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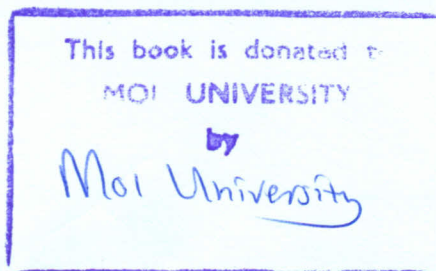
THE NEEDS, IMPLEMENTATION AND CHALLENGES OF THE
COMMUNICATION SKILLS COURSE IN HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS: A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY OF SELECTED
UNIVERSITIES IN TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the needs, implementation and challenges of the Communication Skills (CS) course in higher education institutions in Tanzania. The course was introduced to help students develop and improve communication skills in English language while learning in their areas of academic specializations. However, there have been complaints from various stakeholders (learners, lecturers, parents, employers and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training) in Tanzania that the students are not able to express themselves competently in English even after doing the course. The reviewed literature revealed that no studies have been done on this issue in Tanzania and similar contexts. The research questions raised in this study were: What are the needs of Tanzanian students for learning Communication Skills as stated by learners, lecturers and other key stakeholders? How is the CS course implemented in Tanzania in terms of teaching/learning, resources and assessments? What challenges are faced in the implementation of CS course in Tanzanian institutions? What are the views of key stakeholders on how the challenges experienced in teaching of CS in Tanzania could be addressed? The study was informed by relativist-interpretivist research paradigm which is consistent with the qualitative approach and case study method. It involved 55 participants including: students, lecturers, Heads of Department and Academic Deans from one public and one private university in Tanzania as well as officials from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT). The respondents were sampled purposively. I used interviews, observations, focus group discussions and document reviews to generate data that were analysed thematically. The findings were that the learners needed to know the language skills (speaking, writing, reading, listening and non-verbal communication) for social, academic and professional purposes. The key pedagogical strategies included: lecturing, writing and reading notes, telling stories, asking questions and providing handouts. These strategies were mostly teacher-centred. The key challenges included: poor background of the students and lecturers, interference of other languages, the lack of appropriate resources. In view of the findings, it is recommended that teaching of the CS course should start from the lower levels of education, among others.