Editorial

Papers in Education and Development at 50 (1975–2025): Legacy, Relevance, and Future Directions

The year 2025 marks a historic milestone for *Papers in Education and Development (PED)* as the Journal celebrates fifty years since its establishment in 1975. This Golden Jubilee is not only a moment of celebration but also one of reflection and renewal—an opportunity to look back on a rich intellectual legacy, engage critically with present realities, and chart future directions for educational scholarship in Tanzania, Africa, and beyond. As Abel G. Ishumi aptly reflects in this commemorative issue, if PED were a human being, it would now stand as a mature and respected elder—one who has traversed multiple phases of life, accumulated wisdom, and earned a place of authority within the community. This metaphor captures both the longevity and the responsibility that come with such a milestone. For five decades, PED has grown as a "house-born and house-grown" journal of the School of Education at the University of Dar es Salaam, while simultaneously evolving into a platform of national, regional, and increasingly international significance.

Historically, PED stands among the earliest academic journals within the University of Dar es Salaam, alongside *UTAFTITI*, *Taamuli*, and *The African Review*. Its trajectory mirrors the broader evolution of education in Tanzania—from post-independence nation-building and the philosophy of Education for Self-Reliance, to contemporary engagements with globalisation, digital transformation, and decolonisation. Throughout this journey, PED has remained committed to advancing scholarship that is contextually grounded, critically engaged, and socially relevant. This Jubilee Issue exemplifies that commitment. The contributions assembled here reflect a diverse yet interconnected body of scholarship that collectively interrogates the epistemic, structural, and pedagogical dimensions of education in the 21st century. While varied in focus and methodology, the papers converge around four broad and interrelated themes: epistemic relevance and decolonisation; system integration and partnerships; equity and inclusion; and pedagogical transformation and professional practice.

Relevance, Decolonisation, and the Question of Knowledge

A central thread running through this issue concerns the question of what constitutes legitimate and relevant knowledge in African education systems. Haule and Kinyota's contribution critically examines the exclusion of African Indigenous Knowledge from science curricula in Tanzania. Their analysis highlights how the continued privileging of Western epistemologies reproduces colonial hierarchies of knowledge while marginalising locally grounded ways of knowing. By linking this exclusion to students' disengagement and underperformance, the paper calls for a fundamental rethinking of science education—not merely as content delivery, but as an epistemic project. This concern is reinforced by Maliva's analysis of the language of instruction in vocational education. Drawing on policy documents and linguistic imperialism theory, the study demonstrates how the use of English as a medium of instruction can undermine meaningful learning and

skills acquisition. The argument that cognitive development is more effective in familiar linguistic contexts challenges long-standing policy assumptions and foregrounds the role of language as both a pedagogical and epistemic medium. Overall, these contributions move beyond surface-level reforms to engage deeper questions of knowledge, language, and power. They position decolonisation not as an additive process, but as a structural and epistemological reorientation of education systems.

Bridging Institutional and Community Divides

A second theme emerging from this issue is the fragmentation of educational systems and the need for stronger linkages across institutions and communities. Shirima and Mmbando's study on university–community engagement (UCE) illustrates the transformative potential of collaborative initiatives in promoting STEM education. Their findings demonstrate that mentorship programmes, co-teaching, teacher capacity-building, and resource support can enhance teaching quality and student motivation, particularly in underserved contexts. However, these gains remain constrained by limited funding, weak coordination, and fragmented policy frameworks. Similarly, Irafay's study on parental engagement in physical education reveals a narrow conceptualisation of parental involvement among teachers, largely confined to material support. This limited understanding restricts opportunities for more meaningful collaboration between schools and families, thereby constraining students' participation and learning. Notably, these studies highlight the limitations of siloed educational practices and underscore the need for more integrated, system-level approaches that connect schools, higher education institutions, families, and communities.

Equity in Contemporary Contexts: Gender and Digital Access

The issue also engages critically with evolving forms of educational inequality. Nkwamah and colleagues' study on access to digital technologies reveals that while a significant proportion of students report moderate levels of access, disparities persist across socio-demographic characteristics such as school type, parental background, and location. Notably, access remains uneven between home and school environments, pointing to persistent infrastructural and institutional gaps. Complementing this structural perspective, Balogun and Ayegbusi's study on gender disparities in engineering education in Nigeria shifts attention to internal dimensions of inequality. Their findings show that female students' lower engagement in practical work is primarily linked to differences in self-efficacy rather than external conditions such as resources or teaching quality. This insight underscores the importance of addressing not only structural barriers but also the psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of participation. Generally, these contributions reveal that educational inequality is multidimensional, encompassing access, participation, confidence, and the quality of learning experiences.

Pedagogy, Professional Learning, and Cognitive Foundations

At the heart of educational transformation lies the question of pedagogy and professional practice. Sumani and colleagues' study on experiential education facilitators in Uganda conceptualises professional development as a recursive and reflective process. By demonstrating how competence evolves through cycles of readiness, action, and reflection,

the study challenges linear models of teacher training and highlights the importance of sustained, reflective practice. This focus on learning processes is further deepened by Chacha and Njiku's study on probability language skills. Their findings reveal a significant relationship between students' linguistic competence in probability and their academic achievement, while also showing that conceptual understanding remains limited despite familiarity with terminology. This underscores the critical role of language in shaping cognitive engagement and meaningful learning. These contributions collectively bring the discussion back to the core of education—the processes through which knowledge is constructed, understood, and applied.

Looking Forward: PED as a Living and Future-Oriented Platform

The Jubilee Issue fittingly concludes with Pesambili's reflection on the current realities, emerging challenges, and future directions of PED. Drawing on editorial experience, the paper situates the Journal within a rapidly changing scholarly publishing landscape characterised by challenges such as reviewer fatigue, ethical concerns, digital transitions, artificial intelligence, and the complexities of open-access models. Importantly, the paper does not merely diagnose challenges; it outlines strategic pathways for strengthening PED's internationalisation, editorial rigour, and contribution to knowledge sovereignty. In doing so, it positions PED as a dynamic and future-oriented platform capable of shaping educational research, policy, and practice in Africa and beyond.

Conclusion: Continuity and Transformation

The contributions in this Jubilee Issue reflect an educational landscape marked by both continuity and transformation. Longstanding concerns, such as curriculum relevance, equity, and system integration, remain central, even as new challenges emerge from digitalisation, globalisation, and shifting epistemic debates. What distinguishes this collection is its ability to engage these enduring issues within contemporary contexts, offering both critical reflection and forward-looking insight. In doing so, it reaffirms PED's role not only as a repository of knowledge but as a vital intellectual space for interrogating and shaping the future of education. As we celebrate fifty years of *Papers in Education and Development*, we extend our sincere appreciation to all authors, reviewers, editors, and readers who have contributed to this journey. This milestone is a collective achievement. Looking ahead, we remain committed to advancing rigorous, relevant, and transformative scholarship that speaks to the needs and aspirations of our societies.

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