Examining the Perceived Roles of Educational Planners in Shaping Pupils' Academic Performance in Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania

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Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

This study examines the roles of educational planners in shaping pupils' academic performance in Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania. The study aims to address two main specific objectives namely identifying strategies employed for enhancing pupils' academic performance and assessing the challenges faced by educational planners in achieving the goals. An interpretive paradigm guided the study, using a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design. The target population included 2600 teachers and 37 educational officers in Dodoma municipality. However, from the total population of 2637 only 15 participants were purposively sampled to participate in the study. Data were analyzed using content analysis with the aid of Atlas.ti software; and ethical approval was granted by the Directorate of Research, Publications, and Innovation at the Open University of Tanzania. The findings revealed that the strategies employed by educational planners to improve pupils' academic performance include curriculum development and implementation, teacher training

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and professional development, resource allocation and infrastructure development, monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement, policy evaluation and implementation, and promoting equity and inclusion. Despite these efforts, several challenges hinder the effectiveness of these strategies. These challenges include economic constraints, inadequate resources, demographic factors, socio-cultural influences, technological gaps, and the need for enhanced teacher capacity building. In conclusion, while educational planners in Dodoma Municipality have implemented strategies aimed at improving academic outcomes, significant challenges remain. Addressing these barriers is essential for sustainable improvement. The study recommends aligning the curriculum with local contexts, expanding teacher training opportunities, particularly in modern pedagogies, and increasing community involvement in educational planning. Additionally, it is crucial to address resource allocation and infrastructure disparities, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that all pupils benefit from improved educational opportunities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Planning is the process of setting out in advance a pattern of action to bring about desired result by identifying the means and ends (Innocent, 2021). Educational planning is a continuous process of obtaining and analysing facts and empirical base, of providing information to decision makers on how well the education system is accomplishing its goals in particular, on how the cost effectiveness of educational programmes and specific projects can be improved (Okafor, & Iwerebor, 2023). Planning helps us to understand the targets and enables us to map out strategies of attaining such targets (Innocent, 2021) Educational planners play a crucial role in guiding this process, ensuring that the strategic direction aligns with the school's vision, goals, and community needs (Tariq, 2024**).** At the core of any effort to improve education quality and learning outcomes are the planners are engaged into three central processes: analysing the current education sector conditions, planning for improvement, and monitoring efforts to implement those plans (UNESCO, 2023). Worldwide, educational planners play a critical role in shaping the educational achievement of pupils, especially in public primary schools. However, the developments are taking place everywhere and the rising complexity of our educational system has made the educational planning a necessity (Target study, 2018). Their responsibilities span across the development of policies, curriculum design, resource allocation, and the integration of innovative teaching practices, all aimed at enhancing educational outcomes. This means that undertaking education planning activity requires experts with requisite qualifications in education, economics, sociology, geography, mathematics, statistics and persons with professional qualifications or training could be recruited as educational planners for educational planning to be successful (Okafor, & Iwerebor, 2023).

Nowadays, talking about educational planning generates a certain vital importance for the achievement of the goals and objectives previously established, as well as the definition of the steps and means necessary to carry out this process (Aada, 2019). This makes educational planners to be tasked with ensuring that educational systems are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of diverse populations. This is due to the fact that the primary objective of an education system is for pupils to learn implying that education planning should be grounded in specific learning goals, and should prioritize key actions most likely to improve the system's ability to achieve these learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2023) This includes addressing key challenges such as access to education, quality of instruction, and the need for sustainable development in education (UNESCO, 2020). Through the formulation of national and regional policies, planners aim to align educational goals with broader economic and social objectives, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for education (UNESCO, 2021). Educational Planning is important for improvement of each country and according to which changes would have been introduced in social, political, economic, cultural and academic sphere in a scientific and orderly manner (David, 2021). Hence, educational planners are integral in ensuring that teachers receive proper training, creating systems for the continuous assessment of pupil performance, and advocating for educational reforms that can respond to global challenges such as technological advancements

and the changing nature of work (World Bank, 2022). Therefore, under such circumstances educational planners are required to be well informed at the global, regional and national level.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, countries have successfully broadened access to basic education but empirical and educational reports from this region have consistently documented children not acquiring the foundational literacy skills (Ndijuye & Beatus, 2022).There are three major aspects of education planning which require attention if the situation is to change: the content of the curriculum itself, the organisation of the schools and the entry age into primary schools (Nyerere, 2022).The role of educational planners is particularly crucial as they work to overcome the region's unique challenges in achieving educational success. Sub-Saharan Africa faces barriers such as limited financial resources, teacher shortages, socio-cultural barriers, and inadequate infrastructure, which directly impact educational achievement in public primary schools (Aveny & O'Connell, 2021). Educational planners in the region are addressing these issues by designing policies aimed at increasing access to education, improving teacher quality, and ensuring that curricula are relevant to local and global needs (Kadzamira, 2020). Additionally, they are playing a key role in promoting gender equity, integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into education systems, and ensuring that education policies align with the labor market's evolving needs (Mourshed et al., 2023). However, despite these efforts, challenges persist, and planners must continuously adapt strategies to ensure that public primary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa provide quality education and contribute to broader development goals. The work of educational planners is thus essential in addressing the systemic challenges in education, ensuring that every child, regardless of background, has the opportunity to achieve academic success.

In Tanzania, educational planning has been affected by various challenges such as shortage of science teachers, school infrastructure such as classrooms, toilets for pupils, books, and desks because of an increased pupils' enrolment, financial challenge, poor cooperation between teachers and parents, long distance from residence to school, top-down planning model, unstable education policy, poor selections of students from primary schools to public

secondary school(*Meney, 2024;* Rose, 2016; Sanga et. al. 2023). Despite these challenges educational planners play a crucial role in enhancing academic performance in primary schools by organizing and structuring the educational experience. The current trend that education leaders need to integrate is the public-private partnership through the voucher system, to enable youths living in the slums and inner cities to have access to qualitative education (Mkpa, & Anuna, 2023). Their contributions span curriculum development, resource allocation, teacher training, and community involvement. Research indicates that effective educational planning improves pupil engagement and academic outcomes by providing frameworks for goal-setting, time management, and resource management (Schunk, 2012; Suleiman & Shikuku, 2023). By introducing time management tools and fostering a sense of responsibility, planners help reduce stress and increase pupil focus, which ultimately improves academic results (Mwaipopo & Kessy, 2022). In Tanzania, educational planners have made significant strides in addressing the challenges faced by public primary schools, especially in urban areas by ensuring that schools receive the resources necessary to meet educational goals (Mhando, 2020; Ngowi, 2023).

Tanzania employs the Social Demand Approach (SDA) of educational planning (Ndhlovu & Sawe, 2022).This implies that the progress of any educational system greatly depends on approach of planning (Senimetu & Isaac, 2022). The education provided by to the pupils of Tanzania must serve the purposes of Tanzania (Nyerere, 2022). It must encourage the development of a proud, independent and free citizenry which relies upon itself for its own development, and which knows the advantages and the problems of cooperation (Nyerere, 2022). A significant contribution of educational planners in Tanzania is the development and implementation of a competency-based curriculum, which has transformed primary education by focusing on pupil engagement and the practical application of knowledge. The introduction of this curriculum has improved pupil performance in key subjects such as mathematics and science (Mhando, 2020; Mfaume& Komba, 2022). This shift to a more hands-on, competency-focused approach aims to improve critical thinking and problem-solving abilities among pupils. Educational planners have been instrumental in facilitating teacher training to ensure effective curriculum

delivery, with programs such as the Education Quality Improvement Programme in Tanzania (EQUIP-T) offering regular professional development to teachers (EQUIP-T, 2020). The introduction of this curriculum, supported by planners, has shown positive outcomes, including improved pupil retention and better comprehension of complex concepts (Mwaipopo&Kessy, 2022; Rwekaza & Machumu, 2023).

High-quality talents come from high-quality education planning and management, which largely depends on teacher quality but varieties of environmental forces are driving change in education, which impacts students' performance greatly (Qingyan, 2023). Alongside the existing problems, educational planners have prioritized teacher professional development as a strategy for improving academic performance. This is because teachers' time planning positively affects learners' academic performance (Baleke, 2023). Studies have shown that in-service training programs significantly enhance teaching practices and contribute to improved pupil outcomes (Tanzania Institute of Education [TIE], 2022; Mfaume & Komba, 2022). The EQUIP-T program, for example, has been integral in building teacher capacity in Tanzania. Evaluations have demonstrated that schools participating in EQUIP-T have shown a marked improvement in early-grade literacy and numeracy, particularly in rural schools (EQUIP-T, 2020; Ngowi, 2023). This emphasis on teacher training has provided educators with innovative teaching methodologies that directly impact pupil engagement and achievement, particularly in the foundational years of schooling (Suleiman & Shikuku, 2023).

Resource allocation and infrastructure development are fundamental to educational success, and planners have been crucial in ensuring that schools, particularly those in disadvantaged areas, have the resources needed to support quality education. The Tanzania Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) and the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP) have focused on addressing infrastructure deficits by building classrooms and providing essential learning materials (World Bank, 2021; Kimaro, 2021). Between 2016 and 2020, the PEDP program oversaw the construction of over 15,000 classrooms and the distribution of more than 1.5 million desks, significantly improving the learning environment in schools across Tanzania (World Bank, 2021). Research indicates that improved infrastructure, including access to textbooks and other learning materials, has led to increased pupil performance, particularly in subjects such as literacy and numeracy (Kimaro, 2021; Mwaipopo&Kessy, 2022).

Furthermore, educational planners have increasingly recognized the role of community involvement in improving educational outcomes. Community engagement has been shown to foster accountability, encourage regular school attendance, and create a supportive learning environment for pupils (Ngowi, 2023). Initiatives like the School Management Committees (SMCs) and Teacher-Parent Partnerships (TPP) have played a key role in bridging the gap between educators, parents, and the local community (Ngowi, 2023; Mfaume& Komba, 2022). These partnerships have resulted in improved pupil attendance, reduced truancy, and more effective school management, all of which contribute to better academic performance (Ngowi, 2023). Studies have shown that when local communities are engaged in the educational process, schools experience greater stability and stronger support networks, leading to a more effective learning environment (Suleiman & Shikuku, 2023; Mfaume & Komba, 2022).

In terms of equity and inclusion, educational planners have worked diligently to address the educational needs of marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and those from rural areas. Initiatives such as the *Let Girls Learn program*, which addresses barriers like early marriage and pregnancy, have been instrumental in improving girls' access to education (UNICEF, 2021; Suleiman & Shikuku, 2023). Educational planners played a significant role in advocating for policies that allow girls who drop out due to pregnancy to return to school, contributing to increased enrollment and retention rates among female pupils (Mhando, 2020; UNICEF, 2021). Studies have shown that the *Let Girls Learn initiative* led to a 15% increase in girls' retention rates between 2018 and 2021, with a significant positive impact on their academic performance (UNICEF, 2021). This focus on equity has also extended to children with disabilities, with planners working to ensure that educational policies accommodate all learners and promote inclusive education (Rwekaza&Machumu, 2023; TIE, 2022).

The establishment of robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems has also played a critical role in enhancing academic performance. By regularly collecting and analyzing data on key performance indicators, educational planners can assess the effectiveness of educational programs and make necessary adjustments (World Bank, 2021). The National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA) has been central to this process, providing annual performance data that guides the allocation of resources to underperforming schools (Mwaipopo&Kessy, 2022). A data-driven approach has allowed planners to identify challenges and implement targeted interventions, leading to improved pupil outcomes (World Bank, 2021; Mfaume & Komba, 2022). For instance, schools that received additional support based on M&E findings experienced a 10% increase in pass rates between 2017 and 2020, highlighting the importance of data in educational decision-making (World Bank, 2021; Mwaipopo&Kessy, 2022).

Educational planners have also been instrumental in the formulation and implementation of policies designed to improve access to education. One notable policy is the Fee-Free Basic Education Policy, which was introduced in 2015 to eliminate school fees for primary education. This policy has led to an increase in enrollment, particularly among children from low-income families (UNICEF, 2020). However, the rapid increase in enrollment has also created challenges, such as overcrowded classrooms and a shortage of teachers (Mfaume & Komba, 2022). Educational planners continue to work on strategies to address these issues by focusing on improving resource allocation and ensuring that schools have the capacity to manage the influx of pupils (Mwaipopo&Kessy, 2022). Research has shown that while the Fee-Free Education Policy has increased access to education, it has also raised questions about how to balance quantity with quality, particularly in urban areas like Dodoma, where population growth is putting pressure on educational infrastructure (Suleiman & Shikuku, 2023).

Stakeholder engagement is another essential aspect of educational planning. By fostering collaboration between teachers, parents, and community members, educational planners ensure that policies are responsive to local needs (Mfaume &Komba, 2022; Ngowi, 2023). Studies show that this participatory approach leads to more relevant and effective educational policies, which in turn improve academic outcomes (Suleiman & Shikuku, 2023). Organizations like the Tanzania Education Network (TEN) have been key advocates for community involvement in the educational process, promoting transparency and ensuring that educational strategies are grounded in the realities of local communities (Mwaipopo&Kessy, 2022).All in all, educational planners in Tanzania have made substantial contributions to improving academic performance in public primary schools through curriculum reform, teacher training, infrastructure development, and community engagement.

Despite the critical role of educational planners in shaping academic outcomes worldwide, including in Sub-Saharan Africa and Tanzania, there remains a notable lack of empirical research focusing specifically on the strategies they employ and the challenges they encounter in the context of primary education in Tanzania. Early studies on educational planning in the region primarily concentrated on broad policy formulation and curriculum development (Ngowi, 2023; Mfaume& Komba, 2022). While these studies have provided foundational insights, a clear gap remains in understanding how these policies are operationalized in urban contexts, such as Dodoma Municipality. Rapid population growth and resource constraints in urban areas create distinct challenges that differ from those in rural settings. Previous research has largely focused on rural challenges, leaving urban areas, like Dodoma, underexplored. As such, future studies must address this gap by examining how educational planners in urban environments adapt their strategies to meet the unique demands of urban schools, ensuring that quality education is maintained amid increasing pressure on resources.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of educational planners in enhancing pupils' performance in public primary schools in Tanzania is multifaceted and significant. Planners are actively involved in the development and implementation of various strategies aimed at improving educational outcomes. This literature review examines several key contributions and significant challenges of educational planners worldwide, Sub Saharan Africa and Tanzania.

2.1 The contributions of Educational Planners

Worldwide, educational planners worldwide play a pivotal role in shaping education systems by developing policies, strategies, and frameworks that aim to enhance the accessibility, quality, and relevance of education. One of their primary responsibilities is to design and implement educational policies that align with national priorities and global development goals. These planners work to ensure equitable access to education for all children, addressing challenges such as poverty, gender inequality, and geographical disparities. By conducting needs assessments and data analyses, educational planners can identify gaps in educational access and quality, ensuring resources are directed toward marginalized communities and underserved populations (UNESCO, 2020). They also contribute to curriculum development, ensuring that educational content is relevant to societal needs and evolving labor market demands (OECD, 2021). As part of their role, educational planners work to ensure that educational systems remain flexible and responsive to rapid technological advancements and shifting global trends, incorporating innovation into teaching and learning methodologies (World Bank, 2022). Their work is critical in shaping long-term educational goals and aligning them with sustainable development agendas, including the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for education (UNESCO, 2018).

In addition to policy development, educational planners are responsible for managing educational resources and overseeing the training and professional development of educators. They design frameworks that promote effective resource allocation, ensuring that funding is used efficiently and equitably to meet the needs of both teachers and pupils. They are also instrumental in creating teacher training programs, ensuring that educators have the necessary skills and support to implement new teaching methods and curricular reforms (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Educational planners support the professional growth of teachers by advocating for continuous professional development and capacity-building initiatives (Mourshed et al., 2023). They also work to implement evidence-based practices, using data-driven approaches to monitor pupil performance, track progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of educational interventions. By leveraging

technology, planners can introduce systems for continuous assessment and feedback, contributing to improved educational outcomes (OECD, 2021). The application of digital technology varies by community and socioeconomic level, by teacher willingness and preparedness, by education level and by country income Antoninis, et al. 2023). Through these roles, educational planners ensure that the educational workforce is well-equipped to deliver high-quality education, fostering a culture of accountability and continuous improvement within schools and education systems globally.

In Sub Saharan Africa, educational planners have made significant contributions to improving educational access, equity, and quality, particularly in addressing the unique challenges faced by the region. One of their primary contributions is the development of policies and strategies aimed at expanding access to education for marginalized and underserved populations. Educational planners have worked to reduce disparities in education by promoting gender equality, improving access for children with disabilities, and targeting remote rural areas (Aveny & O'Connell, 2021). For instance, planners have designed national education policies that incentivize school attendance by providing free education, introducing school feeding programs, and increasing investments in infrastructure (Kadzamira, 2020). Moreover, they have worked to align education systems with the labor market needs by integrating vocational and technical education programs that equip pupils with practical skills and prepare them for employment in sectors such as agriculture, health, and technology (Mourshed et al., 2023). By aligning education with national economic goals, planners contribute to improving the employability of youth, addressing issues of unemployment, and fostering economic growth in the region.

Another major contribution of educational planners in Sub-Saharan Africa is their focus on improving the quality of education through teacher training, curriculum development, and the integration of technology in education. Recognizing the critical role of teachers in shaping pupil outcomes, planners have worked to enhance teacher quality through professional development programs and new teacher recruitment strategies, particularly in underserved areas (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Furthermore, planners have reformed curricula to ensure that education systems are relevant to

contemporary challenges, emphasizing critical thinking, entrepreneurship, and technological literacy (World Bank, 2022). In addition, the incorporation of information and communication technology (ICT) in schools has been a key strategy to enhance learning experiences and expand access to quality resources, especially in remote areas (Aveny & O'Connell, 2021). These efforts by educational planners have contributed to enhancing educational outcomes, increasing literacy rates, and addressing the skills gap in Sub-Saharan Africa, thereby supporting broader social and economic development in the region.

Educational planners worldwide face several key challenges that hinder the effectiveness of educational reforms and policies. One major challenge is the inadequate allocation of financial resources, which often results in overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, and lack of infrastructure (UNESCO, 2022). Despite the growing recognition of the importance of education, many countries struggle to prioritize education in their national budgets, leading to disparities in access to quality education, particularly in low-income and rural areas (OECD, 2023). Additionally, the shortage of qualified teachers, especially in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects, is a pressing issue globally. This shortage often leads to increased teacher workloads, reduced instructional time, and lower pupil performance, especially in developing countries (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2021). The challenge is exacerbated by issues such as teacher retention, inadequate professional development, and the increasing demand for teachers in marginalized communities (Ingersoll et al., 2022).

Another challenge faced by educational planners is the rapid pace of technological advancements and the need to integrate technology effectively into education systems. While digital tools offer opportunities for enhancing learning outcomes, many education systems lack the necessary infrastructure, including reliable internet access and adequate training for teachers to use these tools effectively (Bakia et al., 2021). Furthermore, the increasing reliance on data-driven decision-making in educational planning requires robust data systems and the capacity to analyze and utilize this data, yet many countries lack these capacities (Mourshed et al., 2023). Socio-cultural factors also pose significant barriers, such as gender inequality, cultural attitudes towards education, and resistance to educational reforms

in some regions. Educational planners must navigate these complex social dynamics while trying to create policies that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of diverse populations (World Bank, 2022). Addressing these challenges requires a more integrated approach, considering the intersections of financial, technological, cultural, and human resource factors to create sustainable and equitable educational systems worldwide.

Educational planners in Sub-Saharan Africa encounter significant challenges, particularly in relation to inadequate financial resources and infrastructure. Despite international commitments to education, many countries in the region continue to allocate insufficient funding to the education sector, leading to overcrowded classrooms, underpaid teachers, and inadequate educational materials (UNESCO, 2021). Many Sub-Saharan African countries also struggle with a lack of school infrastructure, such as inadequate school buildings, poor sanitation facilities, and limited access to technology, which hinder the learning environment and affect educational outcomes (World Bank, 2022). The shortage of qualified teachers is another persistent issue, with many countries facing an acute shortage of trained educators, especially in rural and underserved areas. This shortage often leads to larger class sizes, which negatively impacts teaching effectiveness and pupil learning outcomes (Kadzamira, 2020). In some countries, teachers also face low salaries and poor working conditions, which affect retention and motivation, further exacerbating the teacher gap (Aveny & O'Connell, 2021).

In addition to financial and human resource challenges, socio-cultural and political factors pose significant barriers to effective educational planning in Sub-Saharan Africa. Gender inequality remains a major issue, with girls in some countries facing cultural biases, early marriages, and long-standing gender norms that limit their access to education (Mann & Boadu, 2021). Cultural attitudes toward education also vary, and in some areas, there is resistance to formal education, especially for marginalized groups or communities that prioritize traditional learning methods (Kabeer & Natali, 2020). Furthermore, political instability and governance issues often disrupt educational planning and policy implementation. Changes in government leadership or policies can lead to inconsistency in the education agenda, undermining the long-term goals of educational reforms (EFA Global

Monitoring Report, 2021). Additionally, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa face challenges in data collection and analysis, making it difficult to implement evidence-based policies and track progress toward educational goals (Mourshed et al., 2023). These challenges require comprehensive and context-specific solutions, with an emphasis on improving funding, infrastructure, teacher training, gender equality, and data-driven decision-making in educational planning.

Despite the contributions made by educational planners in Tanzania, several challenges continue to hinder the effective planning and implementation of educational reforms. One of the primary obstacles is the limited financial resources allocated to the education sector. The World Bank (2020) highlights that Tanzania allocates a relatively small portion of its GDP to education, leading to overcrowded classrooms and insufficient teaching materials. This financial constraint also affects teacher recruitment, with the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEVT, 2021) revealing that many schools, especially in rural areas, suffer from a shortage of qualified teachers. The average teacher-pupil ratio in these schools can exceed 50 pupils per teacher, which limits the effectiveness of instruction and undermines academic outcomes (MoEVT, 2021). Additionally, socio-cultural barriers, such as early marriages and entrenched gender biases, continue to affect girls' access to education, further exacerbating disparities in educational achievement (Tanzania Gender Review, 2020).

Despite these obstacles, educational planners in Tanzania have made notable progress in addressing some of the systemic issues affecting public primary schools. Through curriculum reforms, teacher training initiatives, resource allocation, and community engagement, planners have worked to improve educational outcomes (Komba, 2017). However, challenges such as financial constraints, teacher shortages, and socio-cultural barriers remain persistent, requiring continued focus and innovative solutions to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to succeed academically (Patel & Khatri, 2022).The broader educational context in Tanzania is also shaped by socio-economic, cultural, and political factors, which significantly influence the effectiveness of educational planning and implementation. Mosha (2021) argues that a lack of consideration for these factors often leads to poorly designed

educational policies. Socio-economic challenges, such as the financial strain faced by many families, play a pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes. High costs associated with school uniforms, transport, and supplies contribute to high dropout rates. UNESCO (2020) reports that nearly 1.5 million children in Tanzania are out of school due to financial barriers, illustrating the impact of these socio-economic constraints. Educational policies that fail to consider these realities, such as after-school programs without addressing transportation costs or parents' work schedules, often fail to achieve their intended outcomes (Patel & Khatri, 2022).

Cultural factors also exert a profound influence on education in Tanzania. In many communities, traditional norms prioritize early marriage over education, particularly for girls. This cultural bias contributes to gender disparities in school attendance and academic performance (World Bank, 2018). Education plans that overlook or fail to engage with these cultural factors often struggle to gain traction. For example, the introduction of STEM programs in schools where arts and humanities are culturally preferred may face resistance, leading to low participation and eventual failure (Chirwa & Nsamba, 2019).

Political stability and governance are crucial elements in shaping educational reforms. The frequent changes in government policies disrupt long-term educational initiatives, resulting in a lack of continuity and coherence in reforms. The "Big Results Now" program, which aimed to enhance pupil performance in core subjects, provides an example of how political shifts can undermine educational reforms. Komba (2017) and Suleiman & Mayanja (2021) emphasize that the disruption of such initiatives due to political changes leads to the abandonment of important goals and resources, ultimately hindering the achievement of desired educational outcomes (Suleiman & Mayanja, 2021).

Another critical issue in Tanzanian educational planning is the inadequate assessment of available resources. Planners often fail to conduct thorough assessments of physical, financial, and human resources, leading to the failure of many initiatives. For example, plans to integrate technology into classrooms often face challenges due to budget constraints, lack of infrastructure, and insufficient teacher training. Without proper planning for resources like devices, internet connectivity, and professional

development for teachers, technological integration in education remains ineffective (Kilonzo & Mungai, 2020).Furthermore, the lack of stakeholder engagement has been a significant barrier to the success of many educational reforms in Tanzania. Many plans are developed at the national level without consulting local communities, teachers, and pupils, leading to policies that do not reflect local needs. The Ministry of Education's introduction of a new vocational curriculum without consultation with teachers, parents, or pupils exemplifies this issue. As Nonga (2022) points out, this lack of engagement often results in resistance to change and poor adoption of educational policies.

Professional development is another area where educational planning falters in Tanzania. The introduction of new teaching strategies, such as competency-based education, often lacks the necessary training for teachers. Mugisha & Ndimande (2021) argue that teachers are not adequately prepared to implement these strategies, which undermines the success of such initiatives. Effective professional development is essential to ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills necessary to implement new teaching methods and strategies. Apart from that many educational plans in Tanzania suffer from a lack of data-driven decision-making. Instead of relying on comprehensive data analysis, decisions are often made based on anecdotal evidence, which leads to ineffective policies. For instance, decisions regarding class sizes may be made based on assumptions rather than actual pupil and teacher needs, preventing planners from addressing the real challenges faced by the education system (Peterson & Williams, 2020).

All in all, the challenges facing educational planning in Tanzania are deeply rooted in socio-economic, cultural, political, and resource-related factors. These challenges undermine the effectiveness of educational reforms and hinder the achievement of desired educational outcomes. A more integrated and holistic approach, which takes into account these various factors, is essential for the success of future educational policies and programs in Tanzania (Mosha, 2021). Educational planners can enhance strategies that improve educational outcomes for all students by adapting to the planning environment and engaging key stakeholders. While existing literature offers valuable insights into the challenges faced by educational planners in Tanzania, there is a significant gap in understanding the integrated effects of socio-economic, cultural, political, and resource-related factors on the success of educational reforms. Furthermore, limited research exists on longitudinal studies that evaluate the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of these reforms, especially in the context of political shifts. Additionally, the role of data-driven decision-making in educational planning and the importance of engaging local stakeholders remain underexplored. Further research is needed to explore how teacher professional development programs can be more effectively aligned with educational reforms to ensure their success. This gap presents a clear opportunity for future research in Tanzanian educational planning. Thus, the current study aims to fill this gap by identifying strategies that enhance academic performance and assessing the challenges faced by educational planners in Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section presents various components of the study related to the methodology, including the research paradigm, approach, design, population and sampling, data collection methods, trustworthiness, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The study adopts an interpretive paradigm, focusing on understanding the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals within their social contexts. This paradigm is well-suited for exploring the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of teachers and education officers in Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania. It emphasizes the significance of context and human agency, aiming to provide a deeper insight into how educational planners perceive their roles in influencing students' academic outcomes in Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania.

3.2 Research Approach

A qualitative approach was selected to explore the complexities of inclusive education practices. This approach facilitates an in-depth examination of participants' perceptions and experiences, focusing on the meanings they ascribe to the roles of educational planners in shaping students' academic performance in Dodoma Municipality. The qualitative nature of the study offers rich, contextual insights into the influence

of educational planners on academic outcomes in this area.

3.3 Research Design

An exploratory case study design was employed to conduct an in-depth investigation into the roles of educational planners in shaping students' academic performance in Dodoma Municipality. This design allowed for the collection of detailed data drawn from the varied experiences of teachers and education officers across different school settings. It was particularly effective for gaining a contextualized understanding of how educational planning impacts academic performance.

3.4 Area of Study

The study was conducted in Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania. This location was chosen for its diverse urban setting and semi-arid conditions, which significantly affect the lives of its residents. As the capital city of Tanzania, Dodoma faces challenges related to resource allocation, teacher preparedness, and infrastructure, making it an ideal context to explore the roles of educational planners in shaping students' academic performance.

3.5 Target Population

The target population for this study consisted 2600 teachers and 37 education officers. These individuals were selected for their direct involvement in educational planning, both at the school level and at the municipal level. By focusing on these groups, the study aimed to gather detailed insights from those actively engaged in the formulation and implementation of educational plans.

3.6 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling because the researcher intended to get detailed information from the participants who have direct experience with educational planning. Purposive sampling was particularly appropriate as it enabled the researcher to focus on individuals with relevant expertise and experience for the study's objectives. The sample size consisted of 15 participants that included 10 classroom teachers and 5 education officers from Dodoma Municipality. However, this being a qualitative study the sample size depended on saturation point. This sample size was chosen to ensure a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, allowing for an in-depth exploration of each participant's views and practices.

3.7 Instrumentation

The study utilized three primary data collection methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the roles of educational planners in shaping students' academic performance in Dodoma Municipality. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and education officers to explore their experiences, perceptions, and challenges regarding educational planning. These interviews allowed flexibility in addressing relevant topics while maintaining alignment with the research questions. Second, non-participant observations were conducted to examine planning practices directly. Lastly, a documentary review of relevant school records, policy guidelines, school registers, and meeting minutes was performed to complement the interviews and observations, providing additional context and evidence to support the study's findings. These combined methods ensured a multi-dimensional exploration of the research topic.

3.8 Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, data triangulation was used by combining three methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and documentary reviews. Triangulation enhanced the credibility of the findings by comparing data from different sources and perspectives. The consistency of the results across these varied methods contributed to a more comprehensive and reliable understanding of the educational planners' roles in shaping pupils academic performance in Dodoma Municipality.

3.9 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved three main steps. First, all interviews were transcribed verbatim to capture participants' responses accurately. Second, the transcribed data were coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. Finally, the codes were organized into thematic categories, and direct quotations from participants were used to illustrate key themes. The results were presented in a narrative format to highlight the complexities of

teachers' and officers' experiences in educational planning.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were integral to the study. The researcher obtained approval from the Directorate of Research, Publications, and Innovation at the Open University of Tanzania prior to data collection. To protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity, identifying information was omitted. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. These ethical measures ensured that the research process was conducted with integrity and respect for the participants' rights and dignity.

4. RESULTS

This study aimed to explore the perceived roles of educational planners in shaping students' academic performance in Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania. It was guided by two specific objectives: (1) to examine the strategies employed by educational planners to improve pupils' academic performance, and (2) to assess the challenges faced by planners in enhancing these academic outcomes.

4.1 Demographics of Respondents

The study involved 15 participants, consisting of 10 classroom teachers and 5 education officers, each with diverse demographic characteristics. In terms of age, 7 teachers (70%) were between 30 and 40 years old, while 3 teachers (30%) fell within the 41-60 age range. Regarding educational qualifications, half of the teachers (50%) held certificates, while the other half (50%) had bachelor's degrees. All 5 education officers (100%) possessed bachelor's degrees. In terms of teaching experience, all participants (100%) had between 5 and 30 years of experience, reflecting a significant level of professional expertise across the group. A detailed breakdown of the respondents' demographics is presented in Table 1.

According to Table 1, the demographic data of the study participants reveals a well-experienced and educated group of respondents. In terms of age, the majority of teachers (70%) were relatively young, between 30 and 40 years old, suggesting a workforce with significant energy and potential for growth. However, a substantial portion (30%) of the teachers was in the 41-60

age range, which indicates a blend of both younger and more experienced teachers within the sample. On the other hand, all education officers (100%) were aged between 41 and 60 years, reflecting a more mature and possibly more experienced leadership group within the educational planning sphere. Regarding educational qualifications, the sample of teachers was evenly split between those holding certificates (50%) and those with bachelor's degrees (50%), indicating a diverse range of educational backgrounds. It is noteworthy that all education officers (100%) held bachelor's degrees, suggesting that the individuals involved in educational planning at the municipal level possess higher academic qualifications, which may reflect the level of expertise and responsibility required for such roles. The teaching experience of the participants was notably extensive, with all participants (100%) having between 5 and 30 years of experience. This high level of experience across both teachers and officers suggests a group with a wealth of knowledge, skills, and perspectives to offer, providing rich insights into the practices and challenges of educational planning.

4.2 The Strategies Employed by Educational Planners in Shaping Pupils Achievement

The researcher explored the strategies employed by educational planners to shape pupils' academic achievement. The results revealed a range of strategies that were identified by varying numbers of participants. A total of 13 participants (86.7%) highlighted curriculum development and implementation as a key strategy, while 14 participants (93.3%) mentioned teacher training and professional development and stakeholder engagement as critical factors. Additionally, equity and inclusion were also cited by 14 participants (93.3%). Other strategies included monitoring and evaluation (13 participants, 86.7%), and resource allocation and infrastructure development (12 participants, 80%). Policy evaluation and implementation was identified by 12 participants (80%), indicating the importance of both resource management and effective policy frameworks in improving academic outcomes.

Table 2 highlights the various strategies employed by educational planners to improve pupils' academic achievement, as identified by the participants.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Category	Teachers (n = 10)	Education Officers (n = 5)	Total (n = 15)
Age			
30 - 40 years	7 (70%)	-	7 (47%)
41 - 60 years	3 (30%)	5 (100%)	8 (53%)
Highest Educational Level			
Certificate	5 (50%)	-	5 (33%)
Bachelor's Degree	5 (50%)	5 (100%)	10 (67%)
Teaching Experience	5 - 30 years	5 - 30 years	5 - 30 years

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 2. Strategies employed by educational planners

Strategy	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Curriculum Development and Implementation	13	86.7%
Teacher Training and Professional Development	14	93.3%
Resource Allocation and Infrastructure Development	12	80%
Monitoring and Evaluation	13	86.7%
Stakeholder Engagement	14	93.3%
Policy Evaluation and Implementation	12	80%
Equity and Inclusion	14	93.3%

Source: Field Data 2024

4.2.1 Teacher training and professional development, stakeholder engagement, and equity and inclusion

According to data presented in Table 2, the most frequently mentioned strategies were teacher training and professional development, stakeholder engagement, and equity and inclusion, each identified by 14 participants (93.3%). One of the participants while arguing about teachers training and professional development stressed as follows:

"Exactly! Teacher training is absolutely fundamental. When we roll out a new curriculum, we must make sure teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge to teach it effectively. Through programs like the Tanzania Teacher Development Program, we're constantly working to enhance the teaching methodologies of primary school teachers. We offer in-service training, particularly to help teachers incorporate more interactive and pupil-centered approaches into their classrooms. And when teachers are confident in their skills, pupils can benefit immensely. That's why the resources we provide in schools, such as textbooks and technology, are so crucial to the implementation of these new teaching practices" (Education officer 1, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Another participant showed the need to collaborate with stakeholders from various sectors by stressing that:

"Collaboration is indeed key. We cannot work in isolation. Educational reforms require the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including local governments, international partners like UNICEF, and NGOs. By working together, we can share expertise, mobilize resources, and ensure that our educational strategies are aligned with the country's broader development goals. These collaborations have been instrumental in improving infrastructure, teacher quality, and overall school performance, especially in rural areas where support is most needed." (Education officer 3, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania)

Moreover while speaking of inclusivity the classroom teacher 9 argued that there's been a growing focus on ensuring that marginalized groups, especially girls and children with disabilities, are not left behind.

"Exactly, and this is where equity and inclusion come into play. It's crucial that every child, regardless of gender, disability, or socioeconomic status, has the same educational opportunities. We've launched initiatives like Let Girls Learn to help address the barriers that girls face in education, such as early marriage or pregnancy. Similarly,

we've worked hard to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream education. When we ensure that marginalized groups are supported, we see a more inclusive educational environment, which benefits everyone. These initiatives directly impact performance by giving all pupils an equal opportunity to succeed." (Classroom teacher 9, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania)

The extracts above suggest that a majority of educational planners view that teacher training and professional development, stakeholder engagement, and equity and inclusion are crucial for fostering academic success. Training teachers and involving key stakeholders, along with ensuring inclusivity in the learning environment, are considered essential for enhancing educational outcomes

4.2.2 Curriculum development and implementation and monitoring and evaluation

According to Table 2, other key strategies, such as curriculum development and implementation and monitoring and evaluation, were also frequently mentioned, with 13 participants (86.7%) identifying these as significant components in improving academic performance. These results underline the importance of structured curricula and ongoing assessment in achieving positive educational outcomes. One of the participants stressing on the issue of curriculum development argued as follows:

"As an educational planner, one of my key responsibilities is to ensure that the curriculum we implement meets the evolving needs of pupils. In recent years, we've shifted towards a competency-based curriculum. This is to make sure pupils don't just memorize facts, but truly understand how to apply their knowledge in practical, real-world situations. It's been rewarding to see improved engagement and performance, particularly in subjects like mathematics and science, as pupils are now able to connect theory to practice more effectively." (Classroom teacher 5, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania)

It was also argued that monitoring and evaluation were also being used to discover if there are improved outcome. The participant stressed as follows:

"Absolutely! Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is key to ensuring that the resources

we've allocated are making a real difference. We rely on systems that track the progress of both pupils and teachers. By using data from national assessments like the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), we can identify which schools or regions are struggling. This data helps us target interventions more effectively, whether it's providing additional resources, targeted training for teachers, or addressing specific needs within classrooms." (Education office 2, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania)

The extractsthe importance of structured curricula and ongoing assessment in achieving positive educational outcomes for pupils in Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania.

4.2.3 Resource allocation and infrastructure development and policy evaluation and implementation

According to Table 2, resource allocation and infrastructure development and policy evaluation and implementation were identified by 12 participants (80%), indicating that while slightly less frequently mentioned, these elements are still recognized as vital to creating an effective educational system. While arguing on the resources allocation and infrastructure development the participant stressed that:

"Exactly, and resource allocation is where we come in. As planners, we ensure that schools have the necessary infrastructure and materials to support teaching and learning. The provision of textbooks, learning aids, and classroom facilities makes a big difference. Moreover, infrastructure improvements are necessary to create an environment that fosters effective learning. We've been able to improve learning environments, ensuring that rural schools are not left behind. These physical improvements enable teachers to teach better, and pupils to learn more effectively."(Education office 5, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Another participant argued on policy formulation and implementation as follows:

"That's right. When we create policies, we're trying to lay the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable education system. The Fee-Free Basic Education Policy has been a major step forward in ensuring that

every child, regardless of background, has access to primary education. However, implementing these policies effectively requires continuous monitoring and adjustments. It's not enough to just make the policy—schools need support to manage increased enrollment, especially when resources are stretched thin. Our role as planners is to ensure that these policies translate into real, tangible improvements in the classroom." (Education office 3, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

The overall findings suggest that educational planners in Dodoma Municipality employ a well-rounded approach, focusing on multiple strategies to support academic achievement.

4.3 The Challenges Faced by Educational Planners in Enhancing Academic Outcomes

The researcher explored the challenges faced by educational planners in shaping the academic achievement of pupils in Dodoma Municipality. The results revealed several key challenges identified by the participants. Economic problems were mentioned by 13 participants, accounting for 86.7% of the responses, indicating a significant concern regarding financial constraints. Inadequate resources was the most frequently mentioned challenge, identified by 14 participants, or 93.3%, suggesting that a lack of essential educational resources is a major barrier to improving academic outcomes. Additionally, demographic factors and socio-cultural factors were each supported by 12 participants, representing 80% of the responses, highlighting how factors such as population size and cultural influences can impact educational planning. Finally, technological challenges and the need for teacher capacity building were mentioned by 13 participants (86.7%), underlining the importance of enhancing teachers' skills and addressing technological gaps to improve academic performance in the region. Results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 presents the key challenges faced by educational planners in shaping the academic achievement of pupils in Dodoma Municipality.

4.3.1 Inadequate resources

According to Table 3 the most frequently mentioned challenge was inadequate resources, which was identified by 14 participants (93.3%).This indicates that a significant number of planners view the lack of essential educational resources, such as textbooks, teaching materials, and facilities, as a major barrier to improving academic performance. One of the participants argued as follows on the issue of inadequate resources:

"That's a good point. And what's even worse is the disparity between urban and rural areas. You see, planners often prioritize urban centers, leaving rural schools underfunded. There's a serious lack of educational resources and infrastructure. This only worsens the education gap, particularly in rural communities, where the quality of education is significantly lower. The poor allocation of resources based on economic realities perpetuates this inequality." (Classroom teacher 4, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Similarly another participants emphasized about the question of basic facilities:

"It's heartbreaking. Many schools don't even have basic facilities like classrooms or electricity, let alone the internet and computers needed for modern learning. This infrastructure gap makes it incredibly hard to increase pupil enrollment without compromising the quality of education. If the facilities aren't expanding alongside the increase in pupils, it leads to overcrowded classrooms and worse learning conditions." (Classroom teacher 1, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Table 3. Challenges faced by educational planners

Challenge	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Economic Problems	13	86.7%
Inadequate Resources	14	93.3%
Demographic Factors	12	80%
Socio-Cultural Factors	12	80%
Technological Challenges	13	86.7%
Teacher Capacity Building	13	86.7%

Source: Field Data 2024

The view of shortage of basic resources was supported by another participant who argued as follows

"Right, and don't forget that many of these young people live in rural areas where infrastructure is underdeveloped. Getting schools built in these areas is challenging, both because of the cost and logistical difficulties. Rural pupils often have to travel long distances to school, and when they get there, the facilities are overcrowded and lacking in basic resources, such as desks, classrooms, and sanitation facilities." (Education officer 1, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Economic problems were also frequently cited, with 13 participants (86.7%) acknowledging financial constraints as another key challenge impacting the quality of education. The participant argued as follows:

"You know, one of the major challenges we face in education planning is economic instability. It really affects the resources we can allocate, the funding, and even the infrastructure. Take Tanzania, for instance – the country heavily relies on external financing for education, which can be problematic when economic conditions fluctuate. The Global Partnership for Education (2020) pointed out that when economies are unstable, education budgets get slashed, and this negatively impacts teachers' salaries, learning materials, and ultimately, pupil outcomes." (Classroom teacher 8, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Similarly, technological challenges and the need for teacher capacity building were both identified by 13 participants (86.7%), highlighting the importance of addressing gaps in technology and enhancing teachers' professional development to improve student outcomes. The participant stressed as follows:

"And another issue that hinders successful educational planning is the failure to focus on teacher capacity building. If new teaching strategies are introduced, but teachers aren't properly trained to implement them, it's all for nothing. Take the introduction of STEM education in Tanzania. Without proper training, teachers struggle to deliver the content effectively, and as a result, pupils perform poorly, and the initiative fails."

(Classroom teacher 2, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

As regards to the question of training of the participants argued as follows:

"It's a cycle, really. When teachers aren't properly trained, curriculum reforms fail to take root. Additionally, there's a lack of flexibility in educational planning. Tanzania has a diverse population with varying needs across rural, urban, and remote areas. A one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. We saw that during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were forced to close, and there was no flexibility in the planning to transition to remote learning. The lack of infrastructure for online learning left many pupils behind." (Classroom teacher 7, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Nonetheless another participant shifted to the problem of technology where it was disclosed that:

"And then there's the challenge of technology. The digital divide is growing wider. Education planners often fail to account for the lack of digital infrastructure, which leaves pupils ill-prepared for the digital economy. In Tanzania, many schools don't have access to the internet or the devices required to integrate digital literacy into the curriculum. By the time they implement some tech-based solution, it's already outdated compared to global standards." (Classroom teacher 6, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Likewise another participant supported the issue of technology by arguing as follows:

"That's such a crucial issue. With technology advancing so rapidly, it's hard for countries like Tanzania to keep up. This leaves pupils at a disadvantage when they enter the job market. But there's another big issue – stakeholder engagement. In many cases, local communities and parents aren't consulted during the planning process. If they're not part of the conversation, it's difficult to design policies that reflect their needs. Schools might end up implementing programs that don't align with community priorities, leading to low participation and resistance." (Classroom teacher 10, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Additionally, demographic factors and socio-cultural factors were each mentioned by 12 participants (80%), suggesting that these factors, such as population growth and cultural influences, play a significant role in shaping the educational landscape. It was stressed by one participant as follows:

"Exactly. Demographic trends also play a huge role in shaping education policies. Tanzania has a young population, with over 40% under the age of 15 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Educational policies need to reflect this demographic shift. More schools need to be built, teacher training needs to increase, and the curriculum must be adjusted to cater to a growing and youthful population." (Classroom teacher 2, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Apart from that another participants viewed socio cultural factors as barriers to planners in effectuating the overall planning process for the purpose of shaping academic achievement of girls by arguing as follows:

"That's where socio-cultural factors come into play. In some parts of Tanzania, cultural attitudes towards education are a major barrier, particularly for girls. In coastal regions, for example, there's a tradition where girls stop going to school from June to December to participate in local dances. The Tanzania Education Sector Analysis (2019) noted that planners often overlook these cultural norms when designing education policies, which leads to a lack of support from the local community and poor implementation of education plans." (Classroom teacher 9, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

Finally another participant supported the issue of culture as follows:

"Exactly, the cultural context is crucial. Planners need to understand and respect these local norms to design policies that can be embraced by the community. Also, let's not forget infrastructure and accessibility. A lot of rural areas in Tanzania lack proper roads and transportation systems, making it difficult for pupils to even reach school. The Ministry of Education (2018) reported that over 2 million children are out of school in rural regions, primarily because of these infrastructure challenges."

(Classroom teacher 5, Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania).

These findings point to the multifaceted nature of the challenges that educational planners face, which include not only resource and financial constraints but also broader social and cultural issues. The results highlight the need for a comprehensive approach that tackles these interconnected challenges in order to improve the academic achievement of pupils in Dodoma Municipality.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 The Strategies Employed by Educational Planners in Shaping Pupils Achievement

The study explored the strategies employed by educational planners to improve pupils' academic achievement. Key strategies identified by participants included curriculum development, teacher training, stakeholder engagement, equity and inclusion, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), resource allocation, infrastructure development, and policy evaluation. These findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the need for an integrated approach to educational planning, where multiple strategies work together to enhance the quality of education (UNESCO, 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2021). This comprehensive approach is essential for achieving sustainable improvements in educational outcomes. The importance of curriculum development and implementation was underscored by 86.7% of participants, confirming its central role in shaping academic achievement. As highlighted by Mhando (2020), curriculum reform that integrates critical thinking, practical skills, and real-world applications fosters better student engagement and understanding. The shift to competency-based curricula, seen in Tanzania, enhances students' ability to apply knowledge practically, which contributes to improved learning outcomes (OECD, 2021). These findings reinforce the significance of aligning curricula with both global educational standards and local economic needs.

Teacher training and professional development were identified as critical factors by 93.3% of participants. Darling-Hammond (2021) emphasizes that teacher quality is one of the most significant factors influencing student success. The continuous professional development of educators enables them to

effectively implement new teaching methods and curricula. This is crucial in ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to foster high-quality learning environments. The results of this study support existing research by confirming that ongoing teacher development directly contributes to improved academic outcomes (Mourshed et al., 2023). Equity and inclusion were also highlighted as essential strategies by 93.3% of participants. Planners' efforts to reduce educational disparities by focusing on marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and students from rural areas, are vital in ensuring equal access to quality education. Programs like the "Let Girls Learn" initiative in Tanzania, supported by UNICEF (2021), illustrate how targeted policies can increase enrollment and retention, particularly for girls, thus fostering a more equitable education system. These efforts align with the global commitment to inclusive education as outlined in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) emerged as a key strategy, with 86.7% of participants emphasizing its role in tracking progress and improving outcomes. The use of data-driven decision-making is crucial in identifying underperforming areas and ensuring that interventions are effective. The Tanzania Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) exemplifies how M&E frameworks help planners assess the effectiveness of policies and adjust strategies accordingly. This ensures that educational programs remain relevant and responsive to emerging challenges, ultimately leading to improved academic achievement (World Bank, 2021). Resource allocation and infrastructure development were also identified by 80% of participants as essential components of educational planning. A well-resourced education system, including adequate learning materials, facilities, and funding, is critical for student success. The study's findings reinforce the importance of addressing resource gaps, particularly in underserved areas. The construction of classrooms and the provision of learning materials in Tanzania, as part of the Tanzania Education Sector Development Program (ESDP), illustrate how infrastructure development directly contributes to better academic outcomes (World Bank, 2021). The results also emphasize the need for effective policy evaluation to ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and equitably across the education system.

5.2 The Challenges Faced by Educational Planners in Enhancing Academic Outcomes

Based on the results shared, the discussion of the challenges faced by educational planners in Dodoma Municipality revolves around several significant factors that hinder the effectiveness of educational reforms and policies aimed at improving academic achievement. The most frequently identified challenge, mentioned by 14 participants (93.3%), was the inadequate allocation of resources. Educational planners expressed that the lack of essential materials, such as textbooks, learning aids, and proper infrastructure, severely impacts both teaching and learning processes. This issue is echoed in existing literature, where inadequate resources are cited as a critical barrier to quality education in many developing regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2022). Without sufficient resources, schools struggle to provide an environment conducive to effective learning, limiting pupils' academic potential.Economic constraints were also highlighted by 13 participants (86.7%) as a major challenge in shaping academic achievement. This concern underscores the difficulty in securing adequate financial resources for educational reforms. Financial limitations result in overcrowded classrooms, poorly compensated teachers, and insufficient investment in infrastructure. As noted by UNESCO (2022), many countries, particularly in developing regions, face challenges in prioritizing education within their national budgets, which directly affects the quality of education and overall academic outcomes. In Dodoma Municipality, this economic constraint is compounded by the lack of local funding mechanisms, which restrict planners' ability to implement large-scale changes, ultimately affecting pupils' academic achievements.

Demographic factors, such as the growing population and high pupil-to-teacher ratios, were mentioned by 12 participants (80%) as another challenge to educational planning. The increasing number of students enrolling in schools puts pressure on the available resources, leading to overcrowded classrooms and reduced individual attention for pupils. This finding resonates with the literature on the challenges faced by educational planners in regions with rapid population growth, where education systems often struggle to keep pace with demand (World Bank, 2021). Overcrowded classrooms hinder effective teaching and limit the

quality of instruction, as teachers are unable to address the specific needs of each student. This demographic pressure, combined with limited financial resources, further complicates efforts to improve academic outcomes in the region.Socio-cultural factors, such as cultural attitudes towards education, especially for girls, were also identified by 12 participants (80%) as significant barriers. In some communities, traditional practices and gender norms discourage girls from attending school or lead to early marriages, reducing their chances of academic success. This challenge is particularly pertinent in Sub-Saharan Africa, where cultural biases continue to affect girls' access to education (Mann & Boadu, 2021). In Dodoma Municipality, planners face the difficulty of addressing these cultural barriers while simultaneously promoting inclusive education. Social norms often influence community support for educational initiatives, and without tackling these cultural factors, educational planners may find it difficult to achieve sustainable improvements in academic achievement, particularly for marginalized groups.

Technological challenges, highlighted by 13 participants (86.7%), were also identified as a critical concern in the region. Many schools in Dodoma Municipality face difficulties integrating technology into the classroom due to the lack of infrastructure, such as reliable internet access and sufficient technological devices. The need for technology in education has become increasingly important, especially in the context of preparing pupils for the modern workforce, where digital literacy is essential. However, as noted by Bakia et al. (2021), many educational systems in developing countries struggle to keep up with technological advancements, making it difficult to enhance learning outcomes. Addressing this technological gap in Dodoma Municipality would require significant investment in infrastructure and teacher training to ensure that educators can effectively use technology in teaching and learning processes.Finally, the need for teacher capacity building was identified as a key challenge, with 13 participants (86.7%) emphasizing the importance of improving teacher skills to enhance academic performance. Teachers in Dodoma Municipality, especially in rural areas, often face inadequate professional development opportunities, limiting their ability to adapt to new teaching methods or curriculum changes. Teacher quality is a crucial determinant of pupil success, and without continuous training and support, the effectiveness of educational

reforms may be compromised. Darling-Hammond (2021) underscores that professional development is essential for ensuring that teachers are equipped with the skills necessary to implement innovative teaching strategies and engage students effectively. In Dodoma, the lack of ongoing teacher training programs hampers the ability to improve academic outcomes and respond to emerging challenges in education.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study reveals that educational planners in Dodoma Municipality have employed several strategies to improve academic achievement, such as curriculum development, teacher training, stakeholder engagement, and promoting equity and inclusion. These strategies aim to address key areas such as enhancing the quality of teaching, ensuring access to education for marginalized groups, and fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. However, despite these efforts, planners face significant challenges that hinder the effectiveness of these strategies. Economic constraints, inadequate resources, demographic pressures, and socio-cultural factors continue to create barriers that undermine the successful implementation of these strategies. In particular, the lack of financial investment in education, the shortage of resources, and the socio-cultural challenges related to gender and community attitudes toward education pose significant obstacles to improving academic outcomes.

To address these challenges, a more integrated approach is necessary, where resources are allocated more effectively, teacher capacity is continually built, and community engagement is prioritized. The findings suggest that overcoming financial and resource constraints, addressing demographic challenges, and tackling socio-cultural barriers will be crucial to the success of the educational reforms in Dodoma Municipality. By focusing on strengthening these areas and ensuring that strategies are tailored to the local context, educational planners can create a more sustainable and effective educational system. Furthermore, greater investment in infrastructure and technology, alongside continuous professional development for teachers, will play a pivotal role in improving academic outcomes for all pupils in the region.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the challenges and strategies identified in the study, it is recommended that educational

planners in Dodoma Municipality prioritize increased investment in financial resources to address the pressing issue of inadequate educational infrastructure and resources. This should include expanding funding for schools, particularly in underserved areas, to provide adequate teaching materials, improve classroom conditions, and build essential educational infrastructure. Additionally, planners should advocate for a more equitable distribution of resources to ensure that marginalized communities, including rural areas and female students, have access to the same quality of education as their counterparts in urban centers. The government should also consider reallocating funds from other sectors to support education, particularly in areas such as teacher salaries, training programs, and classroom technology.

Another key recommendation is the enhancement of teacher capacity building through continuous professional development and the integration of technology in education. Teacher training programs should be tailored to address specific local needs, including the integration of STEM subjects, pedagogy for large classrooms, and the use of digital tools. Educational planners should also focus on providing teachers with the necessary resources and support to enhance their teaching practices, especially in marginalized areas. Furthermore, planners should engage local communities more actively in the educational process, addressing socio-cultural barriers to education, such as early marriages and gender biases. By fostering stronger community partnerships, educational planners can ensure that reforms are culturally relevant and have greater buy-in from all stakeholders. Ultimately, a holistic approach that integrates financial investment, teacher development, and community involvement will be essential for improving academic outcomes in Dodoma Municipality, Tanzania.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models, etc have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript. This explanation will include the name, version, model, and source of the generative AI technology and as well as all input prompts provided to the generative AI technology.

Details of the AI usage are given below:

1. I have used chatGPT to edit some sections in this paper.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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