

## Teacher Education and Development in Africa: The Lost Opportunity

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### Abstract

*Teacher Education is an essential education programme that focuses on Teacher preparation and professionalization of teaching career. It prepares and produces school teachers who are considered the back bone of development in any society. It is against this background that the present paper was designed, developed and presented. The paper examines the role of Teacher education programme in development and how this is done. Further, it discusses the development opportunities the African continent has lost by not organising and administering this programme of education efficiently and effectively since the mid-eighties (1980's). Given the observed widespread under-development across the continent is a clear manifestation that African countries have not properly harnessed Teacher education programme for national development. The paper seeks, through well thought out suggestions, the way of redeeming this programme in Africa so as to foster the expected modern development. This will make this continent competitive globally in matters related to development.*

**Key Words:** Teacher Education, Transformation, Development, Lost Opportunity

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher education is a special programme of education that focuses on teacher preparation for an established education system. It is a critical education programme because it is a bastion of all the required expertise for development—individual and national society form of development. The teachers who are produced through this programme are prepared and mandated to develop and nurture required skills in learners for various sectors of the economy. These skills are varied and include life, intellectual/academic and physical skills.

Mankind has always needed a variety of sophisticated skills for survival. This makes Teacher Education programme as old as the human race. From time immemorial, this programme has been regarded as crucial for development. This explains why the teaching profession and the teacher have been held in high esteem by all societies since ancient times. But if teacher education programme is not properly organised and administered, then these two elements of education will be inefficient. Consequently, there will be under-development in the society which seems to be the case on the African continent. Apparently, Teacher Education has not been effectively harnessed in Africa to promote political, social, economic and technological development as the –Tigers of Asia and other progressive developing countries have done. It is time, this situation was redressed to enable Africa participate efficiently in modern highly technological world.

This paper sets out to examine the influence of Teacher Education on development in Africa. Specifically, the paper discusses the concept of Teacher Education, the purposes of this programme of education and the challenges of managing Teacher Education and their potential in influencing development in Africa. Understanding these aspects of Teacher Education may explain the present status of development on the African continent.

### **Concept of Teacher Education**

Teacher Education is a programme of education that is designed, developed and administered to prepare and produce school teachers for an established system of education (Kafu, 2009). It is normally culture-based. In other words, Teacher Education reflects the aspirations of the nation or society. Generally, this programme of education is dynamic and essential in any society. This is because it is the bastion of expertise that sustains the society. Since the society is always dynamic, Teacher Education programme must keep pace by changing to remain relevant. The teachers prepared and produced should be properly provided with relevant competencies to manage the ever emerging challenges in the society. They have to teach and educate the masses as preparation for these challenges.

Since Teacher Education is vital in development of a society, it requires proper and efficient designing or planning and administration. It should be based on the political and educational philosophies of the nation and conducted according to the strategic plan of such a nation. In addition, the programme should be adequately facilitated through provision of relevant facilities, resources and logistical support. In other words, for Teacher Education to carry out its mandate of producing competent cadre of school teachers, it requires massive moral and material support from the society. This is one fact that the –Tigers of Asia (Burma, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and India) were able to realise early and utilized it for their observed development (Jung, 2000). These countries recognised the important role of education in general and Teacher Education in particular in development. They invested heavily in these two resources and recognized them as critical soft-ware for rapid and meaningful development (Munavu, 1999). This strategy produced highly motivated school teachers who have readily supported political, social, economic and technological development in the above nations. The effective utilisation of Teacher education in the development programmes in the –Tigers of Asia confirms the views held by authorities that this programme is a spur of development in the society (King, 1961; Ssekamwa, 1969; Lucas, 1970).

### **Purpose of Teacher Education in a Society**

Teacher Education is a programme of education designed to produce school teachers to serve the needs of the society. The latter are an important –cog in the wheel of development. They spur national development by developing, instilling and nurturing the essential competencies for development by teaching and educating the masses. Therefore, Teacher Education directly or indirectly fosters development in the society.

Further, Teacher Education is the custodian of the culture of the nation/society. This role of teacher education was evident in ancient education systems (Sifuna, 1974). In ancient

(African traditional societies included) times, this programming of education was highly cherished. This is demonstrated in the manner it was organised and conducted. The programme was carefully administered. Those individuals charged with conducting it were thoroughly vetted and its content was based on the culture of the society. They were expected to be experienced individuals in cultural expectations, mature and good role models to the teachers and learners in the society. In this respect, Teacher Education defines the national character.

As indicated elsewhere above, Teacher Education is dynamic. That is, the programme is always adaptive and progressive. In all societies, Teacher Education is looked upon as the source of innovations and creativity. This is because the quality of school teachers will always determine the level of development in the society. The better teachers are prepared the more likely development is to be accelerated since such a cadre of teachers will influence the initiative, creative and innovative tendencies of their learners who will eventually become effective productive members of such a society. Therefore, the purpose of Teacher Education is to initiate and sustain transformation of the society through the process of adaptation to change creation of new ideas in and ideals for the society and advocating for what is good for such a society. Since school teachers are widespread in the society, this function of Teacher Education is not only possible but also effective. This explains why the founding fathers of independent Africa placed the hope of Africa in this programme of education (Kwame, 1965; Republic of Kenya, 1988). Examination of historical development of modern Teacher Education Programme reveals that the purpose of this programme in Europe and Africa has been limited to –training teachers when it should be otherwise.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### **Historical Development and Teacher Education in Africa**

Teacher Education programme has informal and formal perspectives. The former is associated with ancient (Greek, Roman, Traditional African) societies. In these societies, there was no distinct separation between this programme of education and other aspects of life. But the onset of industrialization process in England in the seventeenth century changed this practice in education. Thereafter, there was increased need for specialised expertise for individuals working in factories or industries. This need led to establishment of industrial training institutes to equip workers with relevant skills required in their work place. The effectiveness of this practice influenced the education sector to do the same hence, the establishment of the first formal Teacher Training Centre (T.T.C) in Lancaster, England in 1775 (Ringa, 1995). This T.T.C. and others to follow it in Europe and elsewhere in the world were modelled on the vocational and technical training principles and practices. Emphasis was placed on how (practice) to teach rather than what (knowledge) to teach. An attachment (Teaching practice experience) was considered an important component of this training process. This practice limited the teachers' competence to teach, educate and develop learners; whereas a teacher could be competent in how (pedagogy) to teach, one would be severely handicapped in what (knowledge) to teach the learners. Consequently, the learners were not adequately developed and guided to manage the emerging challenges in the rapidly changing world. This is what has bedevilled the teachers Education Programme in Africa since the eighteenth century.

The present, formal Teacher Education was introduced in Africa at the beginning of nineteenth (19<sup>th</sup> C) century – first in West Africa (Gold Coast/Ghana, Nigeria) and then East Africa (Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda). This programme was modelled on the one practiced in Europe. It was largely introduced by Missionaries who came from different European countries and therefore, introduced different Teacher Education Programmes as practiced in their home countries. Since most of these missionaries were not experts in education let alone Teacher Education, they simply translocated or transferred Teacher Education practices as they —knew or saw them wherever they came from. They never bothered to customise this education programme to the African setting. Consequently, the programmes were and still remain irrelevant to the needs of the African continent hence, the prevailing widespread under-development on the continent (Kafu, 2012).

From the above discussion, one would be forgiven for asserting that the organization and administration of Teacher Education in Africa is responsible for the dismal development on the continent. The basis for this assertion is presented hereunder.

### **Teacher Education and the Lost Opportunity for Effective Development in Africa**

Development is the goal of the human race. This is the process of experience in general and promotion of quality of life in particular. In simple terms, development is making a change in a situation for good purpose. The purpose of Teacher Education is to generate changes in the society to promote quality of life. That is, this education programme is supposed to empower beneficiaries to contribute to national development in several ways. This includes promoting literacy, developing and instilling relevant skills in individuals to engage gainfully in various sectors of the economy and participation in international/global affairs. These are important tools/instruments for development in any society. The intriguing question at this stage is, —has Teacher Education in Africa subscribed to these aspirations? The honest answer is —somehow in general but —Noll in particular. This situation is due to the factors discussed below.

The concept of Teacher Education in Africa is narrow in scope. The programme is still largely viewed as a teacher training programme. That is, a programme geared to preparing school teachers in pedagogy (professional studies) only. This practice places emphasis on pedagogical content at the expense of academic development of a teacher. The practice is the age old philosophy of teacher preparation that can be traced from the Lancastrian of Teacher Training Programme model of the late eighteenth century. The consequence has been to continue using old fashioned Teacher Education curriculum that is not responsive to emerging challenges in Education and Society. Further, the programme has tended to produce non-performing school teachers in modern, market-oriented economy in Africa. They are non-creative, less innovative and poor in initiatives. This cadre of teachers has miserably failed to inject new ideas and ideals in the society which could be utilised to transform development on the African continent. If meaningful development is to occur in Africa, then the concept of Teacher Education must strike a balance between Professional and Academic preparation of school teachers and hence the use of Teacher Education rather than Teacher Training when referring to teacher preparation programme. These make school Teachers more productive and participate in the life of their respective societies.

The second factor that has affected the impact of Teacher Education Programme on development in Africa is the recognition accorded to the programme across the continent. In many countries in Africa, Teacher Education has been and still is viewed in traditional way – that is merely a programme of preparing school teachers (training of teacher). But the programme has far more functions than this. Failure to recognise the real importance and role of this programme in national development has resulted in inadequate investment in it. The consequence is the development and use of inappropriate, out-dated and dilapidated facilities and resources for preparing school teachers. This situation has contributed to preparation of teachers of poor quality with little impact on development in Africa and adversely tainted the image of the programme, teaching profession and the teacher. In contrast, governments in Africa are massively investing in Primary and Secondary education sectors which are solely dependent on the Teacher Education Programme for teachers to serve them. This has compromised the role of Teacher Education in national development because the teachers produced are not adequately prepared.

The design and management of Teacher Education programme is another factor that has impacted negatively on development in Africa. There is little or no documented evidence that this programme is separated from other sectors of education and planned for separately as an entity. In most cases, its design is lumped together with those of Primary and Secondary school education sectors. In nearly all countries of Africa there is no position of Director of Teacher Education who could organise and mobilize resources for designing and administering the programme efficiently. Besides, the programme has no clearly articulated philosophy that could serve as a guide in its role in national development. This has meant that Teacher Education over the years has been managed as routine practice like any other education programmes. Yet it is a special programme. Further, the personnel charged with managing Teacher Education Programme are not specialists in this programme of education. Consequently, the programme is not efficiently and effectively managed. In effect, it is mismanaged. A scrutiny of the existing Teacher Education curricula and modes of preparing school teachers confirms this fact. Therefore, this sort of mismanagement of such sensitive programme can hardly add value to national and international development (Kafu, 2010).

Further, there is no evidence that African countries have made serious effort to review Teacher Education programme to give it the paradigm shift it needs. It has remained traditional and irrelevant to changing times in Africa. This has been a big tragedy to this great continent.

Of serious concern is the fact that the design and management of Teacher Education is not based on the political philosophies of various African countries. This makes the Teacher Education Programme alien and irrelevant to the aspirations of the people of Africa. More often than not, this programme is based on and reflects the nature of Teacher Education of the eighteenth century Europe.

Hence, the Teacher Education programme has to a large extent under-developed Africa by producing incompetent school teachers who are incapable of inspiring and preparing the society for the desired development. This has impeded meaningful development that would make Africa not only a competitive but comparable region to others on the globe

in this sphere. This fact combined with the failure to embrace modern technologies and globalisation in Teacher Education has made the programme irrelevant and ineffective in modern, technological era (Kiptoon, 1969).

### **Suggested Strategies of Harnessing Teacher Education for Development in Africa**

Although Teacher Education plays a critical role in development, Africa has been slow in appreciating this fact. The preceding discussion on this programme and the lost opportunity for effective development in Africa attests to this. The main underlying causes are poor or lack of clear philosophy of Teacher Education programme, misconceptions about this programme in Africa, poor designs and management of the programme, irrelevant Teacher Education Curricula to the African setting, non-performing national economies and the amorphous status of this programme in the existing education systems in Africa. This is the context in which the suggested strategies of harnessing Teacher Education in development in Africa are presented.

The first strategy of making Teacher Education relevant to development in Africa is to introduce Paradigm shift in the design and management of the programme. The approach to conducting the programme requires radical changes in respect to planning, administration and supervision of the programme.

Generally, the philosophy of Teacher Education is hardly well articulated in most systems of education in Africa. This has made it difficult to appreciate the purpose and role of Teacher Education in individual and national development. Consequently, many people in Africa confuse the general philosophy of the national education system and that of Teacher Education. As a matter of fact, there is yet to be a system of education with a well articulated philosophy of Teacher Education. The consequence of this state of affairs has tended to result in total confusion of the purpose and role of this programme in modern Africa. Therefore, if Teacher Education programme is to serve the national needs and interests, it must have a well articulated philosophy which is supposed to provide the direction and frame-work of Teacher Preparation programme for the established education system. The limited concept of this programme of education has not been helpful to development efforts in Africa for a long time and especially after the 1980's.

Over the centuries, Teacher Education has been viewed as –teacher training process (Ringa, 1995). This perception is limiting. Teacher Education is broader than mere equipping school teachers with pedagogical competencies. It is preparation of these individuals in social, moral, academic and aesthetic experiences. This broad concept facilitates preparation of school teachers in competencies of managing life experiences with confidence. This is because one will have been equipped with appropriate leadership, intellectual, social and moral skills to adjust to any environment. Therefore, the present concept of Teacher Education should be broadened to include more survival skills for teachers and the society.

The design and management of Teacher Education should be professionalised (Kafu, 2010). There is need to establish ethics of this programme. That is, make the programme exclusive and specialised. This will characterise the programme and all those involved in its management. Hence, only well trained and qualified individuals in Teacher Education

should be invited and assigned to administer the programme according to the established guidelines.

Further, it is suggested that the present Teacher education curriculum be reviewed to reflect the expected roles of a school teacher in modern society. Though times have drastically changed, the roles of a school teacher outlined by Muhidin-Mohammed (1970) are still valid. According to him, the roles of a teacher are multi-variate. They include being a teacher as well as an educator; agent of change in society; guide and counsellor to all that he/she comes into contact with; resource mobiliser for the school and the general society; legal adviser to the general public on matters pertaining to education; opinion leader in the society and an administrator. In other words, a school teacher is a lead person in the society. That is, he/she is a role model to the members of the public in the society. These formidable roles of a teacher should form the basis of the review of the existing Teacher Education Curriculum in Africa. Consequently, apart from the usual pedagogical content that characterise the present curriculum there is urgent need to broaden it to include totally new areas (disciplines) in Teacher Preparation programme. This development will not only promote the image of Teacher Education profession but also empower the modern school teacher to perform his/her duties competently. In this regard, a teacher armed with a broader spectrum of knowledge will be able to manage the emerging challenges in education and society with confidence. Therefore, the suggested reformed Teacher Education curriculum should cover professional studies, strong academic (teaching subjects) content, social studies, basic legal education, information technology, public administration including state/county governance, globalisation process, resource mobilisation including fund-raising, emerging issues in education, Teacher education and the society. Such greatly enriched Teacher Education curriculum will prepare and produce a competent and relevant school teacher for this century and beyond (Karanja, 1978). This Calibre of a teacher is one who will have the capacity and ability to spur and manage the desired development in modern Africa. However, such expanded Teacher Education curriculum implies that the present duration of Teacher Preparation programme will have to be extended by one to two years at all levels (certificate, diploma and degree). This will be in line with the recommendation of Bosire (1995) that the current period of training school teachers is too short.

Currently, Teacher Education, the Teaching Profession and the person of a teacher are highly despised entities in Africa. This is because the process of adoption of adaptation to new and more sophisticated educational technologies is presently a requirement. This development has resulted in reduced investment in Teacher Education Programme which many countries in Africa view as not useful and if anything, unnecessary burden. Therefore, there is need to invest adequately in the programme so as to attract and retain the best brains in the society. This is because such a move will facilitate the development and use of modern facilities and resources needed to prepare and produce a relevant school teacher for Africa. This development will, in turn, boost the morale of teacher –trainers, teacher- trainees and subsequently serving, qualified school teachers. Hence, not only promoting the image of Teacher Education programme but also making it relevant to national planning needs.

In summary, these strategies required to make Teacher Education programme relevant to the needs of modern Africa include paradigm shift in Teacher Education Programme, designing, developing and administering relevant philosophy of Teacher Education. This will be a vehicle for directing how this programme of education should be customised to the local needs in this continent. The second strategy is to broaden the scope of Teacher Education programme and especially the Teacher Education curriculum to include emerging issues in the society that go beyond the Teacher Training exercise. Third, countries in Africa should invest adequately in Teacher Education Programme so as to develop and use modern facilities and resources in teacher preparation exercise. This strategy will facilitate production of competent school teachers who have the right competencies for national development. Such an environment will promote the creative, innovative and initiative tendencies in teachers. Since the school teachers are potential fosters of the development process in any society, investment in Teacher Education is likely to accelerate and diversify this process in the country. Last, powerful, authoritative Teacher Education directorates should be established in all education systems in Africa. These units will design and develop relevant national philosophies of Teacher Education, facilities and resources for managing Teacher Education programme, create and maintain appropriate policies and structures for administering this programme and facilitate the streaming of the present amorphous status of Teacher Education. This will improve the image of this programme and attract the badly needed investments.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has demonstrated two important things concerning Teacher Education programme in Africa. First is the fact that this programme is the —mover and shakerl of development in any society provided it is prudently designed and managed. The second fact is that Africa has not adequately exploited the potential of Teacher Education in development. This has been the missed opportunity for development in this continent. However, the hope of development in Africa lies in embracing Teacher Education by new generations of Africans and new breed of African leaders.

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### **BIO-DATA**

Prof. Patrick Kafu is a Professor of Education. He is a specialist in Educational Technology in Teacher Education. He has a wealth of experience in teacher training and curriculum development. He is currently the Dean, School of Education, and University of Eldoret, Kenya.