**Article Title: Does the Communication Skills Course at Universities Serve the Needs of Students? A Multiple Case Study of two Universities in Tanzania**

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**Abstract**

This paper presents part of the findings of a study that investigated the relevance of the Communication Skills (hereafter, CS) course offered at University level in Tanzania to the needs of the students. The study was prompted by the fact that stakeholders in Education in Tanzania have been complaining that the students cannot express themselves competently in English even after the communication course training. The study involved 55 participants who included students, lecturers, Heads of Department, Academic Deans and curriculum developers. Purposive sampling was used. The qualitative multiple case study design was adopted with data being generated through interviews, observations, focus group discussions and document reviews. The data were analysed thematically. The study revealed that learners needed to know the language skills for social, academic and professional purposes. However, the CS course did not meet the students' needs. Similarly, the course did not meet students' expectations of using English language effectively. The findings showed that the skills taught were not helpful to students in learning other courses.

**Introduction**

The United Republic of Tanzania (URT) is an independent country in East Africa. Education in Tanzania is managed mainly through the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT). The Ministry has several independent agencies responsible for some core functions such as the National Examination Council of Tanzania (NECTA), the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), etc (Hare, 2007). Tanzania follows a 2-7-4-2-3+ system of education: pre-primary education takes two years, primary education takes seven years followed by four years of lower secondary education (ordinary level), two years of upper secondary education (advanced level) and three years (plus) of tertiary or university studies. However, there are some other courses which take either one or two years at tertiary and university levels; for example: certificate and ordinary diploma courses.

**The Politics of Language in Tanzania**

Tanzania, like many African countries, boasts of over 127 indigenous languages being spoken in this country of forty-five million people. According to Kadeghe (2010), indeed a common educational dilemma in multilingual African countries is what to choose as the language of instruction. In the absence of ethnically neutral lingua franca, any choice is seen to favour certain ethno-linguistic groups at the expenses of all others. Tanzania differs from some of its neighbours in that a lingua franca, Kiswahili, is spoken as a second language by a vast majority of the population and is a straight forward choice for a national language.

Nonetheless, Tanzania has not escaped the medium of instruction problems plaguing so many countries. Although Kiswahili is used in Primary education, English is the medium of instruction at secondary and post-secondary levels. There is ongoing debate

over whether the communicative competence of average Tanzanian secondary school students can enable them acquire knowledge comfortably.

The problem of language and education in Tanzania has been under fierce discussion among Tanzania educators and parents alike for the past two decades. According to Kadeghe (1994), in the sixties it was usually assumed that the use of English as a medium of instruction in secondary schools was necessary but as a temporary measure; that by 1974, Kiswahili should have taken over the function. Interestingly, no changes of medium were made despite the heated debates that students fail exams because their competence of English language is now.

Kadeghe (ibid) explains that in 1983, Nyerere (the then president of Tanzania) appointed a commission on education that among other things, was expected to resolve the problem of the choice of the medium of education at various educational levels. The commission recommended that the medium of instruction should be Kiswahili, from Primary to the University. Makweta (1983) who had chaired the commission and had been subsequently appointed Minister for Education was reported to have said that the government had decided that secondary school subjects would be taught in English and that Kiswahili would remain the medium of instruction in primary schools only.  For three decades now, there have been fierce debates on the usefulness of English against Kiswahili as the medium of instruction. The debates are still going on.

**Impetus for the study**

The Communication Skills (CS) course which was the subject of investigation in this study was introduced at the University of Dar-es-salaam, Tanzania in 1978 and at Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, Tanzania in 1987 to respond to complaints from lecturers and external examiners that students could not express themselves effectively in English language, leading to poor academic performance.  According to the Tanzania Institute of Education TIE (2007), the course aimed at developing the following specific competencies: explain and apply theory of communication, use language skills effectively in the learning process, give answers appropriately, interpret and use nonverbal communication, give and receive feedback effectively during teaching and learning process, analyse and use appropriate types of communication in teaching and learning process and to interpret and answer examination questions appropriately. The CS course also aimed at developing the skills of using study skills to gather information, taking notes when listening to oral presentation (speeches and lectures) and using sign language and Braille to communicate with deaf and blind students respectively. Therefore, the general focus of the CS course was to develop ability to learn effectively at University level through the medium of English language and communicate about the different subjects in English.

However, some studies (such as Komba, 2008; Mbowe, 1994) indicate that many students in the Higher Education (HE) institutions failed to communicate effectively using English and exhibited deficiency in writing skills even after doing the course. They also failed to employ writing techniques as they were taught in the CS course and

majority claimed to have communication problems even after doing the course. Finally, a great part of CS course syllabi was grammatical. Many topics were a repetition of the secondary school English language syllabi.

These problems demonstrated that the CS course did not meet the students' academic needs. Besides, the CS course did not meet students' communication needs. The skills taught were not applicable in other courses. The studies indicated that various problems needed to be solved. Some issues needed to be explored through research to understand better the teaching of CS in HE institutions in Tanzania. It was also important to find out the extent to which the HE institutions conducted studies to analyse the academic communicative needs of students before designing the syllabi. This could help determine what exactly could be included in the syllabus.

Academically, the previous studies have not revealed the communication needs of learners. For example, the study conducted by Mbowe (1994) examined and established the factors influencing lack of interests in the CS courses among the students in Tanzanian training institutions. However, Mbowe's study did not examine the needs of Tanzanian students in terms of CS and ways that are used by the teachers (who are not sufficiently trained) to present CS course.

A related study by Mbuligwe (1995) sought to evaluate the CS dimension in the General Studies (GS) course for 'A' level (High schools) candidates in Tanzanian Secondary Schools. The study aimed at finding the evidence the GS innovation was primarily aimed at promoting the 'A' candidates' CS in English in Tanzania. Mbuligwe (1995) did not explore the communication needs of the students.

Another study done by Msangi (2008) carried out a critical analysis of the CS syllabus, in Technical College in Arusha, Tanzania.  The study aimed at determining the appropriateness of the CS syllabus in addressing the curriculum objectives and improving students language proficiency. However, this study did not analyse the needs of students in terms of Communication Skills. Rugemalira (1990) discusses the Communication Skills Unit (CSU) at the University of Dar-es-Salaam (UDSM), Tanzania. The unit was established as a semi-autonomous section of the department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics.  However, the study did not pay attention to the current needs of Tanzanian students in terms of the CS course.

Overall, the existing related studies did not address the question of whether the CS course in Tanzanian HE institutions addressed the needs of the students. The present study sought to address this gap by generating data that could give insights into this critical question.

**Methodology**
The study was designed as a qualitative multiple case study based on the relativist-interpretivist philosophical research paradigm (Richards, 2003; Jwang and Ong'ondo, 2011). The qualitative approach allowed a flexible, iterative strategy of generating data from participants who were purposively sampled in their natural settings using uncontrolled, triangulated techniques (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, Richards, 2003 and

Mason, 2002). The present study was a multiple case study of two universities in Tanzania that offer the Communications Skills course. This research method enabled us to gain a rich understanding of the contexts of the study.

The two universities (a public and a private) were selected purposively. The universities that were chosen were relevant to the study because they offer various courses in Education, Business and Management or Humanities and Social Sciences, hence could afford different perspectives on the teaching of the CS course at the university level. The overall question the study sought to find an answer to was: to what extent does the CS course serve its intended purpose in Tanzania?

A total of Fifty-five respondents were involved in this study, they included: forty-two students, three lecturers who were teaching the CS course, four lecturers who were teaching other courses, two heads of departments, two academic deans and two curriculum developers from the Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MEVT). Sampling of relatively fewer participants allowed more in-depth generation of data. Four techniques were used to generate data: interviews, observation, focused group discussions and document analysis. These are the data generation techniques which are commonly used with qualitative researches as explained by Baxter and Babbie (2004).

The data were analysed thematically following the steps explained in  Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011, p. 103): transcribing the data, re-familiarising with the data, first phase coding, second phase coding, and third phase coding and producing a report. In terms of trustworthiness, attention was paid to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability which were taken care of through triangulation, maintaining an audit trail, member checking and provision of a thick description and triangulation (Lichtman, 2009).  Furthermore, the ethical issues such as seeking informed consent, maintenance of confidentiality, anonymity, avoidance of harm and honesty were observed (Jwan and Ong'ondo, 2011).

**Findings**

The study revealed three main types of needs for the CS course by the university students: academic needs, professional and social needs as presented below.

### *The academic needs*

In terms of academics, the study revealed that the students wanted to acquire Communication skills so as to interact with lecturers and fellow students in academic contexts competently in English language, they needed to read and comprehend texts and they also had the need to answer examination questions correctly as affirmed by the participants in excerpts from their interviews, cited below:

> ...we need to interact with other students in the classroom; outside the class....Communication helps us to find some answers for our assignments... *(Student studying CS course)*

> ...I think they need more comprehension. So they lack comprehension, when they read something they have to comprehend it that is when they can answer questions... *(Dean, Academic Affairs)*

With reference to the need to interact with lecturers and students in academic context, the students indicated that they needed the CS course to interact with other students in the classroom and outside the classroom as stated by one of the participants below:

> ...My expectation was to see students speaking English frequently using communication skills and following the rules and principles of language which makes them different from those people who have not reached this high level of communication, but it is not the case. Speaking skills are not good especially tenses formulation, use of gestures, different ways of expressing yourself. It is so difficult for most of the students especially in the presentation. Most of them are using words which are not supposed to be used in appropriate way. So, 'tenses' for the university students is a big problem.' Tenses' is something which is supposed to be taught… (*Student studying CS course)*

Students also explained that they needed to know how to communicate with their lecturers concerning academic issues and about relevant different matters.

The lecturers teaching the CS course also admitted that the students needed listening and speaking skills for proper learning at the university. The students also needed to understand how to communicate after being provided with necessary skills since many Tanzanians do not have good background in speaking the language as one lecturer explained below:

> ...We, Tanzanians, don't have a good background in speaking language because in most cases if you give a task of writing to students, you will admire the way they  write well but when it comes to speaking, we even 'fight' sometimes in the class because some of the students think that we are forcing them. They sometimes ask "why are you forcing me to speak? I cannot speak, I feel shy" and

all those things that are coming from the students... *(Lecturer teaching CS course)*

The Heads of Department (HODs) acknowledged the need for oral skills. As they admitted, the course at the university level helps students to take part in discussions as quoted below:

> ... Communication Skills course especially at the University level helps students in making discussions and academic writings. Most of the Tanzanian students are not good. They don't have good background of English. Of course, that is the problem. So, we need to brush them so that they can get ability of writing academic papers. Academic writing needs Communication skills in English language. This is the worldwide language. So they need it too. For example for us to be International people we need to know English language because this is an international language... *(Head of Department)*

The participants from the Ministry of Education emphasized that the needs of students actually come from the name of the course itself. The course is expected to give a student the ability to communicate well or have skills to help them become better communicators. The students indicated the need for writing skills because the course helped them take notes during lectures:

> ... My need as far as communication skills is concern; of course, I was told that at the university level, communication is mostly verbal. Now if it is verbal, the speed of lecturers varies from one lecturer to another. So we need to have a certain kind of writing to cope with the speed of the lecturers. So, we were told that when we are given some short forms of writing words, for instance, if we are writing the word 'language' we just write 'lg' and not the full word. Now, when it comes to writing 'between' we just write 'btn' just to save time and space because the speed of the lecturers vary from one to another and we need to have the right information. If it happens that we are asked to write full sentences, of course, we find ourselves into problems. We are left behind and if at all you are left behind, then you will fail to get the required knowledge. So, when I came here, I was very keen in designing some systems of writing using that short hand... *(Student studying other than Communication Skills course)*

They also explained that the CS course, especially at the university level, helped the students in academic writings. Overall they argued that the course is needed by the students because it helps them to interact with lectures and fellow students in academic context.

The need to read and comprehend texts was also revealed by the study. The lecturers teaching CS course admitted that reading properly was important at the university. In addition, the academic deans emphasized that the students have to comprehend what they read because they have to read novels and speak in English to have more comprehension as cited below:

> ...I think they need comprehension more because they lack comprehension. When they read something, they have to comprehend it. That is when they can answer questions. So, that is what they lack. So, they have to read a lot of novels and speak in English to have more comprehension, to enable them communicate properly, and then they can even be in support of other courses. This is because without communication, they cannot comprehend whether they are told this and that. Unless we have this Communication Skills course, we cannot communicate to other people, that is, to transfer their knowledge and get knowledge from others. And this is through the medium of English. The problem is English because once you do not know English you cannot communicate using it. So they need these basic language skills... *(Dean of Academic Affairs)*

The documents analysis also showed that reading skills were part and parcel of the academic needs. The course contents included various components related to reading as one of the syllabi showed:

> ...At the end of the course, students should be able to listen to aural texts such as news/science reports for gist and in details. The students should be able to know reading skills: intermediate application of reading strategies: skimming and scanning, intensive reading, further reading and understanding of different genres and diverse texts, particularly subject specific text... *(Document analysis)*

Some documents just mentioned generally that the learners needed to know reading strategies, paraphrasing and summarizing information as quoted below:

> …the students need reading skills and intermediate application of reading strategies (skimming and scanning, intensive reading, contextual guessing). They need further reading and understanding of different genres and diverse texts particularly subject specific texts. They need to know individual reading of texts. Also, students need to know advanced application of reading strategies, advanced reading and understanding of different genres and diverse texts… *(Document analysis)*

The need to answer examination questions featured in the findings. The students emphasized that they needed to know how to answer questions. It was very important for them to know how to attempt different questions. In addition, they explained that the course helped them to find answers for their assignments. Some students acknowledged the weaknesses in the use of tenses which affected them in the class presentation as quoted below:

> ...Speaking skills are not good especially the tenses formulation, use of gestures and different ways of self expression. It is so difficult for most of the students

especially in the presentation. Most of them are using words in inappropriate way. So, the big challenge to most of the university students is tenses and spelling. 'Tenses' is something which is supposed to be taught... *(Student studying other than CS course)*

Some documents indicated this need, especially in terms of reading skills. One of the subtopics related to reading skills is the ability to read texts and to demonstrate understanding by responding to questions. Likewise, the purpose of teaching the course as shown in one of the syllabi is depicted below:

> ...The Purpose is to help students plan and produce accurate written work in assignments and examinations in their option subjects. They should be able to develop questioning skills through the use of various question forms. They should be able to develop practising planning and writing essays for exams... *(Document analysis)*

### The professional and social needs

Apart from the academic needs, the participants mentioned the professional and social needs as part and parcel of students' needs in terms of CS course. The study revealed three needs: need to understand the communication contexts/patterns and challenges in different organizations, need to relate amicably as individuals or groups within the professional/work context and the need to carry out communication tasks required such induction, interviews, press conferences, organizing public events, among others.

The students explained that they needed to understand communication contexts in organization because not all people know the basic and appropriate ways of communicating effectively. They claimed that they would be able to communicate well and be competent in all issues concerning communication skills. What they needed was to know how to communicate while working in the organizations due to the flow of information from the authorities to the subordinates as verified from the following quotation:

> ...The time I came at the university, my needs in terms of communication skills as a student was to know how to communicate well. For example, when somebody works in the organizations, he needs to have good communication skills because there is a flow of information from the top level to the low level. So, we are studying communication skills in order to help us to communicate well in the organizations... *(Student studying other than CS course)*

Furthermore, the students needed to know active and effective listening and incorporate etiquette. Document review revealed that developing students' listening skills was one of the purposes of teaching the course as quoted:

> ...Students will be equipped with the four language skills that include: reading, listening, writing and speaking for effective communication. The objective of this course is to help students be able to listen and understand English at the university level and to develop students' listening skills, that is, listening to

lecturers and take notes. The students need active and effective listening and effective use of visual aids. In addition, they need listening strategies, corporate etiquette, Minutes taking. The course objectives state that: at the end of the course, students should be able to listen to aural texts such as news…for gist and detail... *(Document analysis)*

Writing skills is the need which was most mentioned by the students in this study as cited below:

...In terms of communications, yes! We need to know how to summarize things which have the information needed but in brief way. It means that, we do not have to write the whole thing but we have to paraphrase something when we are writing. Therefore, there are key issues to consider when writing.  It means that there are essential issues to consider as we join those ideas and write tangible things... *(Student studying other than Communication Skills course)*

However, the lecturers teaching other courses had different views in relation to the needs presented above. They argued that acquiring and understanding the knowledge of the profession is one thing and communicating with others is a different issue as indicated below:

...Of course Communication Skills course is necessary in all of the courses irrespective of whether a student comes from law or science because at the end of the day whatever a student studies basically should be communicated. For instance, myself I studied BA Electronics but at the end of it, I am a lecturer now. So, knowing and understanding the knowledge of my profession is one thing and communicating with others is a different thing. So, if I can't communicate what I have, it is useless. So, it is important for all of us, the students and the lectures, to understand the language... *(Lecturer teaching other than CS course)*

The lecturers emphasised that the students need to communicate with different people; that is, sending and receiving information. According to them the course could help them to communicate with the other members of the society. They also need accuracy in listening to news and understanding informal speeches. After learning the course, they would be able to know how to communicate with different people who have different status and different professional backgrounds. The students believed that after studying the course, they could communicate with people without formal education. In addition, they could get employment opportunities as captured in a statement by one of the students cited below:

…It helps us in different purposes, especially in communicating with different people such as those who are educated and those who are not educated. The course helps us in giving and receiving information, because when you talk about giving information to someone or receiving some information from other people, a person will be able to receive employment opportunities from somewhere or any other information… *(Student studying Communication Skills course)*

With regards to reading, the students expressed this need as follows:

> ...I think we need it because Communication Skills deals with communication. Whatever we do every day in our life, we usually communicate to one another. Also in Communication Skills, there is a subtopic called reading skills. It helps us to read and know how to attempt different questions. I think it is important. Also in Communication Skills, there is a subtopic called reading skills, it helps us in the way of reading... *(Student studying Communication Skills course)*

Furthermore, the students need to know how to interpret messages from other people and how to give feedback to the senders of the messages. As they stated, this process needs confidence in communication with people especially in terms of writing skills, reading skills and speaking skills. Moreover, other students explained categorically that they wanted to know how to communicate with their customers in terms of both writing and speaking. The speaking skills are needed for conversational strategies, informal speeches and telephone conversations.

The lecturers teaching other courses stated that the students studying Communication Skills as a course but the main challenge was the applicability of its knowledge. They argued that many students after graduating were employed but they could not apply CS course as indicated by the following quotation:

> ...the students need to understand the importance and the main objectives of communication skills course to them because they study it as a course, but applicability is the problem. So what they need is just to make them understand the main purpose of the course. That is why many of them after graduating are employed but cannot apply communication skills because they studied it as a subject but not as a part of professionals... *(Lecturer teaching other than Communication Skills course)*

Finally, the participants from the Ministry of Education said that the students need to have the basic skills for communication if they want to communicate with any person from any part of the world depending on the language in use. Most of the participants expressed the need to relate amicably as individuals or groups within the professional or work context.

The need to carry out communication tasks such as induction, interviews, press conferences and organizing public events was highly acknowledged. The students admitted that when a person has been invited for the job interview, he/she has to apply effective communication as one of the students was quoted:

> ...normal contemporary students need much instruction about this course because every system in society needs communication especially effective communication. Even if somebody has been called for the interview, he/she has to apply effective communication. All students at the University level even those who are at higher levels of the University; they need Communication Skills... *(Student studying Communication Skills course)*

Some participants would like to study the course to gain presentation skills. They need to know how to make presentations and gain confidence to stand in front of the people.

Likewise, they said they need the skills of writing reports, paraphrasing and writing summaries also featured within the writing needs. On the other hand, the documents reviewed, especially the course outlines supported the views presented above as stated below:

> ...the students need to know writing for academic purposes, like term papers. Also they need to know how to write official documents like official letter writing, application letter, the office memo and the e-mails.  They will write letters for various purposes: request and enquires suggestions, opinions, complaints, responses to complaints. They also need skills of curriculum vitae (CV) writing, report writing, formal and informal speeches, official and/or business meetings and telephone conversations, etc… *(Document analysis).*

Data was also generated on two main themes phased in the form of the following questions: Does the CS course address the needs of students? What are the suggestions on how the CS course could meet the students' needs/ we begin with the former question.

### *Does the CS course address the needs of students?*

Most of the participants said that the needs of the students are quite minimally addressed by the CS course. They emphasized that most of the needs were not touched because what they expected from the course was not delivered as stated below:

> ….No.  In the course there are four key areas: Listening skills, writing skills, speaking skills and Reading skills. But we are supposed to be taught part of tenses. How exactly these words are formulated is it a noun or verb and how these verbs change according to time, if it's spelling and writing we were supposed to be taught if these critical spelling areas, how to spell these words. Because most of students did not take the language course in A-level and English is a big problem in Tanzania…. *(Former student of CS Course)*

The above finding that generally, the needs of the students were not met had also been revealed by previous studies (e.g. Komba, 2008), who had concluded that the skills taught were not helpful to students in all courses.

Overall, the present study indicated that many students did not employ competent writing, listening, speaking and reading techniques during lectures and in their assignments. They exhibited deficiencies in the skills even after doing the course.

It could be argued that while the lecturers wanted students to gain the ability to communicate competently in academic, professional and social contexts, the students' needs were to get more knowledge of the English language such as in terms of the grammatical rules. In practice though, most of the lecturers were insisting on mastery of content and not necessarily on the students' communicative ability because they wanted students to pass university examinations. Therefore, even the needs of the students and lecturers also on the teaching of the CS course lacked consistency.

**What are the suggestions on how the CS course could meet the students' needs**

The participants had the following suggestions to the students, lecturers, universities and the ministry of education and vocational training. First, the students were asked to use English language as a medium of communication and instruction as cited below:

> …when we were in secondary schools we were given punishment, if you were caught speaking Swahili. But this cannot be done here…but we have to use English...some people like practising English. They like speaking in English language all the time... so for them when they come to class, the content which is presented becomes simple... *(Student studying CS course)*

English language as a medium of communication and instruction was clearly stated in the policy of education of 1995. Nonetheless, most of the students and lecturers are still using Kiswahili as medium of instruction and communication to date.

Second, the lecturers were advised to conduct needs analysis of the students and use various techniques ad methods while teaching the communication skills course as the following quotations show:

> ……..problems  is like you conduct a needs analysis when you go for research what is the needs for that students  you take what they have written and the placement test and then you realize  most of these have this problem  then I base now my  teaching my course outline my objective on what  I have found out……*(Dean, Academic Affairs)*

> ...To use simple language, showing love to students, be open to them and let them do things not under pressure… They should not use, only talk then if there are difficult words they may write them on the chalkboard…..if it's spelling and writing, we are supposed to be taught these critical spelling areas and how to spell the words, because most of students did not take the language course in Advanced level and English is a big problem in Tanzania... *(Student studying CS course)*

In spite of that, most of the lecturers are not teachers by profession. They might have minimal knowledge of educational communication. As a result, using various techniques and methods to teaching Communication Skills course might be a challenge to them.

Third, the universities were asked to revise the syllabuses to meet the needs of the students: the following citation supports the suggestion:

> ...For me I see that for the case of Universities this course may be is made to be a course, to be taught in all years from first year to third year may be it could be helpful but again in other words I can say the person is taking English let it be like ICT there is no need of teaching the person who is taking English… *(Student studying the CS course)*

According to TCU (Tanzania Commission for Universities) and NACTE (The National Council for Technical Education), higher education institutions should revise the curricula and syllabi after every three years. While this is currently being implemented, the needs of the students are not yet fully addressed.

Finally, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT) was asked to review the policy of Education. Besides, the policy should state that English language should be taught from the lower levels. The following citations refer to the suggestions:

> ...there is something that I have suggested a number of times before that Tanzania is to review its language policy because if the situation continues to be like is two languages fighting for recognition or for prestige that need no to be in Tanzania…*(Dean, Academic Affairs)*

> ...According to me, I see that our Government, especially Government they are supposed to start teaching us English from the Primary level, so that when you come to the high education we are competent so that we can move on…*(Student studying CS Course)*

The findings of the study have highlighted the lack of consistency between the needs of the students and the objectives of teaching the course. This is due to the fact most of the objectives of teaching CS course that were developed by the MOEVT (TIE) address the academic needs only.

**Discussion**

The main concern in this paper; hence the main point of discussion is whether the CS course offered in University in Tanzania meets the needs of the students. In the foregoing sections, we have demonstrated that the students had academic, professional and social needs that they thought the CS course would enable them to meet. However, the data has revealed that these needs were largely unmet.

This finding has also featured in some previous studies, such as those by Komba (2008); and Mbowe (1994). The present study has specifically revealed that the CS course did not meet students' expectations of using English language effectively. The skills taught were not helpful to students in learning other courses. A study by Watermeyer (2011) concurred as it also pointed out that the existing Communication Skills training programmes were not necessarily sensitive to the needs because they were often poorly described in literature and they lacked theoretical background and focused excessively on evaluation.

Therefore, this study is consistent with the previous studies in revealing similar academic needs of the students. On the other hand, the findings of the study have identified more needs of the students than the needs disclosed by the previous studies. The needs include professional needs and social needs. In terms of professional needs, the students needed to understand the communication contexts/patterns and challenges in different organizations. The students also wanted to relate amicably as individuals or groups within the professional/work contexts. Finally, the students needed

to carry out communication tasks required such as induction, interviews, press conferences and organizing public events. Such professional and social needs for the CS course have not featured in previous studies in Africa; hence a major contribution of this study.

In the Tanzanian context, we have not come across any study that has identified the needs of the students in terms of CS course. A few publications exist on the need for CS course. As it has been presented in the background to the study, CS course aimed at minimizing problems related to English language in communicating in the academic setting.  So, CS course was introduced just for academic needs. However, as already indicated, even the academic needs were minimally met. Some previous studies have had similar findings. For example Komba (2008) found out that the skills taught were not helpful to students in all subjects. The CS course did not meet students' academic needs even after doing the course.

The main difference between our study and other previous studies is in terms of other needs that have been revealed by this study. The needs include: the social needs and professional needs in relation to employment in organizations. These needs were not considered while introducing the CS course. Therefore, With reference to the literature reviewed and the analysis of data, this study has made significant contributions to knowledge in the field of CS course

Overall, this study was very important not only to the teaching of Communication Skills (CS) course in English but also other in other languages like Kiswahili, French and German. These are some of the languages that are taught in Tanzania. The CS course can be applied in the languages after the investigation of the needs of the students.

**Conclusions**
Generally, the study sought to ascertain the extent to which CS course was serving its intended purpose in Tanzania. The overall key needs comprised the academic needs, professional needs and social needs, which were largely unmet by the content and process of the CS course. Overall, this study has made important contributions to knowledge in the fields of Communication Studies and Education by highlighting a matter that has not been empirically explored in Tanzania and similar contexts in Africa. Hence this study provides information that may be relied on by Tanzanian Education Authorities and Education officials in similar contexts to review the teaching of the Communication Skills course in institutions of higher learning.

While such a review is recommended, it is suggested that it ought to be based on a keen analysis of the needs of the students. We suggest further research on perceptions of students on applicability of the CS course in their work and socials contexts after graduation from the universities. Similarly, more studies can be conducted on the teaching and learning of CS course in High schools, Diploma programmes and tertiary institutions.

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