



Our May 2023 UDSM Alumnus

This is a “light corner” on the UDSM portal intended to feature for one month in turns two among many of the University’s graduates—alumni—since its foundation in 1961. The corner is designed to inform the public and the University itself, without prejudice in terms of historical precedence but guided only by professional information search, on the past graduates of the University, their whereabouts, their current position or engagement, what is remembered of them as past ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ of their time and, finally, on what is reckoned about their contribution to their Alma Mater, their nation, the Africa region and/or the wider world.

Suleman A. SUMRA



Year of matriculation: 1969;

Year of graduation: 1972;

Award: B.A.(Hons), 1972.

More info:

- **MSc (in Data Communications), ShMA (in Geography), University of Dar es Salaam, 1975;**
- **PhD(in Education), Stanford University, USA, 1986.**

A dedicated teacher and researcher on a broad range of educational issues, Professor Suleman Alarakhia Sumra is an alumnus of the University of Dar es Salaam of the graduating class of 1972. He was born on July 17, 1942 in Lyamungo, Moshi, in Kilimanjaro Region. At age six, in 1948, he went to primary school in Handeni, Tanga, from where he proceeded to Government Indian Public School (today’s Mawenzi Secondary School) in Moshi in 1956. He undertook a Grade ‘A’ teacher training course of three years from 1966 to 1969 and, in that very year, he was admitted to the University of Dar es Salaam’s undergraduate course programme in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, in which he studied in Geography, Sociology and Education. He completed the programme in 1972, earning a B.A.(with Education) degree with honours. He was posted to Tanga secondary school as a graduate teacher (Teacher Grade EO II) of Geography. He was subsequently transferred to Azania secondary school. After about a year of teaching at Azania, Sumra joined the Faculty of Education at the University of Dar es Salaam as a tutorial assistant and registered for a two-year postgraduate study programme from 1973 to 1975. Upon earning his MA (Ed), he was promoted to the position of assistant lecturer.

In 1981, he was fortunate to obtain a World Bank scholarship through the University in order to pursue a PhD study in education at Stanford University in California, USA, which he successfully completed in 1985. He recalls-with appreciation and candour his intellectual association with well-known social-science theorists and educators at Stanford such as Professors Martin Carnoy, Carlos Alberto Torres and Joel Samoff. His close exchanges and debates with them came to influence his thinking about research approaches to issues in education.

At UDSM, Dr. Sumra not only added to growing dimensions of theoretical and ideological debates on educational development but also became a handy choice for a number of academic and research assignments. He grew through academic ranks from assistant lecturer (1974-1977) to lecturer (1977-1980), to senior lecturer (1980-1990) and to associate professor (in July 1990). Also, he served as Associate Dean for research in the Faculty of Education from July 1989 to June 1994. In July 1991, he became the founder-director of a unit within the Faculty known as the Bureau of Educational Research and Evaluation (BERE). He served in that capacity for six years until June 1997. Indeed, the Bureau—which in later years changed status to Centre—did help to boost the volume, the variety as well as the quality of educational research undertaken by members of the Faculty [now School].

Prof. Sumra formally retired from University employment in June 2002, after serving for an appreciable total of 30 years. Thereafter, he was invited or else engaged by a number of human-rights-oriented research organisations in the private, non-governmental sector to undertake consultancy work assignments for them and, in some cases, to help in management of the institution. These organisations include HakiElimu, Aga Khan Education Service/Tanzania (AKEST) and Uwezo Tanzania. He was senior researcher and later senior programme officer at HakiElimu from July 2002 to March 2003, Director at Aga Khan Education Service (AKES) from July 2003 to 2006 and Director at Uwezo Tanzania from August 2008 to April 2012. While Director at AKES/T (2003-2006), he was identified and appointed by the Tanzanian Government—

in August 2005—to serve on the Education-Sector Development Programme (ESDP), then based within the Prime Minister’s Office, as one of the lead facilitators in the country-wide review of the Tanzanian national education system. He served in that capacity for six months till January 2006. The resulting ESD Preview report was a decisive background to certain public policy initiatives on the reorganisation, revamping and governance of the national education system.

Professor Sumra is currently retired. He has to his credit many works found in published books, professional journals and conference reports that are frequently consulted by students, teachers and researchers, at home and abroad. Only four of these are mentioned in the limited space hereunder:

- ◇ *Economia politica del financiamiento educativo en paises en vias de desarrollo.* Mexico City: Educaciones Gernika. 1986 (With Martin Carnoy, Carlos Torres and others [Financing of education seen as a factor shaped by power relations between different economic, political, and social groups];
- ◇ “Expansion of private secondary education: Lessons from recent experiences in Tanzania.” In *Comparative Education Review* 44(1), pp.1-28, 2000 (with Gerard Lassibille and Tan Jee-Peng);
- ◇ *Are our children learning? Annual learning assessment report.* Uwezo Tanzania, 2010 (with others) [on the dilemma of the low quality of learning among primary school pupils in Tanzania contrasted with their cohorts in other East African countries]; and
- ◇ “Schooling with little learning: The Tanzania case.” In *The 2014 Africa Prosperity Report.* London: Legatum Institute, 2014.

The University of Dar es Salaam appreciates his contributions and his achievements over the years.



March 20, 2015. Prof. Sumra, as Consultant at TWAVEZA, making a presentation on ‘Enhancing quality in education in Tanzania’ at ESRF [Economic and Social Research Foundation], an independent, not-for-profit research institution that conducts policy-enhancing research.

**Suleman A. SUMRA is Our May 2023 Alumnus,
and his great stories begin here!**

Get in touch with us through

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