this document, *ethnic minority* was mentioned 4 times, and *disadvantaged group* 5 times, with both sets of instances referring to hunter-gatherer societies. *Equality* was mentioned 7 times, *equity* was mentioned 10 times and

*inclusion* 12 times. *Naturalized refugees* and *integration* were not mentioned.

The second Five-year Development Plan, which spanned 2011/12-2015/16, aimed primarily at stimulating and boosting economic growth from its current rate of 7 percent, to 10 percent. It focused on the development of different economic and service sectors, such as Infrastructure, Industry, Human Development, and Social Services. To achieve its goals, access to high-quality education was identified as a key strategic sector in both the Human Capital Development and Social Services domains, to facilitate the projected socio-economic growth. In the education section of the document, *ethnic minority* was mentioned 5 times, and *disadvantaged group* 7, both referring to hunter-gatherer societies in north-eastern Tanzania. *Equality* was mentioned 10 times, *equity* 12 times, and *inclusion* 15 times. *Naturalized refugees* and *integration* were not mentioned at all.

The third Five-year Development Plan (2016/17-2020/21) was launched in January 2016, and was intended to end Tanzania's status as a lower-income country, and have it designated as a middle-income country. As in the first Five-year Development Plan, access to high-quality education is regarded as very important for moving Tanzania toward being designated a middle-income economy by 2025. In the education section of this document, *ethnic minority* and *disadvantaged group* are mentioned 14 times each. However, both sets refer to hunter-gatherer societies found in north-eastern parts of Tanzania. *Equality* is mentioned 18 times, *equity* is mentioned 23 times, and *inclusion* 27 times. *Naturalized refugees* and *integration* are never mentioned.

Figure 1. Frequency of counted words in the selected documents



#### Abbreviations and number of pages

**PPC**-Pre-primary curriculum (54 pages)

**GPPS**-Guide to pre-primary schools (73 pages)

**T5YDP2006-11**-Tanzania's five-year development plan from 2006-2011 (182 pages)

**T5YDP2011-16**-Tanzania's five-year development plan from 2011-2016 (178 pages)

**T5YDP2016-21**-Tanzania's five-year development plan from 2016-2021 (190 pages)

#### Discussion

This paper reviewed the extent to which existing education policy considers and prioritizes the needs of naturalized refugee pupils as a distinct minority disadvantaged group, and how existing action plans systematize the educational needs of self-settled, newly-naturalized Tanzanian preschoolers.

Although the ETP documents appear to signal the need to overhaul the existing education system to serve the needs of all Tanzanians, the current analyses suggest implementation documents (PPC, GPPS, T5YDP's and LTPP) so far only seem to minimally include the educational needs of newly-naturalized immigrant Tanzanians and other disadvantaged minority groups. Indeed, one of the indicators that a government is

serious about a certain sector is the extent to which that government articulates and handles matters related to that sector's policies (Garcia, Pence & Evans, 2008).

One of the indicators of government seriousness and commitments in addressing needs of a social group is having clear implementation plans to handle and solve the underlying problems facing that group (Mtahabwa, 2010; Pianta, 2004). The gap between education, policy directives, and clear workable strategies in implementation documents suggests that pre-primary education is underrated as a level of education in general, as are the educational needs of naturalized refugee children in Tanzania. More important, it indicates that the educational needs of children from these groups occupy a low position in the

government's priorities, and there is limited commitment to ensuring these children can equally access high-quality early years' education (Mtahabwa, 2009). The fragmentation starts with how education policy itself is made. As noted earlier, education policy in Tanzania is centrally initiated by policy experts at the Ministry of Education, who are not legally required to base their recommendations neither on evidence, nor to consult with other stakeholders in the policy-making process.

The new ETP clearly addresses the needs of disadvantaged minority groups in accessing pre-primary education. For instance, it mandates the use of Kiswahili as a medium of instruction, but also requires that schools teach English "properly" in pre-primary and primary schools, across the country. As with other rural groups, newly-naturalized rural Tanzanian pupils speak their mother tongue at home which likely is neither Kiswahili nor English. Various studies have established that optimal learning occurs when pupils are taught in their mother tongue, or in a language they master as a medium of instruction (Brock-utne & Desai, 2005; Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005).

Choice of language of instruction affects not only access to, but also quality of pre-primary services provided to naturalized refugees in Tanzania. In the last five years, Kasulu and Buhigwe districts, which host most of Tanzania's naturalized refugees, have been ranked among the lowest achieving districts, in terms of literacy and numeracy tests for early graders (RTI international, 2014, Uwezo, 2014). As such, the new ETP mandates special language programs for pupils from minority groups, who lag behind in mastering Kiswahili. It is highly likely this will help create equal ground for newly-naturalized Tanzanian and local majority pre-primary pupils to enter their Grade 1 classroom on an equal footing. However, language teachers at all levels of education,

including pre-primary, are in short supply in Tanzania (MoEVT, 2014), and those few available are not of a high-quality (Qorro, 2013).

By establishing free basic education, the current ETP document seems to affirm promotion of access to education for all, including disadvantaged peripheral social and cultural groups. This is a good move, given the diversity within Tanzanian society. However, in the working documents, mentions of minority disadvantaged groups generally refer to traditional hunter-gatherer societies in north-eastern Tanzania. Given that these hunter-gatherer societies are not the only disadvantaged minorities in Tanzania, the best approach for working document to take is to be as inclusive as possible, so that huge numbers of naturalized refugees are not locked out of Tanzanian society.

By mandating compulsory introduction of pre-primary classes at all primary schools, the ETP and other supporting documents analyzed seem to uphold the long-held belief among education scholars in Tanzania that pre-primary education is a downward extension of primary education (Mbise, 1996; Mtahabwa, 2007; 2010). However, given the current gross enrolment rates at the pre-primary and primary levels, the move will likely increase the number of children accessing pre-primary education, and boost enrolment at that level. In the past seven years, gross enrolment at the pre-primary level has been stagnant and very low (about 30 percent), compared to that at the primary level (almost 90 percent).

The Pre-primary Curriculum and the Pre-primary Guide seem deliberately to avoid the words *ethnic minority*, *naturalized refugees*, and *integration*; instead, they emphasize issues related to equity in general. Official circulars include language that suggests fairness in access to education, especially by marginal and disadvantaged groups. Some curriculum activities, such as *kuonyesha mwenendo sahihi*

*wa mwanamichezo* (fair game and athletics ethics and values), directly target such equity issues as unity, peace, harmony, and anti-racism, which are important aspects of building an inclusive and just society.

The new ETP does not attach any importance to formalizing Early Childhood Education for children below four years of age. The first five years of a child's life are critical to cognitive and socio-emotional development, which ultimately influence pedagogical practices (Black, et al, 2016). Further, there are huge socio-economic returns associated with investing in ECE (Heckman, 2010; UNESCO, 2007), particularly among children from immigrants and disadvantaged backgrounds (Han, Lee & Wadfogel, 2012; Tobin, 2017). Ignoring pre-primary education for this age group, especially for children from refugee backgrounds, is probably the biggest shortcoming of the 2014 ETP.

Tanzania's 2011-25 Long-term Development Plan has ignored, or avoided, mentioning *inclusion of minority disadvantaged groups* in education as the solid foundation upon which sustainable development stands. In this document, Tanzania is envisioned to be a middle-income country by 2025, and education is said to be one of the most important tools for realizing this vision. The document lists other levels of education, such as primary and higher education, but notably excludes pre-primary.

As of 2012, about one-third of households in Tanzania lived below the basic need's poverty line, earning less than one US dollar a day (NBS, 2012). Given the economic advantages associated with investing in pre-primary education, (see Heckman, 2011; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; UNESCO, 2007) it is imperative to have an inclusive pre-primary education policy, supported by clear and workable action plans as a strategy to alleviate poverty and bring about sustainable socio-economic development.

Increasing the educational access and inclusion of marginalized immigrant and disadvantaged groups is considered a critical component of sustainable development (Alix-Garcia & Saah, 2009; CSFM, 2007; Li, Wong & Wang, 2010).

Though the closely-related strategic and working documents (T5YDP, LTPP) might seem to mention and seriously consider issues related to *equality, equity, and inclusion* in mainstream education, it is not clear whether they include such minority disadvantaged groups as naturalized refugees, or if they are more focused on bridging gender differences and the rural-urban divide. Among scholars in the areas of education and social justice, it is an established fact that efforts to increase economic growth and participation should deliberately focus on society in its totality, with a specific focus on individual marginal and minority groups, particularly in terms of early childhood nutrition, maternal health, and equitable access to preschool provision of good quality (Britto, et al., 2016; Castelli, Ragazzi, & Crescentini, 2012; Engle, et al., 2007; UNESCO, 2010). The support required by, and the needs of a naturalized minority rural refugee pre-primary-aged girl, for example, might be different from those of a rural majority non-refugee age-mate of either gender.

However, the analyzed documents seem to avoid - or technically ignore - mentioning the words "*integration*" and "*naturalized refugees*" This might not be by chance. It is worth noting that, though most naturalized refugees received verbal notice of their naturalization in 2007, their relocation (the second stage in the process of naturalization) was put on hold and, as of 2015, they had not legally been naturalized (UNHCR, 2016, US Department of State, 2014). This places them in a legal limbo as, in the process of naturalization, they had renounced their previous citizenship, meaning they legally belong to neither Tanzania nor their former homeland. However, because they received

verbal notification of their naturalization, they are no longer considered refugees, but do not yet enjoy civil rights, such as access to compulsory free high-quality pre-primary education, as legally naturalized

Observations of counted words indicated that educational documents (pre-primary curriculum and Guide to pre-primary schools) rarely mentioned equity, equality and inclusion. The 2 documents never mentioned naturalized refugees nor disadvantaged group. The key strategic working documents (the three 5-year development plans) seem to progressively increase mentioning almost all the accounted words over the years. This suggests that there is neither coherence nor consistency between educational and key strategic documents. This may be attributed to limitations associated with comparing documents of different lengths and time. However, difference in documents' length and time did not pose a threat to this study because the selected documents were meant to guide and record the Tanzania government educational routines and practices.

By not mentioning, or even acknowledging the existence of naturalized refugees, the government may be implying that naturalized refugees are not considered to be a minority or disadvantaged group in need of protection and specific treatment. If so, this suggests the government is not willing to take necessary steps to proactively shoulder their burden of equal and quality access to education for all children in Tanzania.

### **Limitations and Conclusion**

The presence of good educational policy and supporting strategic documents does not guarantee good practices. That said, this study only focused the mentioned documents, and not what is happening at the school level. However, it is important to note that an integrated and comprehensive educational policy is critical to

the development of strategic plans and working documents that can be translated into effective educational delivery and good practices. Pre-primary education, as a sub-sector of formal education, is new in Tanzania. As such, there are a limited number of documents addressing it. The documents analyzed were of different times and lengths. This increased coverage in terms of time span and allowed observation of inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral strategies to include naturalized refugees and other minorities in accessing quality education in Tanzania. Close observation of existing working and implementation documents indicate that it is unlikely that all in Tanzania will be able to access high-quality pre-primary education for at least a few more years. To realize the gains associated with investing in pre-primary education, education policy directives should be translated into action by more equitable and inclusive strategic action plans, and working documents.

The analyses conducted herein do not wholly and comprehensively present the socio-cultural and educational context of Tanzania. Instead, they provide insight into the policy concerns facing Tanzania as it attempts to serve the educational needs of naturalized refugees and other minority groups. From the observations made, it appears Tanzania needs a separate, comprehensive, integrated Early Childhood Education and Care policy that considers health, education, and social welfare needs of all socio-economic and cultural groups. This necessitates empirical study to ascertain learning experiences and outcomes for newly-naturalized Tanzanian pupils in the mainstream Tanzania education system, so that it might respect and represent both majority and minority rights.

## Acknowledgements

The first author gratefully acknowledges funding support from the Patrice L. Engle Dissertation Grant of the Society of Research in Child Development and HKU Foundation. To our knowledge, there is no conflict of interest that exists.

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