Problems and Prospects of Teacher Education: A Review

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Abstract

Every nation strives towards the provision of quality education for its citizens, because of the realization that education is necessary to engineer and consolidate any nation’s developmental process. However, achieving quality education would be a mirage if teacher education is not in good shape. 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. Quality Education is becoming increasingly important with the growing diversity and change brought about by globalization. This has been adapted by Education International through the call for Quality Educator for all projects. Education For All (EFA) goal 6 seeks to improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all, so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. Teachers remain key drivers in attainment of the all the above. This paper explores the challenges facing teacher education and the prospects thereof in various countries including United States Africa, United Kingdom, India, Australia and majorly in Africa.

Key Words: Teacher Education, globalization, Teacher attrition, Teacher development, professionalization of the effectiveness of educational programmes

Problems of Teacher Education

The problem of getting sufficient numbers of qualified teachers to staff school classrooms is one of the most significant public policy issues facing many countries. Teacher attrition is a global phenomenon that requires critical attention from all stakeholders of education. It is a problem not only in developing countries but in advanced countries. This makes it a global issue that needs to be tackled seriously to ensure that teachers recruited are retained in the teaching profession. In the United States, for instance, teacher dropout problem is continuously and gradually getting out of control. Teacher attrition has grown by 50
percent over the past fifteen years, and the national teacher turnover rate has risen to 16.8 percent. In urban schools it is over 20 percent, and in some schools and districts, the teacher dropout rate is higher than the student dropout rate (Kain, 2011). This high rate of teacher turnover in the U.S. school systems costs more than $7 billion a year (Hernandez, 2007).

Again, in the United States of America it has become the practice of many states to declare teaching vacancies in counties every year by subject area, grade level and geographical location. The picture does not look different in the United Kingdom where it is reported that the nation faces an uphill battle to fill all classrooms with qualified teachers (Eurydice, 2002). Generally, among member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), quantitative shortages of teachers are reported (OECD, 2005). In the western world, therefore, the shortage of teachers thus seems to be a topic of discussion and research on a continuing basis.

In India, Leat (1999) blames inability of education systems to address contemporary challenges on faulty academic cultures and traditions. For instance, attainment of good grades and certificates using whatever means is valued as opposed to transformation of learners into effective agents of change in society. Unhealthy competition among learners is tolerated instead of developing the culture of cooperation and mutual responsibility. Perkins (1990) observes that the culture in most educational institutions is characterized by minimal informative feedback and emphasis on traditional ways of doing things. This diminishes the exercise of individual initiative and choice. Consequently learners are denied an opportunity to develop essential characteristic of democratic citizenship. Such characteristics include respect for dialogue, freedom of expression and self-determination through individual choice.

Also, Barrow et al. (2006) report reveals that the main challenges facing teacher education include meeting children’s specific learning needs, respecting students’ cultural and socio-economic context and involving parents and communities in school activities. The teachers therefore require interpersonal and counseling skills that can enable them to empathetically discern the learning needs of pupils. The teachers also need to be able to deal with diversity of learners and forge school-community collaboration. National Council for Teacher Education [NCTE] (2009) acknowledges the important role of teacher education in developing the physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual dimensions of the human person. Consequently the very high social expectations on the teacher are regarded as morally justified. However, in India, an observation is made that academic preparation is over emphasized over other equally critical aspects of teacher education such as moral reasoning, emotional intelligence and capacity to manage interpersonal relationships.

Douglass (2006) perceives preparation of employable graduates as the main challenge of education in the 21st century. According to him, emphasis on employability has led to other challenges. For instance, there are sharp divisions between scientific-technological academic disciplines on the one hand and social science and humanities on the other. He argues that there is an overemphasis on the value of scientific-technological disciplines leading to bifurcation of knowledge. According to NCPE(2008), the main challenges that education must confront in the world today include: conservation of the environment and sustainability of natural resources; the
provision of health care; renewal of economic vitality; coping with change through learning; promoting core human values like justice, peace and equity and protecting human rights.

Demand for teachers in Australia is on the rise. The population of primary students is set to increase dramatically over the next ten years. Secondary schools will start to see the increase flow through from 2018. Part-time employment of teachers is becoming more prevalent and the proportion of male teachers in secondary school continues to decline. Teacher supply varies across Australian states and territories. Most states have a current, and in some cases considerable, oversupply of generalist primary teachers. The secondary workforce is more variable in terms of the availability of teachers by subject areas as well as across states. Regional and remote areas tend to experience greater difficulty attracting and retaining teachers at all levels than do their metropolitan counterparts (Rweldon, 2015). To deal with this situation Rweldon, 2015 asserts that a more in-depth analysis of population growth need to be undertaken, in order to identify locations where teacher shortages are likely to occur. Further study of the experience of graduates in the first five years of their career may assist to identify subject areas and locations experiencing higher levels of attrition, and may assist the creation of policies to increase the retention of early career teachers.

In Pakistan, the importance of teaching practice is not recognized practically in the teacher training institutions. Government of Pakistan (1998) accepted that the existing teacher education program as considered is not being adequately responsive to the demands for quality in the school system. Objective, manual, orientation, rules and regulation of teaching practice are neither prepared nor supplied properly. These are prepared in few institutions but not supplied to all concerned person of the teaching practice. Rashid (1999) quoted that an objective is more specific and describes definite activities. The role of supervisors in the teaching practice is very rare. The supervisors do not provide proper guidance. Supervisors are seen over loaded and sufficient facilities and incentives are also not being provided by the departments/institutions. Issani and Virk (2004) describe that due to lack of adequate training facilities for university teachers the present position of teacher with proper professional competencies and training is alarming low.

Evaluation and assessment criteria is also very formal like satisfactory, unsatisfactory, good, very good or marks % etc. during evaluation all the aspects of teaching skills are not being considered. The segment of teaching practice in teacher training institution is not considered seriously. Modern techniques are neither supplied nor applied. Rafaquat (2002) quoted that mostly the teacher training institution are following lecture methods. It is recommended to adopt modern and better teaching training methodology like demonstration, discovery or participation methods to attain qualitative improvement. The duration of teacher training should be lengthened to develop favorable attitudes of prospective teachers towards teaching profession. New inventions demand that teachers must be well trained, having latest knowledge and be able to apply the new approaches with latest technology. Quality of education and implementation of all policies and plans are depended upon the motivated and quality based teachers. Duration of teaching practice is short. It is not up to the international standard. Farooq (1990) pointed out short duration of teacher training programme as compared with the developed countries. Rafaquat (2002) who reported that the duration of
teaching practice of teaching may be increased according to the programme of training. The quality of teaching practice may be improved by providing adequate human: physical resources and special consideration must be given to the practical components of teacher training programme for producing quality teachers.

Turning to the African continent, Nilsson (2003) analyzed various country reports prepared for the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, and noted that many African countries face large shortages of teachers, which hinder their efforts to achieve universal primary education. He stated that to achieve EFA by 2015, African countries would need between 18% (Angola) and 84% (Malawi) increase in their current teacher supply, noting that majority of the primary teachers in most countries are unqualified according to the national requirements. In some countries the lack of qualified and experienced teachers is due to the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS: the number of primary teachers that died in 2000 in Zambia was equivalent to 45% of all teachers who were educated that year, and in Malawi 30% of teachers are infected (World Bank, 2002).

A report of a survey on teacher attrition in 2009 commissioned by the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) and the Teachers and Educational Workers Union (TEWU) revealed a very high teacher attrition rate in Ghana. The survey revealed that the Ghana Education Service (GES) estimates that about 10,000 teachers leave the classroom every year for other professions (GNAT, 2009). The high rate of teacher attrition impacts negatively on school improvement efforts as it disrupts the stability and continuity of teaching. Whereas high-performing schools are distinguished by stability and continuity of teaching, studies show that teaching traditionally has been characterized as an occupation with a very high turnover rate (Lawrence, 1999). This affirms the situation in Ghana where the Teacher Training institutions in the country produce so many teachers every year but there is still shortage of teachers because they are not retained in the profession.

In Nigeria, Ladebo (2005) reports that primary teachers leave the profession early because of poor working conditions, and the desire for upward mobility. According to him, the problem has reached such an extent that “maintaining adequate levels of staffing and retention have been recognized as important areas of policy intervention for the primary education system in Nigeria” (Ladebo, 2005, p. 356). Barrow et al (2006) asserts that in Africa, educational policies though carefully designed, are poorly understood, interpreted and executed. Consequently, problems that should have been adequately addressed through education still persist. The problems include ethnic tensions, corruption, poverty, environmental degradation and poor governance. An education system that can empower Africans to resolve these problems is needed. In Ghana for instance, development of thinking skills among learners has been identified as a viable way of addressing contemporary challenges. However, in practice, actual efforts to develop such skills in teacher training institutions have not yielded expected results (Acheampong, 2001; Hill, 2000).

In Kenya, the quality of primary teacher education has been questioned. According to Getao (1996) “it can be safely stated that teacher education has reached a level where the problem is not that of quantity but that of quality”. He suggests that the ratio of teachers to pupils should be increased so that teachers can have time to develop innovative
approaches to teaching their subjects. Getao (1996) observes that the poor quality of instruction undermines effectiveness in learning. However, he assumes that given adequate time, teachers are capable of instructing their learners innovatively.

Galabawa (2003) asserts that teacher training lecturers in Kenya do not seem to be implementing a curriculum which cultivates innovativeness in tackling the problem of teaching material production. In addition, he discerns minimal emphasis on practical skills and ability by teacher trainees to analyze, interpret data, apply scientific theory and use research to solve teaching and learning problems. Other challenges include the inability of the Primary Teacher Education (PTE) curriculum to promote awareness of global competition in trade and aid. Some key issues to meeting the challenges of globalization where included in the curriculum, are only partially or sometimes superficially covered.

Galabawa (2003) also identifies the following weaknesses and threats facing primary teacher training colleges (PTTCs) in Kenya: low lecturer professional development, lack of formal research agenda, weak linkage with teachers and tertiary institutions, insufficient knowledge of information communication and technology (ICT), lack of institutional marketing, lack of institutional strategic plans and reluctance to accept change at individual as well as institutional levels. Gakuu et al (2009) for instance states that while integration of ICT would have substantial impact on teaching and learning, the actual state of integration in primary teacher education curriculum is dismal. ARSRC (2007) observes that the content infused and integrated within the current primary teacher education syllabus is inadequate for teacher trainees’ development of meaningful knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Additional challenges related to the capacity of PTE to anticipate and deal with emerging issues include: inadequacy in servicing of primary school teachers to adopt alternative methods of curriculum delivery (Republic of Kenya, 2008b); inability of PTE to address contemporary issues in society (Republic of Kenya, 2005a); rigidity of PTE institutional structures leading to resistance to change (Wegulo, 2007); incapacity of PTE curriculum to effectively facilitate creation, adoption, adaptation, and usage of knowledge (Republic of Kenya, 2007) and persistence of traditional approaches to teaching, learning and resource allocation (KNCHR, 2007).

In a report by KNUT (2015) a number of challenges face the current strategies that provide the needs of teachers. Such challenges include; lack of funds due to low budgetary allocation, poor salary and stipends, strikes, lack of government commitment and cooperation as indicated by the haste to address the needs of the teachers, leading to unfulfilled promises; lack of teaching and learning resources, overcrowded classes due to free Primary Education (FPE), poor infrastructure and lack facilities, lack of conducive environment and understaffing of teachers. Other challenges cited were; corruption practices including corrupt stakeholders, nepotism, lack of transparency and accountability, disunity and wrangles between KUPPET and KNUT, lack of motivation was also a challenge facing provision of needs of teachers, politicizing of education issues by the leaders, state of economy including high living standards, inflation, rising purchasing power and poverty; hostile and harsh working environment as well as cases of insecurity and attacks from other communities and wild animals. Further, meager medical, housing, commuter, hardship allowances have not been provided.
In Nigeria, inadequate funding of the education sector has been a major challenge facing the teacher education. Researchers, Aina (2002), Durosaro (2006), Amadi (2007); Balogun (2010) lamented over the inadequacy of fund in the education sector. It is not an understatement to note that the Nigerian government, over the years has not been meeting the UNESCO recommendations of 26% of the total budgetary allocation to the education sector. For example, the allocation to Education in the National Budget for 2003, 2004 and 2005 were 7%, 12% and 11% (FRN 2005). According to Akindutire (2001) the poor funding of the teacher education since the 1980s has become a cause of worry to educationists as it affects the merits and standard of the certificates awarded to education graduates. According to Durosaro (2006), the low status accorded to teachers in the country, does not make students enroll and be trained as teachers. The few who enroll do so because they have no choice. Ibukun (2004) lamented that many brilliant individuals are not willing to take up teaching as a profession.

Ajayi and Shofoyeke (2003) posited that a number of interrelated factors like poor income, delay in payment of salaries, lack of job satisfaction, contribute to the seemingly declining attitude and commitment of teachers to their professional calling. The lack of commitment manifests in the areas of lack of enthusiasm to work; lack of concern for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities; inadequate preparation for lessons; failure to write lesson notes; careless handling of statutory records among others. There is the problem of attrition in the teaching force and dwindling enrolment of teachers. The teachers’ conditions of service are not enticing enough to attract and retain the best of brains in the profession (Durosaro, 2006). Besides, Ajayi and Shofoyeke (2003) claimed that the continued uncomplimentary public perceived image of teachers may not likely attract the right caliber of people to be retained in the teaching profession.

Generally in Africa, it has been observed in recent times that some practicing teachers in the education system have divided loyalty to the profession, because of their involvement in some other assignments outside the teaching job. Observations have shown that some teachers are full-time politicians. It appears that those that engage in this kind of divided loyalty do so in order to make both ends meet. However, this tendency jeopardizes the progress of the profession. A very important challenge facing the government in the present dispensation in the area of teacher education is how to motivate teachers in order to encourage new entrants to the profession and retain the old ones. Durosaro (2006) advised that motivation should include better pay, improved condition of service for serving teachers as well as bursary and scholarship award to education student at all levels. This suggests that when all these are not there teachers become less motivated to do the job. Mmadike (2006) found excess workload; low morale; inadequate remuneration; unattractive prospects for promotion and inadequate working conditions as sources of job dissatisfaction among university teachers in Nigeria. Ajayi and Shofoyeke (2003) reported that teachers often succumb to the pressure of the lazy students to engage in examination malpractices both internal and public examinations. The authors lamented that right from common entrance into secondary schools, teachers source for live questions before the examination date. This singular act of the teachers appears to drag the name of the teachers in the mud. Another major challenge to teacher education in the present dispensation is that of
globalization. The world is gradually becoming a global village and for teachers to have currency and operate effectively and efficiently in the nearest future, the teachers need to imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the advanced countries of the world.

Prospects of Teacher Education

A decade or two ago, the accomplishment of teacher improvement and development opportunities may have seemed impossible, but with the advent of online learning, schools can now make this transformation possible. Other professions like medicine, law, and business utilize the potential of technology to support ongoing training, and schools in many other countries like Thailand, Chile, Peru and rural China are beginning to see the potential of using technology to continually build skills in teachers and administrators. However, the key is not to just recreate the occasional workshop, but rather to use these new opportunities of technology to allow teachers to connect with experts, teacher mentors and coaches, and other colleagues over time and space, and thereby integrate professional development into teachers' day-to-day experiences (Day & Sachs, 2004). In Kenya, unless educators are quick to realize this trend, Kenyan teachers will lag behind in providing quality education to the country's children.

In the United States of America for example, in the Alabama state, County Schools have entered into a partnership to establish a technology mentoring program that facilitates more teachers training and collaboration on technology embedded projects. As a result, teachers in Alabama, report that students are becoming increasingly proficient in acquiring the scientific knowledge base needed to master course content, and science teachers report that students are better prepared for and more attentive in class. Additionally, student attendance has improved and grades are improving. Using online resource and other tools for collaboration, in-school coaching and mentoring, schools are beginning to see gains in teaching quality and student achievement.

To determine the measures that can be taken to improve the provision of the needs of teachers in Kenya, KNUT (2015) suggests that there is need to increase salaries and other funds to cater for the rising living standards. Further, the government should be committed, involve teachers in policy formulation and implementation as well as decision making. There is need for motivation of teachers through promotion, guidance and counseling, boosting morale by respecting and recognizing teachers and sensitizing the community on the same. Some noted that provision of needs of teachers could be improved through employment, i.e. there is need to recruit more teachers to ease the workload and congestion of classes as well as deal with the teacher pupil ratio which is high. Improved working condition by providing security especially in hostile areas and hardship allowance in harsh environments; increase allowances like commuter, medical, special, responsibility, risk, hardship, entertainment and housing could all improve the provision of teacher needs.

In making a professional teaching qualification mandatory, government should make it compulsory for all in the teaching jobs, at all levels, to acquire teaching qualifications. Government should give another deadline within a convenient time-frame to ensure that by 2015, all teachers would have become
professionals, because the 2006 deadline as seen in the TRC Act had failed, 2006 had come and gone and nothing much had been done to ensure that all teachers are professionalized. Thanks to some state Governments in Nigeria that gave a salary differential in the payment of the Teachers Salary Structure (TSS). While teachers with educational background enjoy 27.5%, those without education certificate enjoy 12.5%. For teacher education to get its pride of place in this democratic dispensation there is the need to change the orientation of people as regards their perception of teachers and the teaching job. The profession must be recognized by the government, as well as, the public to be able to attract young ones into the profession. Akindutire (2005) observed that Nigerian schools are staffed with unenthusiastic, ill-motivated, reluctant and “burn-out” teachers.

For the teachers to keep abreast of the goings in the world and in the area of specialization there is the need for the teacher to be ICT compliant. The teacher education curriculum needs to be reviewed so as to incorporate ICT in all levels of teacher education. Besides, Durosaro (2006) posited that as a result of the growing graduate unemployment, in Nigeria, there is the need to include some entrepreneurial skill development course into teacher education programmes. The teachers must be trained, not only in the act of self-development through continuous learning; they must also be adequately prepared for self-employment. Motivation for teachers should be considered as a means of improving output and productivity in the school system. Welfare package does not mean increase in salary alone; it entails regular payment of salary and improved conditions of service. The following are the hints on how to improve conditions of service: teachers with relevant additional qualification should be appropriately upgraded; teacher can transfer from one state to another without loss of status; capacity building for teachers at no cost; special incentives for teachers in difficult terrains; and regular payment of allowances and leave bonuses. All these would enhance increase in productivity of teachers.

Ibukun (2004) advocated for modern educational gadgets like computers, modern instructional materials and packages to be consciously introduced into the teacher education programme. It must be noted that no programme, no matter how well intended, can succeed if adequate infrastructural facilities are not provided for implementation. Teachers are advised to show high level of dedication and commitment to their job. They should demonstrate good sense of responsibility in carrying out their duties. Regardless of the magnitude of societal negative attitude to teachers, they must not deviate from their traditional role of modelling and nation building. Hence, they must stick to the ethics of the profession irrespective of the whims and caprices. More time should be provided for practical work before students are certified as teachers. There is the need to review upward the twelve weeks of internship for education students in the university. To provide sound teacher education in future, the present curriculum need to be reviewed so as to provide more time for students in the practical aspect of teaching before certificates are awarded to them as qualified teachers.

Conclusion

Teacher education is an acute issue in many parts of the world. Teacher attrition is major challenge that is faced by both developed nations like United States of America and United Kingdom and also the developing countries. For example in India, the type of teacher education offered and methods used do not help teachers to prepare students for the current challenges.
The issue of teaching practice has equally many problems. Shortage of funds to finance teacher education, poor salaries compared to other professionals, low status of the professionalism in teaching, globalization are some of the major setbacks of teacher education. Research has shown that teacher education can be improved with much effort.

References


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