

Teacher Education in Kenya: Emerging Issues

Kafu Patrick A.

Abstract: *Teacher Education is an important component of education. It influences all aspects of education and beyond. Like other components of education, Teacher Education is influenced by social, political, economic and technological developments in a society. This paper examines the emerging issues in this component of education in Kenya brought about by the technological developments. Also discussed are the implications of these emerging issues to education and other related developments in this country.*

Introduction

Teacher education is an important component of education. Through it school teachers who are considered mentors of any society are prepared and produced (Lucas, 1972). Normally, it is ostensibly designed, developed and administered to produce school teachers for the established system of education (Kafu, 2003). Its importance in human life has been recognized for a long time. For example, Lucas (1968) asserts that teacher education is the main pillar of any established system of education and the custodian of the society's culture. The Kenya government echoed the same view in the Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1988 when it said that "there is urgent need to develop and promote teacher education programme if the administration of education in the country is to succeed and national development is to be accelerated" (Republic of Kenya, 1988). These views summarize the importance and the role of teacher education in the survival of any society. In this respect, education is regarded as the driving force behind development in a society. This realization explains why emerging nations in Africa invested heavily in education in general and teacher education in particular in the mid-sixties and most part of the seventies (Kajubi, 1970). This paper examines the development of teacher education in Kenya, the related emerging issues, the implications of these issues to the development of education and teaching profession in this country. This treatment may shed light on the developments in education, teacher education and teaching profession in Kenya this century.

The issues discussed in this paper may appear obvious but they have not been given the attention they deserve. There is a tendency to gloss over them though they have damaging effect on the development and administration of teacher education programme in general and teaching profession in particular. Perhaps because of the little interest taken by the developing countries including Kenya in these issues explains the observed serious under-development in these areas of the world!

This paper is divided into four sections namely, the historical perspective of Teacher Education in Kenya, the status of this programme of education in the country, the emerging issues in the programme this century and the implications of these issues to the development of education and the future of teaching profession in Kenya.

Historical Development of Teacher Education in Kenya

Teacher Education has always been an important component of education since time immemorial. This is because all societies in the world have always needed teachers to propagate/transmit their cultures (read education!) from one generation to another (Ssekamwa, 1969).

Examination of education systems from ancient times to to-day reveals elaborate and deliberate practices of teacher education. Therefore, when discussing the development of teacher education in Kenya, one should not lose sight of the fact that before the coming of Europeans there existed an elaborate teacher education system in indigenous/traditional African education systems (Kenyatta, 1963). This may not have been formal in the sense of Western European education system, but it produced competent teachers who sustained the African indigenous/traditional education systems (Sifuna and Indire, 1974). But since these practices of teacher education were not properly documented, the focus of this paper will be on the historical perspective of the formal Western European Teacher Education programme in Kenya since colonial era.

Formal teacher education was introduced in Kenya in the mid-nineteenth century by European Christian Missionaries (Karanja, 1995). This programme of education was patterned on the Western European and Canadian established teacher education models of the early nineteenth

century. The urge to establish teacher education at the time was necessitated by the unplanned, rapid expansion of the “mission” and “bush” schools (Sifuna and Indire, 1974). This development called for an equally sharp increase in the supply of teachers to work in the newly established schools. In addition, there was need to produce school teachers to relieve missionaries who were required to concentrate on missionary/evangelization work.

The established mission and “bush” schools were Primary (Classes B and A, and Standards I – IV) schools and intermediate (Standards V – VIII) schools. These institutions needed Primary school teachers. Therefore, the designed teacher education programme catered mainly for Primary School leavers from the level of Standard Three to Eight (Standard III – VIII). This shows that most of the teacher-trainees were of low academic qualifications although for that period in time, they were the most well educated individuals.

However, after the First World War (1914–1919), there was increased demand for African education especially higher education (read secondary school education). This demand led to establishment of secondary schools which needed teachers of higher calibre. Consequently, Makerere College in Uganda was established to train teachers of Diploma in Education qualification in the early 1940’s (Beecher Education Commission, 1943; Karanja, 1995). This was followed by the introduction of Kenyatta College in 1965 and Kenya Science Teachers College in 1966 to train S1 teachers, and then Kenya Technical Teachers College in 1977 to train teachers in technical subjects at Diploma level (Otiende, 1992). However, much earlier and to augment the effort of Makerere University College, University of Nairobi College had started training graduate secondary teachers with B.A./B.Sc. (Education option) qualification in 1966. But this was later to be transformed into the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) professional degree qualification in 1970. This was expanded with the establishment of Kenyatta University College in 1972. Today there are more than ten public and private universities in the country conducting teacher education programmes in Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE), Primary School Education and Secondary School Education but not *Teacher Education*. However, there are two disturbing features that have characterized the development and administration of teacher education in Kenya since 1847. It has always been managed by non-professionals in teacher education and it has remained too academic in nature. This is the background to the issues presented here.

From the colonial period up to the mid-seventies (1847-1970's) teacher education was a respected component of education. It was an education programme one would be proud of and reserved for the selected few! This was reflected in the administration of the programme. Only privileged individuals in terms of qualifications, experience and competence were associated with this programme of education. The society saw and felt that the future of Kenya lay in this programme of education. The society expected the programme and its products (the school teachers) to develop and provide leadership in its development. But with time, this high esteem has steadily waned. The society no longer regards teacher education highly when compared to other sectors of education. This attitude is seen in the manner the government is managing this programme of education in comparison to Primary School education and Secondary School education sectors. The programme has been marginalized. Great emphasis is being placed on the development of the two sectors of education at the expense of teacher education. This treatment of teacher education has promoted the observed poor image of this programme, teaching profession and school teachers respectively in the society. This is why the emerging issues in teacher education presented herein below are of great interest not only to teacher educationists in Kenya but the Kenyan society.

Emerging Issues in Teacher Education in Kenya

These are new developments in teacher education in Kenya that have been occasioned by socio-economic-political changes and technological advancements locally and beyond. The impact of these developments on teacher education programme, education, teaching profession and national development is being felt. While at independence, this programme of education was viewed as the spur of national development, today it is being treated as just one of those "ordinary" education programmes. Not much is heard about it in mass media, public fora and government circles. This means that the once revered education programme has been consigned to oblivion! This status of the programme great has generated great debate among the teacher educators and teacher educationists (Kelly, 2003). Therefore, it is timely to examine the cause (issues) that are currently impacting on teacher education in Kenya. The main emerging issues of interest include the concepts of teacher education and teaching profession, administration of teacher education programme, status of facilities and resources used in this programme, the ethics of teaching, the teacher education curriculum, terms and conditions of service for teachers

in Kenya, the present image of teaching profession and teachers and, the influence of globalization on teacher education programme. These are real issues in teacher education that cannot be wished away. They are compromising the role of this programme in national development and its image. These issues are now briefly examined.

Today there is confusion over what teacher education really means. There are those who regard it as mere training of teachers. That is, an education programme that equips the teachers with pedagogical content only. Then there is another school of thought that regards teacher education as preparation of teachers or training and teacher development process. (Karanja, 1995). This concept of teacher education focuses on preparing school teachers in pedagogical content as well as academic content. Here, the emphasis is laid on equipping a school teacher with adequate competencies in both pedagogical and academic contents that prepares the teacher for challenges of modern life. This unclear definition of teacher education has tended to affect the preferred modes (approaches) of training teachers today and the quality of teachers produced to serve an education system. Further, this tends to affect the “identity” of this programme of education and teaching profession leading to questioning these two things are necessary today! Perhaps the present attitude of the government towards this programme is a reflection of this confusion.

The above confusion is also cascaded down to teaching profession. Whereas in the past, this profession was seen as the process of mentoring the society, today it is thought otherwise. In fact there are more questions than answers concerning teaching profession. There are individuals who are questioning whether teaching is real a profession! This worry is based on the existing practices in teacher education (administration of the programme, modes of training teachers, observed behaviour of teachers in the society etc) and in teaching profession itself (absence of codes of conduct for members, terms and conditions of service for teachers, ethics of teaching, ...etc). These absurd practices and observations have tended to depict this profession as lacking credibility, a dumping ground for failures in academics and life, and in other careers. This perception of the profession has kept away competent individuals who would have made the profession attractive and competitive.

Management of teacher education is another issue. Since colonial time, teacher education has never been professionalized. There has been a tendency to handle it casually. From the initial

stages, teacher education was left in the hands of the so-called “experienced” Primary and Secondary school teachers. These are individuals with no proper training in this programme. From this pool, the teacher education administrators and teacher-trainers were appointed to run the programme. Things became bad for the programme after 1978 when politics was introduced with impunity in teacher education administration. This period has seen failures as head-teachers of secondary schools to being posted as Principals and tutors in teacher-training institutions, young university graduates being appointed as teacher-trainers and individuals with no training in education also serving as teacher-trainers. This development has raised eye-brows in the society. It has tainted the image of teacher education and raised questions on the quality of the prepared and produced school teachers. Sometimes decisions concerning the programme are made with little professional in-put. Rendering such decisions political! Besides this fact is the issue of increased enrolment in teacher education without reciprocal increase in the development and supply of relevant facilities and resources. These developments have made teacher education less attractive, competitive and comparable to the new and enterprising professions in the country.

The issue of facilities and resources for preparing school teachers is critical. The status of current materials for preparing school teachers is pathetic. These are inadequate, obsolete, dilapidated and unsuitable for producing a competent teacher who can operate in this century. This state of affairs raises concern about the quality of teachers serving in the school system and has negatively affected the image of these teachers (self-esteem and how the society views them) and their integrity. While these teachers may appear incompetent and not reflecting the expected image of what a good teacher should be, the causes of this state lies elsewhere. They are victims rather than villains of the teacher preparation programme.

Another important issue in teacher education in Kenya is that of ethics of teaching. These have never been formally designed and taught to teacher-trainees since colonial period. These ethics of teaching are normally, just casually, mentioned in passing as aspects of principles and practices of teaching and by those teacher-trainers who care to do so (Wilkins, 1975). Consequently, the teachers who are produced do not understand the teaching profession itself and its demands. They also do not understand themselves and their role in the profession other than instructional responsibilities in teaching profession. This scenario has compromised the

status, integrity and image of the teacher not only in the profession but also in the society (Kelly, 2003). Because of this situation, some teachers are involving themselves, without knowing, in activities that go against the expectations of the profession and the society. This problem is compounded by the government's failure to employ trained teachers since 1996.

Of greater concern to teacher education programmes are terms and conditions of service for teachers. Currently these are not attractive and competitive enough when compared to those provided for professionals in other professions. Consequently, these have demoralized the serving school teachers, put off potential aspirants to teaching profession and affected the image of this profession and that of school teachers.

Globalisation of teacher education is a new development but affecting the whole world. This is the process of sharing experiences, ideas and technologies globally in administration of teacher education through the use of technological appliances, exposures and expertise. This process tends to bring its own unique demands in the teacher education programme which no one nation can competently manage. These demands are varied in nature and sometimes traumatising. Among these demands are increased cost of financing teacher education, development and provision of suitable facilities and resources, reviewing of the existing teacher education curriculum, administration of suitable media programmes in teacher education programme and, introduction of new and sophisticated information and communication technology (ICT) systems which the developing world including Kenya can ill afford.

All the above discussed issues are new and require proper management if teacher education programme is to redeem its lost glory. This necessitates collaborative and co-operative strategies in teacher education from all the stake-holders. Therefore, there is need to identify these needs properly through the process of needs assessment and manage them professionally. This must be done carefully and by the professionals in teacher education if the implications of these needs have to be addressed properly. Derived from these discussed issues are the following implications.

Implications of the emerging issues in Teacher Education in Kenya

Close scrutiny of the issues discussed above reveals that they are serious and can create a crisis in teacher education if care is not taken. They are demanding in terms of logistics, cost, resources and expertise. Therefore, they require that the country prepares itself well to deal with them firmly. From the presentation above, the following important implications emerge.

- **Design and Formulating of Policy Frame-Work.** This is a priority in administering teacher education programme efficiently and effectively. Through this strategy the concepts of teacher education and teaching profession will be provided; guidelines for organizing and administering this programme shall be stated; the proper structure and procedures for administering the programme will be provided. This may reduce the existing politicization of and apparent confusion in the programme.
- **Review of the Existing Structure of Teacher Education.** There is urgent need to review the policies, administrative structures, recruitment of staff and students, financing of teacher education programme and teacher education curriculum. This should be done to reflect modern needs in teacher education locally and globally. But for this process to succeed, there must be adequate and reliable sources of funding and good will from political establishment (the government and society).
- **Improvement of information and communication systems in teacher education.** To change for better the face of teacher education, programme, teaching profession and school teachers respectively, there is need to adapt to and adopt new educational communication and technology materials. That is design, develop and use modern educational technology to prepare school teachers. This will improve the training and instruction of teachers and teacher-trainees. These packages (computers, satellite technologies, etc and their accessories) will educate, inform and expose these individuals to the needs and challenges of the modern Kenyan society that they are expected to serve. The initial costs of adapting to and adopting these systems may be high but the eventual benefits are rewarding.
- **Investment in Facilities and Resources for Teacher Education.** There is concern that quality of teachers produced today is wanting (Kiptoon, 1996). The teachers are said to be incompetent, indisciplined and disinterested in their service. But the cause root(s) of this behaviour is known to everyone in Kenya. This include the factors out-lined and discussed elsewhere above – that is poor administration of teacher education, terms and conditions of service for teachers, teacher preparation programme,...etc. To reverse this trend in teacher education, the government must

invest heavily in it and recognize this programme as an essential service to the society. Therefore, those recruited in it should be accorded the same treatment as those in other essential services. This will attract and retain the best brains and committed individuals in this programme and teaching profession respectively. But this means that the government must provide adequate funding generated through well performing economy, collaboration and co-operation with other stake-holders in teacher education and encouraging teacher training institutions to conduct income generating activities. These funds, if well managed, can be used to improve facilities and resources for teacher preparation programme.

- **Identity of Teacher Education.** Today, there is confusion over what teacher education means and what it does. As intimated elsewhere above, the confusion can be traced from colonial period when emphasis was on pedagogy rather training and development of school teachers and how the programme was conducted. Therefore, there is need to broaden the teacher education curriculum to include areas that are being demanded by the modern, technologically-oriented society. This will ensure teachers are equipped with relevant competencies to manage emerging challenges in education and the society. In fact this is the major short-coming of the present teacher preparation programme.

Further, there is need to professionalise teacher education to make it an exclusive rather than inclusive (stake-holding) enterprise. This will give a clear identity to this programme and teaching profession. If this is buttressed by strong and attractive packages of terms and conditions of service for teachers, the identity of this programme and teaching profession will not be a problem at all.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to examine the present status of teacher education as practiced in Kenya today. It has also addressed some of the issues that are impacting it. The influence of the latter on this programme of education has been noted and considered serious. However, the conclusion to be drawn from the discussion is that the development and practice of teacher education in Kenya is not unique. It reflects the global practice of this programme of education which means that Kenya needs to adopt collaborative and co-operative strategies with relevant/global stake-holders in teacher education and institute national concerted effort to promote the quality and image of this programme of education.

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