

Raging Controversies in Teacher Education in Africa: The Question of Who Should Be the Prospective Teacher, Who Should Prepare Them and How Should They Be Prepared

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Abstract

Teacher education as a programme of education is critical in the development and management of education and the general development in the society. It is the creator and custodian of the culture of the society. The origin and existence of this programme can be traced from the ancient times, and in the case of Africa, the formal Teacher education programme can be traced from the colonial era. The need for this programme in the development of a society cannot be over-emphasized and, perhaps, this explains why, for a long time it was revered, highly respected, recognized, cherished and reserved for the selected few in the society. But with time, this special image has drastically changed. The emerging and rapid developments both in education and the society have tended to raise hereon unimaginable issues concerning this programme of education. In effect, these emerging issues seem to compromise the image of this special program. This paper, focusing on the issue on **who** should be a prospective teacher to-day, **who** should prepare such a teacher and **how** should such teacher be prepared; examines the origin/genesis of this controversy, the impact of this development on the image of the programme and its importance on the development and management of this programme in Africa. At this stage, there are two intriguing questions. **Who** are questioning the management of the Teacher education programme and are they **professionals** in Teacher education? These two professional questions are the thrust of the discussion in this paper. This discussion will not only unlock the unnecessary controversies in the Teacher education programme but also create new frontiers in this discipline.

Keywords: teacher education, controversy, professionals, African.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education is a specialized and exclusive programme of education. It is characterized by these features because of its nature. Not everybody in the society can develop and manage it competently. This is because to manage it efficiently, it requires possession and mastery of unique competences. Among these competencies are proper knowledge of the programme; wide experience in it, ability to identify, develop and use of relevant resources in its administration and proper understanding of the necessary logistics that facilitate its administration. Not everybody in the society is fortunate to access and possess these rare competencies. Hence, the assertion that Teacher education programme is somehow exclusive and reserved for the selected few in the society. The treatment of this programme of education in ancient education systems including African Tradition/Indigenous education demonstrates the importance of this programme of education (Sifuna, 1974; Bokongo, 1972). In these systems of education, Teacher education programme was cherished, highly regarded and considered as the source and custodian of the culture of the society. However, with the emerging changes in education and modern societies in the world and specifically Africa, this rosy image of the programme has rapidly

waned. Hence, the emerging controversies in the programme including unexpected questions of who should be prospective school teachers, who should be prospective school teachers in the face of the on-going turbulence in the world and how should these teachers be prepared so as to be able to manage the unending challenges of the modern world.

The issue of who should be a teacher, prepare a school teacher and how such a teacher should be prepared for Teaching profession, has never been issue until recently. It was always a well known fact that those to be recruited for this profession were properly identified and selected. Normally, they were those individuals towards the profession. Equally, those individuals to prepare prospective school teachers were respected persons in the society with high level of integrity and whose character was beyond reproach. These qualities were besides their being **properly prepared** in Teacher education programme, **experienced** in this programme and **qualified** to prepare prospective school teachers for the Teaching profession. In the case of how prospective school teachers should be prepared for this profession, well identified and developed structures for the purpose were put in place and adhered. This provision ensured that the right crop of

school teachers were prepared and produced for the established system of education. It is from the above perspective of Teacher education programme that this paper examines the emerging controversies in this programme. Specifically, the paper focuses on the confusion between Teacher education and Teacher preparation programmes, management of Teacher education programme in Africa today and, the emerging and the related controversies in this programme as a result of modernization in Africa and the implications of these developments to development and management of education and general development on the African continent.

Concepts of Teacher Education and/or Teacher Preparation Programme in Modern Africa

Teacher education is increasingly becoming a replacement to the commonly used term of Teacher Training programme. The latter, is narrow in scope, and as a matter of fact, it is an aspect of the former. It focuses on development and instilling of pedagogical competencies in prospective teachers. Traditionally, it emphasized pedagogy (methods and skills/techniques of teaching). But Teacher education is broader and inclusive as well as embracing. This programme deals with issues like Teacher preparation, Teaching profession and the emerging issues in this profession.

Teacher education is a much recent development in education. Its purpose is to promote the quality of Teaching profession by ensuring that the crop of school teachers produced are competent to perform in this century and beyond and also have the ability and capacity to deal with emerging issues in education in general and Teaching profession in particular (Nyerere, 2009). This is so because the curriculum of this programme covers areas that were traditionally not considered aspects of Teacher Training programme. Some of these areas include content, general knowledge current affairs, professional areas, new educational technologies such as ICT and social issues. This feature has created ambiguities, contradictions and dilemmas in this programme. Whatever is being advocated for by this programme appears strange and unfamiliar territory to traditionalists in Teacher Training practices and many of these individuals are confused whether the programme is intended to prepare school teachers or what! However, a modern school teacher must be broad minded, aggressive, knowledgeable enough and current in his/her instructional duties and outlook.

However, while Teacher education programme deals with broad issues that affect Teaching profession Teacher preparation programme focuses on preparation and production of school teachers for an established system of education. It is a rebranded Teacher Training programme. Its design,

administrative structure and curriculum design are a departure from the traditional Teacher Training programme. Its curriculum is much broader than the traditional, narrow in scope type practiced in Teacher Training programme. This programme embraces the widely advocated for ideals in Teacher preparation practices as out-lined elsewhere above.

Generally, Teacher preparation programme is a transformation of the initial Teacher Training programme that was envisaged in Western Europe and then exported to Africa in the mid-nineteenth century. It focuses on preparing and producing school teachers who can confidently initiate and participate efficiently in modern development-related activities. This is the strategy the “Tigers of Asia” exploited or used to promote and accelerate their national developments (Jung-Li, 2001). Teacher preparation programme has the connotation of rebranding the model of Teacher preparation with the main purpose of producing creative, innovative and highly initiative school teachers who are adaptable (Johnson & Adams 2004). Africa urgently needs to review its Teacher preparation programme to reflect the changing environment on the continent. Continued use of labels like teacher Training Centre and Teacher Training colleges is the connotation of an old fashioned programme and a reminder of bad, traditional practices in Teacher preparation programme of the recent past (Republic of Kenya 1985, Nyerere, 2009).

Though the importance of Teacher preparation programme was recognized on the outset of independence in africa, it has remained very much neglected, and in more recent times a despised programme of education (Razali, 1996). Generally, the programme is characterized by massive mismanagement, under-funding and amorphous placement in the structure of national Departments and Ministries of Education. With increased sophistication in the society and the rise of new and more lucrative careers in the job market, Teacher preparation programme has been consigned to oblivion and therefore the Teaching profession is the least sought after career by the young generation in Africa. For the Teaching profession to redeem itself and regain its lost glory, it requires urgent resuscitation process through introduction of reforms in Teacher education and Teacher preparation programme which, for now, is a wanting. The issues discussed in the next section of this paper could be helpful in reforming Teacher education and Teacher preparation programmes and by extension, Teaching profession in modern Africa (Bokongo, 1972, Kafu, 2010).

Considerations in Development and Administration of Teacher Education in Africa

Management to Teacher education is a technical business. This is because of the nature of this programme. Generally, the programme is inclusive, encompassing, dynamic and requires diverse inputs. Therefore, efficient management of the programme involves consideration of various things. Among these things to be borne in mind in the administration of the programme are the political and education philosophies including that of Teacher education, policy design and formulation for this programme, the Teacher education curriculum, the historical facts concerning the development of and the trends in Teacher education programme and then investment in this programme. The need for consideration of these factors in development and administration of Teacher education programme is now herein below discussed.

Efficient development and administration of Teacher education programme dictates that due consideration is given to political philosophy of country should be run it is from which the philosophy of education and by extension, that the Teacher education is derived. This is the statement of intent based on the aspirations and/or wishes of the society. That is, what the nation/country believes in or cherishes most. The latter determines the nature and scope of political programmes a country intends. Therefore, the country's political philosophy determines the type of education system a country adopts. In other words, it is the guide of how education should be developed and administered. Since education and Teacher education are the culture and custodian of the same respectively, they must subscribe to the political philosophy of the country (Nyerere, 1982). Therefore, for the Teacher education programme to serve the needs of the country well and remain relevant it should be based on this philosophy and the inherent wishes/desires of the society! But for the Teacher education to perform efficiently, it must have and/or guided by a clearly stated philosophy from which the policy frame-work derived. Unfortunately, many countries in Africa do not have Teacher education philosophies (Kafu, 2008). Nearly all of them simply state the functions of this programme – which include to “train” school teachers.

Like all other programmes of education, there is need to develop and administer Teacher education policy frame-work. These are guidelines that specify the purpose of this programme, its functions and administration. Policy frame-work defines the character and practice of this programme. Therefore, because of the importance of policy frame-work of Teacher education which be based on political and general education philosophies, it is necessary that due consideration is given to the design, formulation and administration of this policy frame-work. This ensures systematic approach to the organization, development and administration of the programme.

Another value of the policy frame-work is that it determines the model and structure of the programme, its organization and administration and the relevant activities to be conducted in the programme. Finally, policy frame-work is critical in determining the kind and level of investment the country should make in the programme.

The main challenge facing Teacher education programme in Africa is the kind and level of investment being put in this programme. Scrutiny of education reports around the world by UNESCO (2008) reveal that Teacher education is currently receiving little attention from the national governments and it is the most under-funded programme of education in any African country. There is little capacity building in terms of training programmes, establishment of modern facilities and resources for preparing school teachers and adaptation to and adoption of new educational technologies. The consequence of this feature in the programme is that there have been very few, if any, reforms and innovations. The staff serving in this programme, at best, are ill-equipped to prepare and produce competent school teachers of to-day and, at worst, not professionals. Therefore, it is imperative that the kind, level and sources of the needed investments for Teacher education programme are seriously considered. This effort will ensure that the quality of Teacher education administered on the continent is high and competitive/comparable (UNESCO, UNEVOC, 2006). Hence, the preparation and production of competent school teachers who have the ability and capacity to promote general development in Africa. (Nyerere, 2009).

In education, there is normally close relationship between investment in education programmes and development of relevant curriculum, educational media and establishment of information data and systems. The latter are the cornerstones of efficient Teacher education programme. The main concern about this programme is that it is characterized by a narrow in scope, irrelevant and non-performing curriculum. In many African countries, little or no reforms and innovations have been carried out since the colonial era because of low investment in Teacher education. Further, Teacher education has been slow in adapting to and adopting technological advancements in the society. Interestingly, these developments are the soft-ware for the very much talked about globalization process to-day. Therefore, for the Teacher education to appeal to the peoples of Africa and remain relevant in this century and beyond, there is increasing need to consider the investment factor in the administration of this programme. This ensures availability of the needed expertise, modern educational technologies in Teacher education and the development and

administration of the required reforms and innovations in the programme.

It is also important to consider and recognize the historical facts of and the emerging trends in Teacher education programme. These will inform the decisions made concerning the policy frame-work, and the models of the Teacher education programme to develop and pursue. The failure to appreciate the role of historical facts in this programme and the emerging trends in it, may be the cause of the noted ambiguities, controversies, contradictions and dilemmas in the programme. It is necessary to bear in mind the past significant historical developments and how they relate to the present policies and practices and the global trends in management of this programme. These are useful guides that authorities undertaking the task of development and administration of Teacher education programme must recognise since these provide opportunity of avoiding the past weaknesses/failures, and compare experiences in the development of an attractive Teacher education model in Africa (Indire and Sifuna, 1982).

In summary, consideration of the above discussed issues will provide the road map to developing and administering relevant Teacher education programme in Africa. Hence promote the quality of this programme in Africa and, as a consequence, guarantee sustained and accelerated development on the continent (Kerre, 2010). When appropriate strategies are done, the present dogmatic/conservative nature of the programme is likely to be replaced by a more pragmatic approach in its management. This is the problem that must be adequately addressed if this programme is to facilitate and accelerate development in Africa. This is one of the challenges of this programme in Africa as demonstrated in the next discussion on constraints of administering it in modern Africa.

Constraints in Managing Teacher Education Programme in Modern Africa

The development and administration of Teacher education programme in Africa has not been easy. This programme has faced many challenges some of which have been manageable while others are still nagging. Generally, these challenges are technical, professional, academic, structural, and administrative and logistical in nature. These are formidable challenges to efficient management of the programme in modern Africa. However, the main constraints in managing Teacher education programme are: the prevailing philosophical and conceptual frame-work of the programme, the nature of the programme, the issues of nature of expertise for the programme, the problem associated with investment in the programme and the emerging developments in the society generally and education in particular.

From its inception in industrial Europe in mid-seventeenth century, Teacher education (then Teacher Training) programme has not been guided by clearly articulated philosophy at all (Ringa 1992). It has always been described as a programme for preparing (Training) school teachers for an established education system. Lack of a well stated philosophy has made this programme vulnerable to manipulation, criticism and misunderstanding (Lucas, 1972). The consequence of such a situation has been the emergence of the prevailing thinking that this programme is not “specialised and exclusive” as it has always been emphasised. There is the feeling that anybody who is literate can be recruited into this programme (Government of Kenya, 1966). This absurd attitude results from the existing poor concept of the programme in Africa. The present concept of Teacher education programme is amorphous, ambiguous and simplistic in nature and practice to say the least. Directly related to the prevailing philosophical and conceptual thinking about Teacher education in Africa that is rapidly gaining currency is the feeling that it is not professional. This feeling is attributed to its nature. The programme has remained dogmatic and conservative in out-look and practice since it was formalised during the industrial revolution in Western Europe more than four centuries ago. There have been no reasonable reforms and innovations in this programme since then. Its function has remained the same and predictable – to train school teachers yet many traumatizing developments have occurred in education and society in Africa over the same period. For example, there is increased sophistication in the society, the perception of education has drastically changed and the roles of school teachers has been transformed from mere pedagogical to other expectations of the general public (Kafu, 2012). Hence, the current feeling that the programme is redundant, unnecessary burden and its role in the society can today be satisfactorily played by the established Teaching machines and non-professional individuals outside the programme.

The other worrying trend in Teacher education in modern Africa to-day is the lack of or absence of expertise in the programme. In many parts of this continent, Teacher education was introduced and conducted by non-professionals in Teacher education. These were mainly European or white missionaries, colonial settlers and administrators and occasionally white philanthropists. Many of these individuals had little or no training Teacher education and or in teaching and, therefore, they had little knowledge about Teacher education programme. The situation became worse after independence in Africa. Most of the independent African countries expanded their education sectors rapidly by establishing many schools. Therefore, there was a mismatch between this situation and supply of teachers. This meant that

there was increased need for more school teachers. This development created a new and very unfortunate feature in Teaching profession – the use of untrained teachers (UT's) and unqualified teachers (UQT's). This practice has damaged or undermined the status and image of Teacher education programme and Teaching profession in particular. Hence, the now established belief that anybody can teach so long as he or she is literate. Therefore, the issue of limited or absence of expertise in Teacher education in this continent is not a new experience!. It has always existed and it still persists. The present crop of people managing this programme are not specialists in Teacher education but individuals trained to teach or work either in primary, secondary or other related sectors of education.

The above discussed features have contributed to the dwindling investments in Teacher education programme. There has been noticeable and progressive reduction of the levels of investment in this programme in Africa especially after independence (UNESCO, 2008). This happens to be so because: this programme is not treated as a priority and highly regarded and prioritized; the need for new and diverse competencies in beneficiaries of school education in modern Africa; and new developments in education and society. The reduced levels of investment in the programme has affected the initiation and nurturing of reforms in the programme and its overall image (Wilkins, 1975). This is the reverse of the past perception of the programme which was highly regarded (recognized) and considered a critical facilitator of development in Africa (Nkrumah, 1963; Ssekamwa, 1972 and Indire and Sifuna, 1982).

The stated constraints in Teacher education programme have been caused by the emerging issues in modern Africa, especially in education and the society. These are both new, unique and strange developments some of which, a few decades ago, would be non-issues in Teacher education programmes. But they are now real issues/challenges and modern Africa has to content with them. That is, the continent must deal with them decisively and effectively if this programme of education has to efficiently play its espoused role of development.

Emerging issues in Teacher Education and Their implications to Development in Africa

The emerging issues in Teacher education in Africa are inherent in the constraints of the programme so far discussed above. These issues can simply be characterized as socio-economic, political, developmental, technical and structural in nature.

Socio-economic as a factor in the development of Teacher education programme in Africa can be appreciated when looked at from the poverty point of

view. Globally, Africa is the least developed region (Nation Media Group, March, 2010). Its potential has not been fully tapped and the emerging needs of the society are massive. This means that the revenue base to develop and manage Teacher education programme, let alone education generally is weak. Therefore, there is no adequate facilitation of promoting the quality of this programme in terms of capacity building and research activities. Hence, the conservative/dogmatic nature of the programme that has stifled the much needed reforms and innovations over the period.

The emergence of market economy in Africa has generated demands for new generations of companies to service the development process. School teachers must be equipped with these required competencies that they, in turn, can instill the same competences in their learners. This means that there must be new, pragmatic approach to preparing school teachers. There has to be paradigm shift in organization and administration of Teacher preparation programme if this revolution has to occur. The existing Teacher education curriculum must be broadened and the Principles and Practice of the programme should be reviewed so as to accommodate the new developments in education and society respectively. This is likely to transform the image and role of this programme in Africa and promote the expected development.

An element of emerging issues in Teacher education in Africa is need to design, formulate and administer relevant policy frame-work, establish the right structures and improve or review the existing practices in the programme by introducing the new perspectives in it. This cannot be possible without there being good will from the government through investment in the programme and professionalizing it. This, therefore, requires that the political elite are individuals who are familiar with this programme and have the capacity to tap or enlist expertise for or in the programme - hence facilitating the development of reforms and innovations in the programme.

The organization and administration of Teacher education programme is a weighty issue to-day in Africa. The intriguing issue about this programme in Africa is: who should organise and conduct the programme? Not the present cadre of people who have little or no training in Teacher education! Leaving this sensitive programme in the hands of such ignorant individuals, in itself is **self deceit**, dishonesty and an expression of mismanagement of the programme. Therefore, there is need to prepare and staff this programme with well trained and qualified professionals in Teacher education to manage it. This will ensure guaranteed quality in the programme and the production of competent school

teachers with the capacity to promote national development.

As alluded to elsewhere above, Teacher education programme has not changed much since its inception in Western Europe; yet the environment it is operating in has changed drastically. The society is now very sophisticated and there are many technological advancements in the world. This feature has given the impression that Teacher education is both not sensitive and responsive to changes in the modern world. The consequences of this development have been to question the need for this programme today in Africa now that there is some evidence that **Teaching machines** can teach just well as teachers can do (Makewa, 1996; Zigama, 2009). This development seems to lend itself to the increasing view that Teaching is not a profession at all (Some, 2003). According to this school of thought, anybody can teach provided he/she is literate. This line of thinking is one of the present controversies in Teacher education that are discussed below.

Emerging Controversies in Teacher Education in Modern Africa

The emerging controversies in Teacher education programme are not new. Right from the inception of Teacher Training programme there has been the question of whether there is need to train school teachers and in what? (Thompson, 1973). However, the past controversy in Teacher education has originated from professionals in education. But the present controversies, similar to the long held/cherished adage of whether **Teachers are Born or Made**, are unique and strange in nature. The initiators and proponents of these concerns are non-professionals in education, let alone, Teacher education. Their concern is about the quality of the present crop of school teachers whose performance and character is betrayal of the Teaching profession. This concern reflects what Kiptoon (1996) and Maritim (1996) referred to as half-baked graduates. This observation raises several professional questions “who should be **prospective teachers**? **Who should prepare** these teachers? And **how** should these teachers be prepared?” These questions are at the core of Teaching profession. The discussion of this paper examines the implications of these important questions regarding Teacher education and, by extension, Teaching profession.

This issue of who should be prospective teachers today is a big concern to the modern society in Africa. This is because of the rapid developments in the society in general and education specifically. The society is highly sophisticated, it has access to information and other related materials - which until recently were the preserve of school teachers; and the emergence of market economy. The latter factor has

made many people to join Teaching profession for employment's sake only. These developments have empowered the general public to question the performance and character of the present cadre of school teachers. The society to-day demands for more and better services from school teachers than traditional pedagogical duties only. In the case of education, many new developments have occurred in the recent past. Enrolment in schools has shot up - hence the large classes found in schools to-day, which have put pressure on the performance of school teachers, the available learning facilities and resources; and the amount of required investment in education. The other related developments in education are the introduction of new educational technologies and the changing character of learners. The latter (learners) are restless, militant, critical, inquisitive and not interested in school education at all. Therefore, these developments mean that the modern school teachers must be carefully selected and prepared for the Teaching profession.

From the above discussion it is clear that the modern prospective teachers must be individuals who have passion for Teaching profession, they have to be totally committed to this “noble” (**privileged**) profession. That is, individuals who regard Teaching as a **call/vocation** and are willing or ready to contribute to the development, growth and demands of the profession. In order to get such individuals to join this profession, there is, more than ever, the need to subject these prospective teachers to **thorough vetting** to establish their real interest in this demanding profession and improve the scheme of service for the school teachers which may attract the best brains in the society.

In the case of **who should prepare** the should be school teachers, it is useful to draw lessons from the past experiences. Ideally, Teacher educators or Teacher trainers should be dedicated individuals to Teacher education. That is, individuals who are specialised, experienced and interested in this programme of education. They should have trained and qualified in Teacher education. The present practice of recruiting Teacher-educators or trainers from either Primary or secondary school education sectors is unfortunate. These individuals are subject or discipline specialists and NOT Teacher-educators or trainers. This explains why there are complaints about the quality of the present crop of school teachers. That is, these teachers are of low quality and have little interest in the profession. In order to promote the quality of Teacher preparation programme, universities in Africa with Teacher education units (Faculties or Schools) should design, develop and administer degree or any other programmes in Teacher education. They should mount Bachelors and post-graduate degree programmes in Teacher education. The emerging

trend in some of these universities, where some units not mandated to conduct Teacher education have been authorized to run this programme, is the underlying factor for the observed negative image of Teaching profession.

However, in the case of how the present crop of school teachers should be prepared, it is the contention of this paper that this process should be professionally conducted. The selected individuals should be prepared in competencies that should enable them to deal with ease the challenges of the modern world. That is, they should be prepared and conducted through well designed and administered Teacher preparation programme with a much broader curriculum than the case is at present. These prospective teachers should be prepared by professionals in Teacher education using a variety of modern generations of educational technologies in teaching and training.

The prospective teachers should be provided with conducive environment (including accommodation, catering facilities and financial support) for training so as to motivate them in taking up the Teaching profession; Only professionals in Teacher education should prepare teachers; modern facilities and resources should be developed and used in preparing them, and the African governments should invest adequately in the Teacher education programme if they hope to have competent school teachers required for modern and accelerated development. This strategy will facilitate the development of reforms and innovations that are badly needed in this programme. As pointed out elsewhere above, this is the main missing link in the management of Teacher education programme in modern Africa. Besides, the administration of Teacher education programme should be controlled. The rise of uncontrolled so-called **private "Teacher Training"** institutions in some parts of Africa is compromising the quality in Teacher preparation. The authorities should not encourage the establishment of these institutions that are being established and run by quacks for commercial purposes only. Ideally, school teachers should be prepared in officially designed Teacher education institutions that follow the nationally approved structure!

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that Teacher education programme is under siege from the stake-holders because of poor performance and also that the existing controversies and contradictions in Teacher education are real issues that have their origin in emerging developments in education and society. These controversies are technical, professional, logistical and social in nature. For Teacher education to remain relevant and useful to development in Africa, these controversies must be professionally

and ably addressed otherwise, they will continue threatening the existence of Teaching profession.

This discussion also demonstrates that Teacher education programme is specialised, exclusive and strategic in national development. Therefore, it should be managed by highly specialised individuals in Teacher education and NOT amateurs or conmen and women as the case is at present in some parts of Africa. This is the only way the programme can survive the "beatings" of the modern world. Unfortunately, these controversies are orchestrated by non-professionals in Teacher education let alone in education.

Finally, this paper has also ably demonstrated that Teacher education programme is dynamic in nature. It has the capacity and tenacity to respond to the emerging developments both in education and the society as it has always done in the past. But this can only be possible when there is relevant support from all the stake-holders in the programme. Generally, the programme is characterized by resilience and ability to respond to new challenges in education and society. There can be no better hope in this programme than this!

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