

# Improvising History Teaching Materials in Tanzania Secondary Schools: Lessons from the PITA Project in Arusha, Meru District Council

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates how History teachers in public secondary schools within Meru District Council, Arusha Tanzania, improvise teaching and learning materials amid resources constraints. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research involved observations, questionnaires, and document reviews in three schools under the PITA Project. Findings reveal that teachers, often with students' participation, create visual, environmental, and digital teaching materials using locally available resources. Despite innovative strategies, challenges such as limited funding, time constraints, and storage issues persist. The study underscores the necessity of both improvised and ready-made materials and recommends greater community and technological involvement in material preparation.*

**Keywords:** History education, improvisation, Tanzanian secondary schools, teaching materials, PITA Project

## 1. Introduction

Improvisation of teaching and learning materials is an art to be encouraged to teachers and students. This study is about improvisation of teaching and learning materials for History subject in community PITA Project secondary schools. The Project -Participatory and Integrative Teaching Approach is an in-service training initiative for secondary school teachers in remote and disadvantaged schools in Meru District Council, Arusha Region (ref. item 2.2 of this article). The Project aimed to defend the right of education entitled to all human beings, following the principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and treatment, as well as universal access to quality education [37]. The Project is implemented by the Tumaini University Makumira and funded by Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission. The core context of this article is the activities done by the PITA Project in phase one (2015 - 2017), phase two (2018 - 2021) and phase three (2022 - 2025). Such activities include: training PITA Project community secondary school teachers, on the effective use of participatory approach, together with the skills for improvise and use teaching-learning materials for various subjects, in particular for this study the History subject [36, 37, 38].

History subject is opted to be used in this study because of its uniqueness in the list of subjects which are taught to the Ordinary level secondary school students in Tanzania. History subject is taught from form I-IV to students in the General Education pathway. Likewise, the subject "Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili" translated into English language- "History of Tanzanian and Ethics" as a compulsory subject is also taught from form I-IV to students in the General Education and the Vocation pathways [1,2]. The general

purpose of History subject in Tanzania secondary schools is to enable students to use historical events in society and make interpretations which enhance them to understand themselves, the nation, and the world at large. By studying History, students are expected to develop patriotic characters and the 21st Century skills in the practice of everyday knowledge and disciplinary knowledge [1-3].

Furthermore, for the case of the subject- "Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili" is taught in Kiswahili language, different from History subject where English language is a medium of instruction [1,2]. The purpose of using Kiswahili language is to build and sustain traditions, customs and the culture of Tanzanians. In particular, the subject "Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili" has the following expected outcomes: (i) to inculcate ethical behaviours, (ii) to promote nationalism and civilization, (iii) to protect the countries' resources and the nation, (iv) to value duties and responsibilities, and (v) to protect and promote principles of peace, national ethics, accountability, humanity, integrity, unity, patriotism, love, honest, as well as civil rights and value the nation's resources [2,4]. For this reason, this article aims to investigate how History teachers in Tanzanian public secondary schools improvise teaching and learning materials, focusing on the practices, challenges and outcomes within the PITA Project. Understanding improvisational strategies in resource-limited settings is crucial for enhancing educational quality and equity, offering insights applicable to similar contexts across Tanzania and other developing regions.

The rationale for this study based on section 3.6.4 of the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014, (2023) Edition, which emphasizes the Government's obligation to

ensure the availability of adequate teaching and learning materials at all levels of education and training. Following the introduction of the fee-free education policy in 2014, students' enrollment in public schools has increased substantially. For instance, from 2022 onwards, schools experienced a sharp rise in student number, resulting in a general shortage of teaching and learning materials, tools and resources, including secondary schools. As a result, the system of preparation, printing and distribution of books was challenged together with having inadequate equipment, tools as well as teaching and learning materials. In addition, some existing equipment, tools and materials are either outdated or do not meet current needs [5]. Thus, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) made several resolutions and among them are as follows: (i) to establish and continue to improve the system for the provision of sufficient high-quality books, materials, equipment and tools to meet the needs, and (ii) to have an efficient system for preparation, printing and distribution of teaching and learning materials [5]. Therefore, exploring the practices and experiences of improvising teaching and learning materials for the History subject is significant for the following reasons: (i) it enhances the interest, ability, and skills of secondary school teachers to improvise teaching and learning materials; (ii) it contributes to the improvement of students' understanding in the classroom and ultimately their academic performance, and (iii) it reduces teachers' dependency syndrome-where they view the government and school administration only as the sole providers of teaching and learning materials.

## 2. Literature Survey

Teaching and learning materials are one of the curriculum elements which are essential for efficient provision of education and training particularly in facilitating teaching and learning [1,2,4-6]. According to Prastowo [7], teaching and learning materials refer to selection of educational resources that assist a teacher to deliver specific content and meet specific objectives of a lesson. This means that each lesson has its own specific objectives which in turn require specific teaching and learning materials. Tomlinson [8] and Prastowo [7], describe teaching and learning materials in classroom context by including, but not limited to textbooks, reference books, handouts, samples of real objects, videos, CD, manipulative, games, models of diverse kinds, overhead projectors, computer soft-wares or internet search engines, posters, and maps. These teaching and learning materials are available in two forms: first, ready-made materials bought from shops or supplied to schools through government, private and/or non-government institutions and second, teacher's and students' locally-made materials through simple selection, modification or construction of materials. Specifically, this study deals with the second form of availing teaching and learning materials.

Expounding further the concept of improvisation of materials, Tomlinson [8] and Prastowo [7] demonstrate that improvisation entails producing and using local resources in the absence of real ones in the course of preparing and actual classroom teaching and learning stages. In other words, improvisation is the act of using alternative materials and resources to facilitate lesson delivery. Thus, improvisation is

among the effective strategies for imparting adequate, every day and disciplinary knowledge, skills, facts as well as values to students [1,4]. In reference to History subject, teaching History is fundamentally teaching about past events and processes whose reality can no longer be directly experienced. Therefore, improvisation in the course of teaching and learning History subject is essential in order to capture the past which no longer exist. Freire [9] and Akinleye [34], said that the use of improvised materials provides students with a first-hand experience. Improvisation imparts to students the sense of creativity, innovation, imagination, curiosity, confidence, realism, pragmatism and cooperation. Generally, improvisation of teaching and learning materials makes the lesson interactive, interesting and less difficult for students to use their intellectual and social abilities [9-12].

In this sense, the utilization of improvised teaching and learning materials assists the teacher to achieve efficient and effective teaching. According to Aina [13] both teachers and students must improvise teaching materials in a cooperative manner. This is by involving other teachers, students and the community around at large. Sawyer [14] realizes that classrooms are often overly structured and scripted, something which needs to be modified for better performance of both the teacher and the student. Hence, through improvisation of teaching and learning materials, a History teacher can ease and in-formalize the teaching and learning process. Under improvised teaching and learning circumstance, the teacher talks little and covers a large content, yet students understand fast and enjoy learning. The teacher uses time effectively and efficiently, and the class becomes more interactive and interesting. Many view History merely as memorization of events and figures, but effective teaching requires deeper engagement. Also, it denationalizes the lingering minds that History is about the dead past, is of no importance to learn [14,15]. It is high time to revoke this kind of thinking and look at the way teachers can be enthusiastic in improvising teaching and learning materials for History subject in secondary schools. Thus, the study addressed the following objectives: (i) to explore types of History subject improvised teaching and learning materials, and (ii) to analyze challenges facing the availability and use of improvised History materials. Expanding the scope of improvisation of teaching and learning materials will inevitably promote participatory teaching and learning, ultimately producing more competent teachers and students.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Approach and Design

The study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design [16,17]. The qualitative approach was necessary to be used because of its naturalistic methods and interpretive nature which informed the methodology behind the study [16,17]. A single case study design was chosen, focusing on the PITA Project and its associated community secondary schools in Meru District Council. This case study design assisted the researchers to concentrate on obtaining an in-depth understanding, and captured study context [16,17]. Thus, deeper information was gathered on the real

practices and experiences of History teachers on the improvisation of teaching and learning materials.

### 3.2 Area of Study, Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in Meru District Council which is in Meru District-one of the six Districts of the Arusha Region in Tanzania. The Meru District Council is located on the slopes of Mount Meru. The Council is bordered to the North by Longido District, to the East by Siha and Hai District Councils of Kilimanjaro Region, to the South by Arusha City, to the West by the Arusha District Council. The headquarters is in Usa River. The main economic activities in the Meru District Council include: agriculture, forests, and the National Park (<https://arusha.go.tz>). According to the National Basic Statistics in Tanzania the Meru DC has 79 secondary schools [18]. Among these schools, the PITA Project worked with 34 schools from which 6 are under the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) schools, and 28 are community schools [35]. As for this study, only 3 community schools were involved in the study. The sample schools were obtained by identifying PITA schools whose History teachers attended trainings on subject teaching materials and thereafter randomly selected by following recommendations from PITA Project coordination. The population of History teachers was 9. This means 3 History teachers from each school. The expert purposive sampling was used to obtain the participants from the population [19,20]. 7 History teachers in total who accepted to be involved in the study were used as sample size of experts'. These are implementers of History curriculum and with first-hand information on the reality of improvisation of materials for History subject.

### 3.3 Data Collection, Analysis and Trustworthiness

Three instruments were used to collect the data; observation checklists, questionnaires, and documents review [16,21,22]. Classroom observation schedule with open-ended checklists commenced the data collection process. The researchers observed and identified the kind of teaching and learning materials used in History lesson. Also, open-ended checklists were used in observing teaching and learning materials found around in the school environment. In addition, the researchers conducted observations during History events exhibitions in one of the studied secondary schools. The researchers recorded information related to History teaching and learning materials. Further, the structured questionnaires had both close-ended and open-ended questions. Questionnaires were used to collect the data from History teachers involved in the study. Through these questionnaires participants were able to provide detailed responses on their practices and experiences of improvisation of materials. Regarding documents review such as lesson plan, scheme of work, history notes and assignments as well as PITA Project reports were analyzed to obtain information for the study. In each document the researchers commented on how these materials were used in the process of teaching and learning. The PITA Project reports were used to obtain facts and evidence for discussions on the findings. Therefore, triangulation of the collected data was processed accordingly.

The data were analyzed thematically [16,23]. In the process of analyzing the data, several steps were followed by the researchers which include: familiarizing with the data from each instrument, developing a coding scheme based on the study objectives, generating themes and sub-themes, interpreting and presenting the data. The trustworthiness of the data was confirmed by looking at the credibility in interpreting the data. This was done by spending reasonable time with History teachers in the schools, and observed teachings as well as reviewing documents. The dependability aspect was considered by using more than one method of collecting data. As for the conformability of the study, this was considered by aligning together the research methodology, ethical practices and the study findings appropriately [16,22,24].

## 4. Results

The study findings are presented based on the two research objectives under the context of the PITA Project community secondary schools in the Meru District Council. First was to explore History subject improvised teaching and learning materials. The second was to analyze challenges facing the availability and use of improvised History teaching and learning materials. The latter objective extended advice on remedies to challenges emanating from the study. The three PITA community secondary schools involved were named as school 1, school 2, and school 3 respectively. The participants were identified as (Ht), that is History teacher. Therefore, participants involved were Ht-a from school 1, Ht-a, Ht-b, Ht-c from school 2, and Ht-a, Ht-b, Ht-c from school 3. The context of using observations and documents were also identified accordingly.

### 4.1 History Subject Improvised Teaching and Learning Materials

The first research objective intended to give a History teacher opportunity to mention the improvised teaching and learning materials used in the PITA project schools. Before the participants had responded to this objective, they were asked if they improvise materials. All seven participating History teachers reported that they improvise teaching and learning materials for History lessons. Also, these teachers were asked if they involve their students in preparation of the teaching and learning materials. All of them pointed out that several times they involve students in preparation of improvised materials for History lessons. Then, the participants were asked to list the most common improvised materials used in the process of teaching and learning. The listed materials were coded in sub-themes and presented as: visual, community-environmental- based, as well as digital and printed materials.

#### (i) Visual Materials

One of the identified improvised visual materials is bio-visual aids. In the course of teaching the topic on "Colonial Economy", teachers employed a variety of cash crops which were grown in Africa. Such cash crops include "sisal, coffee and cotton" (Questionnaire from Ht-c, school 3 on 18th October 2024). Also, another participant mentioned "cotton" (Questionnaire from Ht-a, school 1 on 18th October 2024). The data from lesson plans and scheme of work showed that

teachers have indicated the use of cash crops as teaching and learning aids (Documents reviewed at school 3 on 18th October 2024). Nevertheless, the researchers observed pictures which were hung on the walls showing the cash crops which were produced during the colonial era but were not grown in the area (Observation made in school 3 on 18th October 2024). This implies that teachers are aware of some cash crops which can be improvised to facilitate teaching and learning on agricultural colonial economic activities.

Another bio-visual material for teaching and learning is food crops. The research participants mentioned different food crops for example “banana tree and maize, variety of leguminous crops, root crops and fruits” (Questionnaire from Ht-a, school 1 on 18th October 2024). In addition, the data from documents reviewed showed that teachers planned to use a sample of crops such as maize, beans, groundnuts, sunflower as examples of food crops which are used to facilitate teaching (Documents reviewed at school 3 on 18th October 2024). The data imply that identified food crops can be improvised for History lesson as teaching and learning materials.

Further, the samples of real objects were mentioned as visual materials used by the participant teachers in teaching History subject. These real objects include; “stones, iron tools, motors and pestles” (Questionnaires from Ht-b, school 2 on 15th October 2024). Similarly, the data from analyzed lesson plans and lesson notes showed clear examples of real objects planned to enhance teaching and learning. Such real objects were stones and iron tools (Documents reviewed at school 2 on 15th October, 2024). Also, it was mentioned that, “a box, manila papers to make drawings...” were also used in History lesson (Questionnaire from Ht-a school 1 on 18th October 2024). Other real objects reviewed from documents were mats, pots, spears, hoes, utensils and containers (Documents reviewed at school 3 on 18th October 2024). The data therefore imply that teachers are capable of identifying real objects which can be used for supporting students teaching and learning. The real objects can be improvised to meet the needs of the materials for a particular History lesson. In addition, History teachers from school 3 managed to teach the topic on “Hand craft industry and trade” to form one students through an exhibition of real objects that were produced and exchanged in the precolonial regional trades. They illustrated distinctly the concept of “barter trade” through real objects such that the students were fascinated by the lesson that indicated high retention of information and understanding of the lesson.

The other materials are sketched maps, drawings and pictures. These are also visual materials. One of the participants mentioned that “...sketched maps” (Questionnaire from Ht-b, school 2 on 15th October 2024). Another participant listed a “map” as material for History subject (Questionnaire from Ht-b, school 3 on 18th October 2024). Likewise, researchers observed different sketched maps which were prepared by History teachers and displayed on class whole. For example, a map that shows historical sites in East Africa and a map showing trade routes (Observations made on 15th October 2024 at school 2). Moreover, the researchers have reviewed lesson notes with sketched maps showing various events. Also, students’

notes books had well sketched maps, drawings of evolution of man, diagrams of early stone/iron tools and tables show goods and commodities of triangular slave trade (Documents reviewed at school 2 on 15th October 2024). Similarly, the observation made by the researchers pointed out that there were diagrams which were drawn showing stages of evolution of man, and pictures showing slaves with heavy ivory under closely supervision of colonialists (Observation made at school 2 on 15th October 2024). Moreover, it was mentioned that History teachers use sketched maps and pictures of influential leaders” (Questionnaire from Ht-a school 2 on 15th October 2024). “Models” were also mentioned by participants Ht-a, and Ht-b from school 2 (Questionnaire dated 15th October 2024). In addition, a History lesson plan from school 2 indicated that pictures show types of agriculture and pictures of handcraft industry were planned to be used during History lesson (Documents reviewed at school 2 on 15th October 2024). Regarding classroom observations made in schools, the following were noted as an example of History teaching and learning materials used during the lesson. At school 2, observation was made during the lesson with Form one class. This is what was observed: a chalk-board, a sketchmap of Central Africa and a list of factors for the rise of the Congo Kingdom were used. Further observation was that:

“...the chalk-board was well divided into three columns. At the centre top, the title of the topic was written in capital letters ‘FACTORS FOR THE RISE OF THE CONGO KINGDOM’, and the other spaces provided were used for notes. Also, a sketch map of Central Africa on a manila paper was well fixed on one of the columns. The sketched map was clearly visible. Students could visualize the location of the pre-colonial Congo Kingdom amongst the States”. Furthermore, students were asked to make a list of factors for the rise of the Congo Kingdom. Students did that in groups. Then after, students presented their discussions. The teacher noted the factors on the chalk-board and corrected them (Observation made at school 2 on 15th October 2024).

The data on the use of maps, drawings and pictures imply that History teachers improvise these materials for teaching and learning various History topics. However, ready-made visual materials like the chalk-board can be also used to support the use of improvised materials. Nevertheless, teachers were reluctant to employ much ready-made teaching materials because of the fact that they have involved a long bureaucratic process and money in order to obtain them.

#### (ii) Community-Environmental-Based Materials

The data has shown that some teaching and learning materials are from the community or environment around schools. These materials were mentioned as “roads, railways and farms”. A response from one of the participants through questionnaires was that “I use real school environment” (Questionnaire from Ht-c, school 2 on 15th October 2024), “...transportation system near the school such as railways and roads” (Questionnaire from Ht-c, school 3 on 18th October 2024). Nevertheless, researchers observed the farms with grains near the schools, where teachers take students to see those cash crops when teaching about types of crops in

the colonial era (Observation made at school 1 on 18th October 2024). This reveals that teachers are capable of using real environment for improvisation of visual teaching and learning materials.

Nevertheless, school 3 planned for a History exhibition day on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024. The researchers were astonished to see a museum containing all History teaching materials created during the year 2024. All History students in their respective groups, passed around various stations with classified teaching aids reminding one another regarding various topics that they had learned. Therefore, this indicates that improvised teaching and learning materials are powerful platform for students to revise what they learned in previous months or years. The researchers further observed students uttering that they were responsible for constructing certain objects while others claimed that they collected them from their homes. This indicates that students participated in the improvisation of day to day teaching and learning materials.

### (iii) Digital and Printed Materials

Videos and tablets were listed as digital materials. The data from one participant indicated that “videos” are used to facilitate teaching and learning (Questionnaires from Ht-b, school 2 on 15th October 2024). Another participant mentioned that “... videos are very interesting since students and teachers listen and watch at the same time” (Questionnaires from Ht-a, school 2 on 15th October 2024). The other participant from the same school indicated that the “Artificial Intelligence (AI)” has been used in teaching History. The teacher named it “My wizard teacher!” (Questionnaires from Ht-c, school 2 on 15th October 2024). Also, through review of documents it was noted that the teacher had indicated to use a tablet in making notes (Document reviewed at school 3 on 18th October 2024). In addition, scripts of songs, speeches and past papers are improvised to facilitate teaching and learning. These materials are printed on a paper and can be read aloud, sang or narrated in the course of teaching and learning (Document reviewed at school 3 on 18th October 2024). Thus, the data on digital and printed materials also bring the assumption that History teachers use ready-made materials. These materials are also known as visual-audio which facilitate teaching and learning of History lessons. In addition, during exhibition day at school 3-one History teacher with a tablet showed the researchers a number of websites with ready-made notes for various History topics. The teacher allowed the researchers to view a list of videos that were used in the course of teaching. (Observation made at school 3 on 23rd October 2024).

Generally, the data from observations, questionnaires and documents reviewed showed that various teaching and learning materials are used in class depending on the nature of the topics taught. This implies that teachers and students improvise teaching and learning materials. However, ready-made materials are used simultaneously in order to meet the expected learning outcomes of the lesson.

## 4.2 Challenges: Availability and Use of Improvised Materials

The last objective was to analyze challenges facing the availability and use of improvised History teaching and learning materials in the PITA Project schools. The challenges include: limited funds, limited time for preparation of materials, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate materials, difficulties in the use of English language as a medium of instruction, and lack of special rooms for storage of materials as presented next.

### (i) Limited Funds

Lack of funds was seen to be an obstacle affecting all schools in the improvisation of History teaching and learning materials. Participants commented that; financial problems, lack of funds, shortage of money for more materials, funds for supporting students to visit the nearby historical sites are challenges. For instance, the Ht-a, from school 3 mentioned “lack of funds” (Questionnaire on 18th October, 2024). Also, another participant mentioned that “shortage of money for providing teaching and learning materials” (Questionnaire from Ht-a, school 1 on 18th October, 2024). Furthermore, when students and teachers plan for study visits, they need funds. The analyzed documents, such as History department meetings minutes, did not show any budget for study visits and support for improvisation of teaching and learning materials. Therefore, the data on the shortage of funds revealed that teachers are challenged to avail and use improvised materials.

### (ii) Limited Time

One of the research participants commented that “time for preparation of teaching materials is a challenge” (Questionnaire from Ht-a, school 1 on 18th October, 2024). This History teacher also explained the mentioned challenge that “it needs a lot of time to prepare teaching materials” (Questionnaire from Ht-a, school 1 on 18th October, 2024). Apart from teaching students, some teachers have other responsibilities, like managerial activities to accomplish. The researchers observed one History teacher was responsible for supervising the ongoing class construction. Thus, setting apart time for improvising teaching and learning materials is a challenge (Observation made at school 1 on 18th October 2024). The availability and use of improvised materials require teachers to have enough time for preparation.

### (iii) Overcrowded Classrooms

Depending on the type of improvised materials needed, the materials for teaching and learning should be visible, readable, touchable, felt, and smelt, to mention some. One participant responded that “not all topics can be taught by improvised materials. Teachers find it difficult to prepare teaching and learning materials which could assist all students to learn within class hours” (Questionnaire from Ht-b, school 3 on 18th October 2024). Some of the observed History classroom had more than 50 students (Observation made at school 3 on 18th October 2024). Therefore, the availability and use of improvised materials could be limited in very large classes.

**(iv) Inadequate Pedagogical Materials**

Some of the participants commented that there are very important teaching and learning materials which are not available in the school environment. Those materials are electronic devices like “camera, laptops and projectors” (Questionnaire from Ht-a, school 3 on 18th October 2024). Other materials are “projectors and computers” which were observed to be very few for enhancing teaching and learning (Observation made at school 2 on 15th October 2024). Another participant commented that “there is a lack of materials around the school” (Questionnaire from Ht-a, school 1 on 18th October 2024). Another participant commented that “it is impossible to get materials like Carbon 14 around the school environment” (Questionnaire from Ht-b, school 3 on 18th October 2024). Also, another participant responded that “materials needed for improvisation are very few and not all are found in the school environment” (Questionnaire from Ht-b, school 2 on 15th October 2024). The data imply that lack of improvised teaching and learning materials affects the teaching and learning of History subject. However, lack of electronic devices which support improvised materials affect the availability and use of improvised materials.

**(v) Difficulties in the Language of Instruction**

In the process of teaching and learning History subject, English language is used as a medium of instruction which brings a challenge to some students with an inadequate foundation of English language. Teachers tend to switch to Kiswahili language for making clarification of various concepts for enhancing students understanding. The participant from school 2 mentioned that “most of the topics and sub-topics want a deep explanation” (Questionnaire from Ht- b, on 15th October 2024). The researchers observed that students used to communicate in Kiswahili language around the school environment (Observation made at school 2 on 15th October 2024). When the teacher allows students to use Kiswahili language, students become more active and cooperate in class compared to when English language is used. Thus, since the improvised materials are to be communicated in English language, teachers and students need to have mastery of History subject concepts and vocabulary in English which is the medium of instruction. However, an unfamiliar language of instruction is a challenge on the use of improvised materials.

**(vi) Lack of space for storage of Materials**

One participant commented “when you prepare learning materials and leave them in the classroom students destroy them” (Questionnaire from Ht-b, school 3 on 18th October 2024). This reveals that teachers find it difficult to keep the prepared teaching and learning materials leading to time consuming preparation of the same materials in the future for teaching the same content. The researchers observed that there were no storage rooms for teaching and learning material. The researchers commented further on this observation that it seems the storage of teaching materials is upon the subject teacher to find a place where he/she could keep his/her materials (Observation made at school 2 on 15th October 2024). This also affects the improvisation of teaching and learning materials in History subject because they can be misplaced or misused since they are not stored. In his own words, Ht-c in school 2 wrote “I cannot keep

improvised materials in the office or at home; the space is not enough. There should be a room for keeping improvised materials as they are equally important as books in the library” (Questionnaire from Ht-c, school 2 on 15th October 2024).

**5. Discussion**

Discussion is made on key findings on the improvisation of teaching and learning materials for History subject. Three main themes are discussed from the findings. These are: the art of combination of materials, usage of technological resources in pedagogy, and opportunities derived from the challenges.

**5.1 Combination of Teaching and Learning Materials**

The findings show that teaching and learning materials for History subject are used in combination. Both the man-made and ready-made materials facilitate teaching and learning. These materials can be grouped into the following: (i) visual materials-real objects, pictures or photographs and diagrams, (ii) audio materials-songs and presentations, (iii) audio-visual materials, (iv) tactile-models, (v) printed-notes, text books, blackboard, question papers and marking schemes, (vi) digital materials-videos, whiteboards, tablets, and (vii) community environment-based materials-mainly community resources. According to Ndomondo [15], a rich learning environment supported by a variety of materials is crucial in the teaching and learning of History subject. These materials are carefully selected and prepared for teaching and learning in different stages of developing a lesson [15,25]. Also, the majority of teachers (84.3%) across PITA schools use improvised and ready-made materials [37]. For this reason, the findings show that a number of improvised teaching and learning materials are known and used by History teachers and students. Nevertheless, ready-made materials are also used in combination.

**5.2 The Use of Technological Resources in Pedagogy**

The growth of the field of science and technology has a great influence on the teaching and learning of History subject. As the field of science and technology grows also the field of History grows [1,2,15]. The study findings show that although improvised materials are used in pedagogy, technological devices such as videos and AI systems, ICT related tools like computers, projectors, and camera are also used by some History teachers. Such teachers seem to keep pace with the modern technological advancements in pedagogy. Authors like Beck [26]; Campbellet al. [32]; Kagori and Haule [28], Ndomondo [15], Meney [27] and Richard [25] give more examples of technological resources that include internet, film strips, mobile phones and textual materials which can be found on-line.

Thus, the findings reveal that digitization of History teaching and learning process is gradually finding its way into research schools. This is a positive step in teaching professional development. The findings call for institutional and individual awareness of digital resources, operations, as well as their uses [15,25]. History teachers need to be trained for example on how to search for videos for History lesson

preparations, and use History related videos in the History classroom, where History teachers and students become more motivated, creative, skilled, interested and critical thinkers. This will make the realistic picture of History subject and more relevant to teachers and students' lives [15,25].

### 5.3 Opportunities Derived from Challenges

In the context of this study, the findings indicate that community secondary schools in the Meru District Council experience some challenges on availability and utilization of improvised teaching and learning materials. These challenges include: limited funds, limited time for preparation of materials, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate materials, difficulties on the use of English language as the medium of instruction, and a place for storage of improvised materials. Related studies provide evidence that these challenges are historical and common in various schools both community and private schools in Tanzania (Karogi and Haule [28]; Ndomondo [15]; Meney [27]; MoEST [5]; PITA-End of Project Evaluation Report, 2021; PITA Annual Project Report, [37] [25]). These authors made similar recommendations on how to deal with such challenges. The recommendations were directed to the MoEST and its institutions like Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), school administration and its management as well as individual teachers and other stakeholders (Karogi and Haule [28]; Ndomondo [15]; Meney [27]; MoEST [5]; [36, 38] [25]). Such recommendations include: stakeholders to organize trainings for pre-service and continuing teachers, to equip teachers with skills for preparation and use of materials including digital ones, translate policies statements on pedagogy into meaningful practices, strengthen school-community collaboration in provision of materials, as well as allocation of school library and computer laboratories which are equipped with adequate teaching and learning materials.

For this reason, in this article authors have seen the need not to reiterate the list of common challenges and recommendations made, but to extend the discussion of current action taken by the Government of Tanzania towards the challenges, and the recommendations related to the present study. For example, section 3.3 and 3.6 of the ETP of 2014 (2023) Edition indicate the key areas planned to improve the quality of education and training which include: the establishment of conducive environment for the delivery of education and training using ICT in all levels of education and trainings (ref section 3.3.2 of the ETP 2014 (2023) Edition), and ensure the availability of sufficient resources to meet the needs of teaching and learning materials to the established standards to all levels of education and training (ref section 3.6.4.5 of the ETP 2014 (2023) Edition). Therefore, in this context the Government of Tanzania has done the following:

#### (i) Technological Resources

The MoEST has formalized the teaching of Computer Science as a compulsory subject to all levels of education and training [5]. The Tanzania Institute of Education has also published a current syllabus for Computer Science [29]. Opportunity is there for schools to employ professional ICT

teachers who will teach the subject and facilitate the teaching of other subject like History via ICT tools [15,25,30,31]. Opportunities from the Government should be extended also to newly employed teachers who are to be supplied with tablets, desk top computers with internet connections at their schools. In addition, schools need to conduct in-service trainings and seminars for all teachers including History teachers, on the application of ICT tools as current needs of science and technological advancement [15,25,30,31]. Nevertheless, trainings and seminars for teachers and students on the use of mobile phones for academic purposes are to be conducted. This will assist in educating on responsible engagement with mobile phones in schools [26,32].

#### (ii) Kiswahili Language-Medium of Instruction

The MoEST, through the TIE facilitate curriculum or syllabus for a history related subject "Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili". The subject is taught in Kiswahili Language at all levels of education and training in the country [1,2]. Together with the advantages of using Kiswahili language in the process of teaching and learning "Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili" (ref section 1.0 of this article), students are becoming familiar with several topics which are taught and learnt in the History subject which English Language is a medium of instruction [1,2]. Anticipation is made that with time, students will not lose interest in studying History subject.

#### (iii) Priority in Allocation of Funds

The concern on funds for buying and maintaining teaching and learning materials is also considered and worked out by the MoEST through its Councils. Strategic budgeting is essential in schools based on educational priorities. Thus, the allocation of funds for materials and a place for storage including improvised ones could also be prioritized. [15,25,31]. Further, the availability and allocation of funds for these materials could also encourage the improvisation of materials needed. Schools are to be connected to the National Broad Networks for consideration of techno-teaching support [15]. However, teacher's individual efforts are needed in valuing their profession by giving time to search for, and prepare teaching and learning materials. This is an issue of a teacher being professional, responsible and honest in service [33].

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 6.1 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that improvisation of teaching and learning materials is essential for History education in Tanzanian secondary schools, particularly under resource constraints. Teachers and students work together to create and utilize materials, blending traditional and modern resources. Despite ongoing challenges with funding, time, and storage, innovative strategies and community involvement show promise for improving educational quality. Continued attention to technological integration and policy support will be key for future progress.

## 6.2 Recommendations

The study recommends to History teachers and other subject teachers that:

- 1) Should keep on using improvised teaching and learning materials as they play a pivotal role in the implementation of curricula. Creativity among the teaching profession is very necessary for teachers. This could be achieved through training and the integration of improvisation skills in methodology courses.
- 2) Cooperation among school administration, students, community and other stakeholders is very crucial in enhancing the process of preparation, use and storage of materials.
- 3) Should take positively the pace of development in the field of science and technology. Thus, improvised materials are to be integrated with technology-related resources to make History learnt in a livelier manner.

## 7. Future Scope

Further research is recommended on improvisation and students' learning outcomes. Researchers could examine the impact of improvised instructional materials on students' academic performance, interests, and intention in History across different regions and school types. Also, research could be conducted in the context of Tanzanian schools on mechanism for maximizing the positive use and impact of smart phones to teachers and students.

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#### \*Title's Translations

1. ...History Syllabus for Ordinary Secondary Education, Form I-IV...
2. ...History of Tanzania and Ethics for Ordinary Secondary Education, Form I-IV...

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