

The Unfulfilled Mission of Teacher Education in Modern Africa. The Development Agenda

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ABSTRACT

Teacher education programme is an essential and highly specialized component of education and society. It is supposed to be the initiator, creator, nurturer and sustainer of society's culture and subsequent innovations. Generally, Teacher Education programme deals with, among other critical issues, the preparation and production of school teachers, professionalisation of Teaching career and setting the development agenda of the society. The present paper is designed to discuss the background of the development and growth of Teacher Education programmes? in modern africa, the contributions of this programme to the development of modern africa, the development agenda of modern africa and the future role of this programme in development in africa. Specifically, the present paper examines the concept of Teacher Education programme, fundamentals of this programme, the potential and expectations of the programme in modern africa, contributions of the programme to development in modern africa, the indicators of the performance of the programme in modern africa, the emerging issues in Teacher education and society in modern africa which comprise its development agenda, the present status of Teacher education programme and development in modern africa and the future of this programme in modern africa. This approach will make the paper presentable.

KEY WORDS: Teacher Education Programme, Modern Africa

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education is a unique programme of education. It is the programme of education that is as old as mankind has been known (Sifuna, 1974). It is the bastion of the culture of society and it also defines the destiny of the society. Through it, the culture of the society is usually initiated, developed and nurtured with a set of cherished values including development. The latter may either be individual specific or national/societal in nature. Normally, development may be political, economic, moral and otherwise in dimension. This paper sets out to examine the role of Teacher education programme in development of modern Africa since colonial era. Specifically, the paper discusses the concepts Teacher education, modern africa, the unfilled mission of the programme in modern africa and development as a process in modern africa; fundamentals of Teacher education programme in modern africa; the potential and expectations of the programme to development in modern africa; the main indicators of the performance of the programme in modern africa since colonial era; the emerging issues in Teacher education programme and their influence on development in modern africa and the future role/prospects of this programme in the development of modern africa. This sort of approach to discussing the present theme will demonstrates the extent to which the set mission/purpose of the Teacher education programme in Africa has been realized since colonial era.

Concepts of Teacher Education, Modern Africa, the Unfilled Mission of Teacher Education in Modern Africa and Development as a Process in Modern Africa

In this paper there are several important concepts that need clarification so as to make the presentation readable. These concepts include Teacher education programme, modern Africa, the unfulfilled mission and development as a process in modern Africa. The understanding of these concepts is crucial to the appreciation of the present discussion on the role of Teacher Education programme in the development of modern Africa. In other words, the importance if this programme in modern Africa.

i. Teacher Education programme

This is a special and critical programme of education that ostensibly deals with Teacher preparation and Teaching profession (Kafu, 2009). It is charged with the responsibility of preparing and producing school teachers who are the backbone of development in the society. These personnel are responsible for disseminating and upholding the culture of the society as generated by the Teacher education programme. School teachers inspire and act as agents of change in the society (Lucas, 1968).

Teacher education programme is also considered a special programme of education because not everybody can handle or manage it. Traditionally, this programme was for selected few people in the society. Normally, these were individuals characterized by highly cherished values of integrity, dignity, expected relevant experience in the programme, good understanding of this programme and maturity (Occiti, 1970). Hence the characterised rigorous procedures of identifying and selecting individuals to serve (in) this programme. Consequently, Teacher education programme, for a long time, was associated with age, experience, wisdom and privileged status in the society. This is why the programme was and still is regarded as a critical programme of education. This perception is based on its role in the development and nurturing of the culture of the society, its destiny and development agenda (Jung, 2007). Hence, the long held view that Teacher education programme is the “heartbeat” of education and the society. It is the survival as well as the determinant tool of the society.

Fundamentals of Teacher Education Programme

Fundamentals of Teacher education programme are the realities and/or facts about this programme. In other words these are the main features that characterize the programme. They are the things that are used to identify it. Therefore, for better appreciation and understanding the role and functions of this programme of education in the society, it is important to know and understand these realities and/or facts concerning Teacher education programme. Generally, there are three main realities or facts of importance concerning Teacher education programme in the society. The programme is critical, special and essential to any society. Teacher education programme is critical to any society because it initiates, generates, develops and nurtures the culture of the society. In other words, the programme determines the life and destiny of any society. Teacher education programme is the factory in which the culture of the society is manufactured by a specialised crop of members of the society.

Secondly, Teacher education programme deals with Teacher preparation programme which focuses on preparation and production of school teachers. This is the personnel entrusted with the responsibility of creating a society and promoting its development. That is, school teachers are the “messengers” of Teacher Education programme, promoters of the culture of the society and creators of nay society. This is the reason why Lucas (1968) and Ssenteza-Kajjubi (1969) advocated for preparation and production of good quality of school teachers to manage an established system of education which is the culture of the society.

Thirdly, Teacher education programme is critical to a society because it sets out its development agenda. Through this programme certain values, characteristic to a society are established. Among these values are those that deal with development and use of life skills of production, creativity and innovations, co-operation, integrity, responsibility, love and respect. All these life skills are the cornerstone of development in the society. They are the skills that promote development as well as transform the society.

On the other hand, Teacher education programme is an essential service in the society. It deals with development and transmission of the culture of the society which determines the development agenda of the society. Included in this role of the programme are things like the aspirations, desires or wishes of the society. The fact that the programme deals with preparation and production of school teachers who are deemed to be “spurs/drivers” of development, make it not only an essential but also a required programme for the survival of the society (Kafu, 2013). In other words, without this programme no society can survive. This is the programme that defines the roadmap as well as the, destiny of the society. The programme initiates designs, develops and presents the blue print of the society’s development agenda.

Finally, Teacher education programme is a special programme of education. Its nature and scope requires special treatment, since it deals with the life (culture) of the society. Therefore, it must be carefully and specially treated in the society. Because of the significant role of this programme in the society, its management has always been a preserve of selected few members of the society. Normally, the chosen individuals were carefully identified and selected for this service. They were expected to be well cultured, experienced, and mature enough to generate new ideas, dignity, integrity and respect in the society. In other words, these were persons a good reputation, beyond reproach in the society. This was the main feature of this programme when it was initially introduced in modern Africa in late eighteenth century (in the case of West Africa) and mid-nineteenth century (in east africa). The special and preferential treatment of the programme was intended to ensure the survival of the society and continuity of the cherished values, practices and belief of such a society.

Therefore, the fundamentals of Teacher education programme in any society are its character, values scope and focus. These are the basis of efficient management of this programme. Apparently, these facts have not been well grasped and/or captured in modern Africa. Hence the failure to appreciate the potential of this programme in development in modern Africa.

The Potential and Expectations of Teacher Education Programme in Modern Africa

Teacher education programme has big potential in modern Africa. This potential has been alluded to in the preceding discussion. This programme is the cradle of the culture of the society which, in turn, is the thrust of development in such a society. Specifically, Teacher education programme is the initiator, developer and reform agent of the society. In other words, this programme is the basis and pace setter of the society's development agenda. That is, Teacher Education is the promotion of all forms of development in the society. In effect, Teacher education programme is the foundation of the creation of the desired society (conservative, pragmatic, sophisticated,...etc). This is done in the process of preparing and producing the right calibre (motivated, creative and innovative) of school teachers (Lucas, 1968). Generally, the potential of Teacher education programme lies in the development and nurturing of appropriate culture of the society. The latter (culture) determines the development agenda of the society and the programme lays the foundation of the creation of the desired society. From these facts lie the expectations of the Teacher education programme in modern Africa.

The expectations of Teacher education programme in modern Africa are conventionally discussed under two phases of development namely, pre-independence and post-independence eras of Africa. It is interesting to note that this discussion covers the period since the introduction of formal, Western Teacher education programme in modern Africa. Generally, this is the period between the early eighteenth century and the present (17th c to to-day).

Formal Western education programme was introduced in modern Africa in early eighteenth century (western Africa) and mid-nineteenth century in Eastern Africa respectively (Mutua, 1970). During this colonial period and the early years of independence era from 1956 when Gold Coast (Ghana) gained independence, the expectations of this period were quite limited. The colonial governments and the Missionaries expected this programme to "train" school teachers who would evangelise the "dark" continent (Africa) and also prepare the indigenous Africans to serve as clerks in the colonial administration. In other words, the mission was to transform Africa. However, both the colonial administration and the missionaries expected Teacher education programme to produce school teachers who were cultured in Western European life with emphasis on "character formation" (in the case of the British) and "assimilation" for the French colonies. In other words, colonial Teacher education programme was expected to promote Western European cultures and uproot the Africans from their traditional cultures (Okot-Bitek, 1969; Ssekamwa, 1970).

But on attaining independence from the colonial powers starting from the mid-fifties, countries in modern Africa set for themselves five main expectations of Teacher education programme (King, 1961) namely preparation and production of enough qualified school teachers to serve their rapidly expanded education sectors (Karanja, 1988); promotion of development through the influence of this crop of school teachers in these countries (Lucas, 1968); preparation and production of skilled man-power to serve the emerging economies of the newly independent African countries (Ominde, 1965); preparation and creation of the desired society in modern Africa as well as transforming or modernising the existing society (Rodney, 1966; Nyerere, 1967, 1985; Indire and Sifuna, 1982) and to enable the African nations participate actively in geo-political affairs (Mazrui, 1993). All these lofty expectations were mere ideals which modern Africa wished Teacher Education programme to facilitate but have never come true. In fact they have not been achieved in modern Africa because the initial mission of the Teacher education was never appreciated. This is what Okoli et al (2015) complained about when writing about "preparing Teachers for contemporary Nigeria.

Based on this discussion of the potential and expectations of Teacher education programme in modern Africa, the focus of this paper now turns on the mission of this programme in modern Africa. The main interest is on what this mission was and to what extent it has been realized in Africa. In fact, this is the premise from which the above discussed expectations of teacher education programme were derived.

The Mission of Teacher Education Programme in Modern Africa

This section of the paper covers the intended purpose of Teacher education programme as well as its contributions to development in modern Africa. The discussion traverses the colonial and post-colonial eras in Africa. Generally, three different but somehow closely related scenarios concerning the development and administration of the Mission

of Teacher education programme in modern Africa are briefly examined. These are scenarios of the colonial administration, Missionary and independent Africa of the expected Mission of Teacher education programme in modern Africa. Ought to have been or should be.

Generally, the Mission of Teacher education programme in modern Africa is defined by the era/phase of development and the intended purpose of this programme under discussion. During the Missionary period in modern Africa (early eighteenth century to mid-twentieth century) the main Mission of Teacher education programme was to “train” school teachers who were expected to teach in missionary run/sponsored educational institutions as well as evangelise Africans. This explains why the content of the then Teacher education curriculum was largely religion and pedagogy (Hargreaves, 1928). The purpose of this programme was mainly to prepare and produce school teachers who would promote Christianity in Africa and transform the Dark Continent!!

In the case of colonial administration, the main Mission, just like in the case of Missionaries, of Teacher education programme in modern Africa was to “train” school teachers who would prepare a labour force to serve as clerks and labourers on European farms. The emphasis in Teacher education curriculum was competence in language arts, basic mathematics and character formations (Colonial Department of Education 1935). The main purpose of Teacher education programme during this era was to promote basic literacy among the African people to enable them work in government offices as clerks, messengers, cleaners and cooks and also work on European farms as labourers.

However, on gaining independence, the mission of Teacher education programme in modern Africa was drastically transformed. Apart from the traditional mission of preparing and producing school teachers, for the education system the Mission of the programme was expanded to cover the creation of the desired society in modern Africa (Lucas 1968); development, nurturing and sustenance of the appropriate (in effect African) cultures for societies in modern Africa; promotion of quality education in modern Africa to accelerate development (Nyerere, 1985); transformation/modernization of the African region so that it becomes competitive and comparable to the rest of the world in development; preparation and production of skilled man-power to promote economic growth in modern Africa (Ominde, 1965).

In summary, Teacher education programme is usually designed, developed and administered in a society to promote its culture, development and transformation. In the case of modern Africa, at different times of development and for different purposes, this programme, (to some extent,) served the expectations of the society. During colonial era, Teacher education programme was designed and developed to create a society that was supposed to adopt and adhere to the culture of the colonizing power, that is, the society that was subservient to the colonial masters and missionaries. Further, the programme was supposed to prepare and produce school teachers that were expected to instil foreign values, ethics and patriotism to the colonial administration and missionaries. In short, Teacher education programme during colonial era was designed to make Europeans and Christians out of the indigenous Africans. But post-independence Teacher education programme was designed to reverse these foreign rakes as well as promote Africanism and pan-Africanism. Specifically, Teacher education programme was designed to produce school teachers, promote nationhood and national unity, promote general development in Africa, prepare and produce skilled man-power as instruments for agents of development and also transform the “Dark continent” (Ominde, 1965; Nyerere, 1967 & 1985; Karanja, 1988).

So far so good goes the above discussion on the Mission or purpose of Teacher education programme in modern Africa. But the major concern of scholars of Teacher education programme in modern Africa is how successful was this Mission? That is, has the intended mission of the programme been fulfilled in modern Africa? This concern is addressed in the section of the paper that follow - fulfilment of the expectations of the Mission of Teacher education programme.

Fulfilment/Realisation of the Mission of Teacher Education Programme in Modern Africa

As pointed out elsewhere above, Teacher education programme is critical in the development agenda of the society. The foregoing discussion has demonstrated this role of the programme. The crucial question or concern is how far did this programme fulfil this Mission in Africa? The performance of Teacher education programme with the regard to the realization of this Mission has yielded mixed results as demonstrated herein below.

On the part of positive results, Teacher education has prepared and produced school teachers who have served modern Africa well as agents of change (Ringa, 1992; Bosire, 1995; Karanja, 1988). This personnel have successfully created societies, disseminated the “desired cultures” prepared and produced skilled man-power for the emerging economies of modern Africa (Ominde, 1965; Kwapong, 1988), and they have played a leading role in transforming/modernizing the African continent. This far, Teacher Education programme has performed quite well in modern Africa.

But from the available evidence, there are certain gray areas of short-comings of this programme in Africa. Lamentations by renowned scholars like “how Europe underdeveloped Africa (Rodney, 1966), the Song of Lawino (Okot-Bitek 1966), the River Between (Ngugi-wa-Thiong’o 1968) and all the works of Chinua Achebe, attest to the failures of the teacher education programme and/or the unfulfilled mission of the programme in modern Africa. Besides, the widespread underdevelopment in Africa is a clear demonstration of this failure (Nyerere, 1985). The chaotic scenes on this continent as shown by the instabilities in most African countries and poor political leadership is a further manifestation of the poor quality of Teacher education programme designed, developed and administered in the continent since colonial era. As a matter of fact, this programme was expected to initiate, develop and administer the desired culture in the African continent that was to promote the aspirations of the African people including development. This should have been done through the preparation and production of resourceful school teachers with good intentions for this continent (Ssentza-Kajjubi, 1969; Karanja, 1988). These patriotic, productive (creative and innovative) efficient school teachers were to provide the required leadership for accelerated development in modern Africa. This crop of school teachers were expected to inspire their learners to develop and uphold the virtues of patriotism, creativity and innovations, hard work, integrity, respect for life and property and love for their countries and serve in various sectors of the economy with dignity. Unfortunately, these laudable expectations are not observed in the present practice of Teacher education programme in modern Africa. This is an interesting observation since this programme has the potential to deliver all these expectations to the society. The question is “what happened or what went wrong? The consequence of failures has been the emergence of chaotic societies in modern Africa characterized by corruption, dependence syndrome, military coups and counter-coups, poor quality of education and massive underdevelopment on the continent. Clear manifestation of a non-performing Teacher education programme! which has failed to spur the desired development.

However, modern Africa has the ability and capacity to reverse the above trend in development. As Jung (2007) points out, with good will and commitment from political leadership, Teacher education programme has the potential to deliver the desired results to modern Africa if only its mandate is properly nurtured. This hope for the role of Teacher education programme in development of modern Africa is not lost at all. It is real and achievable.

Prospects of Teacher Education Programme in Development of Modern Africa

Notwithstanding the above short-comings of Teacher education programme in modern Africa and the emerging issues in this programme during the last and present centuries, the programme has the future in the development of modern Africa. Among the emerging issues in this programme is the scope and nature of curriculum, financing of the programme, changing attitudes of the peoples of Africa towards the programme and the Teaching profession, the rise of new and more lucrative professions in the society, the emergence of technological advancements in the society, population explosion on the African continent and the impact of globalization process on education and especially Teacher education programme, have had their toll on the performance of this programme in modern Africa (Kafu, 2012). But with the proper focus and determination, this programme has a future for modern Africa.

Modern Africa, more than any time in its development, needs Teacher education programme for its transformation. It needs relevant man-power with proper competencies that can propel it into a powerful tool for the competitive world market. The Teacher Education has the potential to provide this service by preparing and producing the right caliber of school teachers who can deliver this mandate with ease. Bosire (1995) correctly asserts that well organised and conducted Teacher education programme can deliver any service to the society. But what is required is the relevant support from the society and this can be done. Critical to this process is the design, formulation and administration of the proper political and educational philosophies to serve as guidelines for the designed activities of this programme. When this is well done and administered, all expectations of this programme for the general development in modern Africa will be realized with ease. Hence, fulfilling the expected mission of teacher education programme in modern Africa.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, Teacher education programme has been presented as a critical facility in the development agenda of modern Africa. The programme has been demonstrated as the creator of the society; the initiator, developer and the disseminator of the culture of such a society. But for this programme to perform this function efficiently considerations must be given to the issues discussed above.

The paper has also indicated that the stated Mission of the Teacher education programme in modern Africa has not been well fulfilled for various reasons. The created society does not reflect the aspirations of modern Africa. Among the expected aspirations of the modern society in Africa was to be stable, cohesive, productive, peaceful and patriotic. So far, none of these features have been fully realised. Instead, the present society in this continent is somehow chaotic, dependent and much less creative and innovative than was anticipated to influence meaningful development in this continent (Lucas, 1968).

Further, Teacher education programme has failed to produce school teachers who can be relied on to create a stable society in modern Africa. Okungu (2008) has been apt to point out this failure when he says school teachers of today do not understand what is expected of them because they do not understand themselves and their role in the society! This view is in total agreement with that of Kiptoon's (1996) claim that universities in Kenya were producing half-baked graduates. Consequently, the belief that school teachers generated from the Teacher education programme can transform the society in modern has actually not been realized. These school teachers are not creative enough, do not have progressive ideas and are far less modern in their out-look when compared to their counter-parts from the "Tigers of Asia" (Jung, 2007).

In conclusion, Teacher education programme has not fulfilled its intended Mission in modern Africa as stated in the Organisation of African Unity of 1963 O.A.U Proceedings UNESCO, the resolution on Teacher Education in 1968) and Kenya's position on the role Teacher Training programme for development in modern Kenya (Karanja, 1988). This is so because the programme has remained conservative in nature and scope since colonial period. Hence it is viewed as being irrelevant to the present needs of this continent by many critiques of education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the above discussion concerning the nature and scope of Teacher education programme in modern Africa, and its intended mission, since colonial era, this paper makes the following recommendations.

1. The countries of modern Africa should design, develop and administer implementable political philosophies that should they undertake to promote development. In addition, these countries should develop philosophies of Teacher education programme that provide their missions for the development agenda in modern Africa beyond the traditional Teacher preparation role.
2. Teacher education programme be reviewed/reformed to reflect the realities of modern Africa. The curriculum of this programme should be more inclusive than the case is at present. New areas ought to be included in the existing curriculum so as to develop and equip the prospective school teachers with relevant competencies for modern development agenda. The urgently required additions to this curriculum are Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a tool, ethics of teaching and ethics of teaching profession and information management systems for fast development of modern Africa.
3. Teacher aspirants or prospective teachers be carefully identified, vetted and selected before admission for training and be properly prepared in creativity and innovative work over the extended duration beyond the present one. When preparing these teachers, emphasis should be on concept formation, logic development and critical thinking. These will facilitate the development of creativity and innovativeness in these teachers' aspirants. This can be conducted through the use of purposeful exposures for these individuals, seminarial and tutorial practices and collaborations with relevant institutions and organisations. These are suitable avenues for developing the necessary competencies for development in modern Africa this century and beyond.
4. As repeatedly stated, in this presentation management of Teacher education programme is costly to manage. It requires funding, expertise, logistics out-lays, infrastructure and resources for conducting it. All these items require proper planning, relevant structures (policies, guidelines, philosophies, systems, logistics, etc) and commitment from the major stake-holders in this programme. Therefore, this paper recommends that African countries invest adequately in this programme so as to prepare and produce competent school teachers with capacity to spur and set the development agenda of modern africa. This investment can be sourced internally or from outside the continent.

5. The programme should be professionalised. Let only well trained and qualified Teacher educators be appointed to manage this programme right from the Ministry of Education. In order to get such personnel, Faculties/School of Education at university level should mount specific degree programmes in Teacher education. Besides, there should be a specific Directorate of Teacher Education Programme in the Ministry/Department of Education to manage Teacher education affairs.

Finally, the paper recommends that the needs assessment/situational analysis be conducted in Teacher Education programme as implemented at present in modern Africa. This process will be able to determine the existing strengths and weaknesses in the programme. Hence facilitate the reviews/reforms to be carried out in this programme to promote its quality.

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