

Message From the TODOS President August 2023

I start this writing with a quote from the late Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Tanzania's first president (1961 - 1985).

"It can be done, play your part!"

Nyerere is described in a variety of ways in numerous writings as an anti-colonial activist, political theorist, and politician. The way that I've come to know this leader is through my ongoing relationships with Tanzanian colleagues. Julius Nyerere's first profession was teaching, and hence the term "mwalimu" (which is teacher in kiswahili). I've come to know him as Mwalimu Nyerere.

Each Tanzanian school and government office that I've ever stepped into has a picture of Mwalimu Nyerere and the picture of whomever is serving as current president. You will see Mwalimu Nyerere's picture in many hotels and businesses as well. As I had the opportunity to work alongside and come to know many mathematics educators in Tanzania, I realized the impact that Mwalimu Nyerere's teachings also had on our collective work.

Our collective work, known as "Hisabati ni Maisha" (mathematics is living in kiswahili) was around the teaching of primary school mathematics in rural and remote communities in 3 regions and 9 school districts. The collective included primary school teachers, community members, quality assurance officers, district academic officers, ward education officers, teacher college tutors, university lecturers and professors, district education officers, teacher college principals, regional education officers, and representatives of national organizations such as the Mathematics Association of Tanzania, Tanzania Teacher's Union, Tanzania Institute of Education, and the Ministry of Education.

This summer I had the chance to meet with some of the colleagues that were a part of the collective and as I listened to their ongoing experiences I was inspired by all of the ways that each person I spoke with was "playing their part" around teaching primary school mathematics in Tanzania. I was reminded of the importance of the quote "It can be done, play your part!"

"It can be done, play your part!" became part of the collective work of the colleagues who had leadership roles within Tanzanian educational systems when we spent time talking about the ways that gender bias was 'built into the fabric of the mathematics resources' used in schools. In these conversations we would talk about the role of leaders in working with communities and teachers, and we started to remind each other that gender bias can change if each of us "played our part."

The visit to Tanzania this summer caused me to reflect on TODOS: Mathematics for ALL. TODOS members are a part of a collective who are advocating for high quality mathematics education for ALL; we want to illuminate, and dismantle, the systemic barriers that are experienced by SOME; barriers that are 'built into the fabric of the educational systems' that have shaped who we are as individuals and as a collective. Illuminating and dismantling systemic

barriers requires each of us to "play our part". I am also very conscious that I, as one individual, might not know what a dismantled system might look like or what a new system might look like.

This is where the collective is important - how might we learn together to imagine different systems - equitable systems where ALL are welcome?

I invite each of you to "play your part" and I leave you with a second from Mwalimu Nyere:

"If a door is shut, attempts should be made to open it; if it is ajar, it should be pushed until it is wide open. In neither case should the door be blown up at the expense of those inside." (Julius Kambarage Nyerere, from his Stability and Change in Africa speech given to the University of Toronto, Canada, 2 October 1969.)

With respect,

Florence Glanfield, President
TODOS: Mathematics for ALL

PS: If you'd like to know more about Hisabati ni Maisha I invite you to read this article:

Simmt, E., Binde, A., Glanfield, F., & Mgombelo, J. (2019). *Developing capacity for teacher inservice education in rural Tanzania: Embracing emergent phenomena*. In I. Eloff (Ed.), *Handbook of Quality of Life in African Societies* (pp. 327-344). Springer.