



TEACHER EDUCATION IN KENYA: REALIGNMENT TOWARDS VISION 2030

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Abstract

As Kenya gears towards achieving vision 2030, stakeholders are concerned that the current system of education needs to be overhauled to enable it achieve this coveted vision. Quality, Efficiency and effectiveness in education cannot, however, be achieved without the teachers who are the pivot of any education system. Hence qualitative improvement in teacher education will guarantee quality school education, which this paper seeks to highlight based on the premise that quality begets quality! Thus this paper examines the issues in teacher education and seeks to provide the way forward on how to solve them and re-align towards achieving the vision 2030.

Key terms: *Teacher Education.*

Introduction

Kenya envisions being a middle income and knowledge based economy by the year 2030. In this regard, the government identifies three pillars upon which the vision will be realized. These are the political, social and economic pillars.

Under the social pillar, education and training has been identified as one among the key subsectors that will play an integral role towards the realization of the vision. This is mainly because it is through education and training that the human capital asset base of the country can

be developed in order to spur growth in the knowledge economy and increase the space for political development. On the basis of this, the ministry of education developed a vision 2030 blue print on education and training in which teacher education has been identified as a key subsector that will midwife the process. Hence this key subsector is crucial towards the attainment of vision 2030 (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

Experts in the education sector contend that vision 2030 will not be realized without universal access to quality education. It is on this basis that the government set a task force to review the current education system with a view to offering suggestions and recommendations as to how the current system of education can be attuned towards the realization of vision 2030. From the discourse in the public arena, there is a general feeling among the stakeholders that the current 8-4-4 system has outlived its usefulness and should be overhauled to pave way for a new system which the task force has recommended i.e. the 2-6-6-3 system that will enable the country attain the aforementioned vision by the year 2030. Besides, other developments have been made by the government that are aimed at increasing equity and access towards educational opportunities for all Kenyans in view of realizing the MDGs and EFA goals by the year 2015. These efforts include among others the introduction of free primary education and free tuition in secondary education in the years 2003 and 2008 respectively. In spite of the aforesaid developments, one component of education seems not to feature in the public discourses when it comes to improvement of educational quality. That is: Teacher Education.

Whereas teacher education was revered at independence according to (Bogonko, 1992), the government's attitude towards the same has since changed. This is evident given that very little funding and resources are channeled towards it. This attitude can be seen in the manner in which the government is managing this programme of education in comparison to the Primary and Secondary School Education sectors (Kafu, 2010). Teacher education appears to have been marginalized and great emphasis placed on the development of the two sectors of education at the expense of teacher education (ibid).

Teachers play an integral role in the provision of quality education. Without qualified, well trained teachers and in their adequate numbers, the quality of any education system will be compromised (Mwebi, 2009). Improvement of quality in the school system of education cannot

be achieved without first improving the quality of teacher education. The fundamental principle here is that; Quality begets quality! (ibid). The government and all the stakeholders concerned must rise up and accord teacher education its due significance away from the existing perfunctory manner in order to restore its lost glory.

Changing the system of education might not enable us achieve what we want if the teachers are not adequately prepared to implement the curriculum. Teacher education, if well done will lead to success of the 8-4-4 system of education; a system which was harshly implemented without adequate preparation of the teachers to undertake the task that awaited them. Therefore, it is imperative that a proactive approach is taken to prepare teachers to undertake the important and noble task that lies ahead if the touted system is to succeed. Thus for qualitative improvement in any education system; “a sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential as noted by Sharma, 2005:22 and Mangla, 2001: 42. The Uganda Education Review Commission (1989) also observed that the quality of a country’s education is as good as the quality of its teaching force. While quoting Fafanua in Akinyemi (1972), Mukiri (2004:45) puts it that, “if an African teacher is to cope adequately with the monumental task that lies ahead of him/her, he/she has to be trained well for his job.

The above literature is a demonstration that there cannot be quality in an education system without quality teachers. This is why Vision 2030 will require that teacher education programmes be realigned proactively to initiate the changes necessary in the school curriculum in order to guarantee quality as the country gears to become a knowledge hub in the region. To achieve this vision though, a number of issues currently affecting the provision of quality in teacher education need to be addressed.

Issues of Teacher Education in Kenya

Though this paper will not highlight all the issues regarding the status of teacher education in the country, I have taken the initiative to bring to the fore those issues that in my opinion require urgent attention as the country seeks to realign its education system towards vision 2030. These issues range from admission, the career progression of teachers, policy framework in teacher education, and resources in teacher education colleges, teaching practice, and the concept of teacher education.

The current system of admission to teacher training colleges varies depending on the level of teacher education training. In Kenya there are different levels of teacher training that one can opt to seek admission for. These are; pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. Admissions to these levels are pegged on one's average grade in the O- level certificate. The government has set various benchmarks for the same. Research has however demonstrated that majority of the recruits to the teaching profession does not do so out of their own volition but because of being forced by their parents or lack of any better career option (Oketch, 1985). University admissions to teacher education faculties especially for those students under the JAB admission programmes get to join the faculties not because of their liking but because that is where a vacancy exists (Koech.1999). In general, admissions to the teacher education programmes do not consider the interests and aptitude of the recruit to the profession of teaching. This eventually means that the candidates enter the teaching profession without the passion and would soon get out of the profession whenever an opportunity avails itself. This mass exodus of teachers will eventually lead to acute teacher shortage in schools thus compromising on educational quality.

The second element is that of career progression. Currently, teacher training is done at various levels i.e. pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels. Upon completion of the course, the graduate is awarded a certificate, diploma, or degree. On entering the public teaching service, the teachers are then grouped as; P1 for certificate holders, S1 for diploma holders and Graduate teacher for degree holders. This is the respective scheme of service for teachers entering the teaching service in government sector as revised in 1997 (TSC, 1998). The scheme does not however consider grading those who have obtained higher degree qualifications like masters and Ph. D. They get stuck in their former job groups and wait for a promotional vacancy to be advertised in order to be promoted. Moreover, promotions are not done transparently and in most instances, teachers who are highly qualified miss these promotional chances against the less qualified counterparts in the profession. Essentially, at this level, teaching lacks progression and majority of those who get higher qualifications get frustrated and leave the profession to venture into other institutions like universities where there are clearly defined career progression structures.

It should however be noted that, a profession must have distinct career progression paths for its members with defined entry and exit points for any level of qualification and achievement-This

is conspicuously lacking in the profession of teaching in Kenya. The implication of this is that many highly trained and qualified teachers are opting to exit teaching thus leaving untrained, under qualified and unqualified teachers in the public schools and teacher training colleges. This assertion holds true if the following observation is anything to go by, “in Kenya, upper primary pupils are often taught key subjects by teachers who had scored an average of D plain at KCSE exams” (East African standard; October, 2011). Besides lowering educational quality, the situation contributes to lowering of the image of teaching and teachers in the society.

The third issue is the policy framework on teacher education. Currently there is no harmonized policy framework guiding teacher education programmes at all levels. The lack of the professional codes of ethics for teachers’ exacerbates this. The TSC has its control limited to the public school teachers and does not have the mandate to control teachers who enter the profession and practice in the private sector. Additionally, there is lack of teacher deployment policy as regards to the minimum level of qualification and experience one needs in order to be posted as a teacher trainer in teacher training colleges especially at the Primary Teacher Training Colleges.

Studies have shown that in most instances, “failures as head-teachers of secondary schools are being posted as Principals and tutors in teacher-training institutions whereas young university graduates are also being appointed as teacher-trainers and individuals with no training in education also get to serve as teacher-trainers (Kafu, 2010). There also lacks a national body for harmonizing and overseeing teacher education programmes in Kenya. Instead, running of teacher education programmes is overseen by various semi autonomous government agencies (SAGAs) which are not well coordinated. For example, the primary and pre- primary teacher education is managed by the ministry of basic education, the diploma and university education by ministry of higher education and universities charters respectively. On the other hand, teacher education curriculum is done by the Kenya institute of education (KIE) while teacher evaluation is done by the Kenya national examinations council (KNEC) and yet teacher registration, recruitment, and maintenance of education standards is done by the teachers service commission (TSC). This causes confusion as the respective mandates of these bodies can be at variance with each other. For example, as recent as 2008, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) raised its concern about the quality of teachers especially P1 teachers who were graduating from universities with B. Ed

degrees. The TSC went further to blacklist some teachers with these degrees by arguing that a P1 certificate is not a valid qualification for admission to degree programs unless they had the basic requirements for undergraduate degree courses. It was described by Lengoibon, the TSC secretary, as absurd for a P1 teacher who got grade D+ in KCSE to be enrolled for a degree program which is done during school holidays and be guaranteed a teaching job in a secondary school (Daily Nation, 18th June 2009). This put universities on a collision course with the TSC. Universities justified themselves through some research findings that the quality of their graduates was above reproach. This example is one of the few others which serve to illustrate the point that there is lack of harmony in the teacher education programmes in the country.

As discussed elsewhere above, teacher education programmes in Kenya are not adequately financed. Most of the facilities in the teacher education colleges are old and out dated and in dire need of repair and replacement. In a recent study by (Mwebi, 2009); it was found that library facilities in most teacher education institutions are inadequate. Mwebi observed that some university campuses were being established without enough library facilities to cater for the increasing number of students they enroll. The learning resource centers at Primary Teacher Education colleges were also not adequately equipped to cater for the increasing number of students. Normally, books that were prescribed by subject lecturers were not found in the institutional libraries. This made students depend on lecture notes, which were highly inadequate. Moreover, the textbook materials available in some of these colleges were outdated and the information in them obsolete (ibid).

Teaching practice in teacher education colleges is also not effective since there lacked harmonized way of conducting teaching practice. Whereas other colleges conducted theirs at the end of the teacher training course, others did it before the end of the course. Besides, there is no harmony as to the number of lessons to be observed by the supervisors before one was declared as having completed the TP programme. Many a times, the TP session was considered complete once a school term came to an end even if the student teacher was supervised only once. This problem is further compounded by lack of funds to facilitate TP supervision. Normally, the TP sessions were such that the supervisor only evaluated the effectiveness of the teacher trainee in classroom teaching while avoiding other aspects of teacher competence such as in extracurricular

activities. This makes the concept too narrow in its approach in terms of evaluating the teacher's professional competencies.

The concept of teacher education also deserves mention here. In Kenya, there is no consensus as to what teacher education is about. There are scholars who regard it as mere training of teachers, that is, an education programme that equips the teachers with skills in pedagogy only while others regard teacher education as preparation of teachers or training and teacher development process (Karanja, 1995). This unclear definition of teacher education has tended to affect the preferred modes (approaches) of training teachers today and the quality of teachers produced to serve an education system (Kafu, 2010). This further tends to affect the "identity" of this programme of education and teaching profession (ibid). In my opinion the former qualifies to be teacher training because it concerns itself with the acquisition of skills and knowledge necessary for one to be declared as qualified to teach. The latter however, is teacher education since it is concerned with the development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for one's professional life. It is therefore a continuous process and does not end. It is a lifelong process and aims at enhancing the teachers' efficiency and effectiveness.

Therefore, teacher education is broader in perspective than teacher training. Whereas Kenya can nowadays boast of having well trained teachers as compared to the formative years after independence, it cannot boast of having well educated teachers. According to the ministry of education policy paper of 2004 "teachers are equipped with the skills of giving instruction rather than teaching skills". This is because the government has not adequately instituted mechanisms aimed at the professional development of all teachers. Those which have been put in place are for a few teachers and in many instances are for those being prepared to undertake managerial roles in schools.

Moreover, the content of these courses is also not structured and therefore there are occasions where one can be forced to repeat a particular content. This is compounded by the fact that teacher training colleges are not involved in the continuous and professional development of teachers. This serves to demonstrate why the colleges are called "Teacher Training Colleges" rather than "Colleges of Teacher Education". They concentrate on the pre-service component of teacher training and do not get involved in the continuous and professional development of

teachers. The implication of the current approach is that pre - service teacher education becomes isolated from the professional life of the teacher thus making it rather theoretical than practical in approach.

Relevant Policy Implications

The aforementioned issues have respective policy implications. As the country seeks to overhaul the current 8-4-4 system and replace it with the much touted 2-6-6-3 system of education in view of vision 2030, proactive measures need to be undertaken to ensure that teachers are well equipped to handle the existing challenges as well as those that are likely to accompany the expected changes. The measures to be taken must be able to address the issues mentioned beforehand. These include:

Mainstreaming all teacher education programmes into the university education system:

This implies that teacher education be under the purview of university education. Consequently, the diploma and primary as well as pre- primary teacher education colleges be affiliated to universities and have their programmes being designed by teacher educators in universities as opposed to being designed by other personnel who may lack the expertise necessary for curriculum development. This policy will be of benefit in the following ways: first, it will help to the image of teachers in particular and also raise the status of teacher education in general. Mainstreaming of primary teacher education into university education will also help to streamline admissions to teacher education courses and raise admission points and ensure that those who are highly qualified get to be admitted to teacher education programmes.

This will raise competition to teacher education programmes -like it is happening in other professions- and help restore its lost glory. Furthermore, the teacher education programmes at all levels will have to benefit in terms of research findings and innovative activities by the university faculty. Equally, this policy will help to break the isolation that currently exists between university teacher education and teacher education colleges at lower levels (Mwebi, 2009). The image of Kenyan graduates will be boosted across the region and beyond. Already, the influx of P1 teachers to universities during holidays is a strong indicator to demonstrate that this is where the country should be heading. Although one can argue to the contrary that these teachers are influenced by other factors other than quality, the trend serves to demonstrate that people are not interested in getting diploma or certificate qualifications in teacher education but

rather want higher qualifications. This will steer the country towards being a knowledge hub in Africa and beyond. Consequently, the recently witnessed takeover of colleges by universities ought to be seen in this perspective. Although heavily criticized, the approach can be modified so that the colleges do not lose their identity but retain it through affiliations with the universities upon thoughtful legislation.

Developing a Teacher education policy framework: As discussed elsewhere above, there is no clear policy governing teacher education as a whole. A policy framework needs to be developed to regulate issues such as deployment and posting of teacher educators to colleges of education and management of teacher education. In this respect, a national body on teacher education should be formed to harmonize all teacher education matters in the country. This body will help in coordinating teacher education affairs in the country and help professionalize teaching. The body will also be charged with the responsibility of regulating the profession by formulating a professional code of conduct and ethics for any teacher entering the teaching service whether in the private or public sector. Additionally, the body will be licensing teachers and revoking the licenses of those who do not abide by the regulations it sets. Moreover, the body should ensure that highly qualified teachers are retained in the teaching profession by coming up with distinct career progression paths especially for teacher trainers in primary and diploma education colleges. This will ensure that highly qualified staffs are retained in the profession for qualitative improvement.

Shift from teacher training to teacher education: There should be a paradigm shift in the naming of colleges from teacher training colleges to teacher education colleges. This will ensure that the teacher education colleges will adopt a wider scope rather than the narrow approach to teacher education issues. As discussed, these colleges have their work cut out to only the pre-service training of teachers- a reason why they are called “teacher training colleges”. They do not have any additional role to play in terms of continuous professional teacher development – a function which is normally left to the relevant ministries and other semi- autonomous government agencies. Since the continuous development of the teachers using the SAGAs is uncoordinated and unstructured, it is imperative that the teacher education colleges deal with this component also but in a structured manner. To achieve this, the colleges will be required to have extension service departments that will be offering these additional professional services

whenever they are required to do so. The department will also be charged with the responsibility of carrying out baseline surveys to identify areas of need for professional improvement of teachers and structure them. This approach will ensure that the tutors in teacher education colleges are kept abreast of both the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching. Hence it will be easier for them to integrate theory and practice in due process of curriculum transaction.

Financing of teacher education programmes through government grants and IGAs:

Just as the primary and secondary sectors are important, the government should recognize that teacher education is equally important and therefore adequately finance it like the two former components. Financing will be required in order to give a facelift of the existing dilapidated infrastructure in teacher education colleges most of which were started during the colonial period. Additionally, these colleges need to be equipped with state of the art facilities in preparation of a modern teacher ready to undertake the teaching challenges in the rapidly changing world. In this regard, these colleges should be equipped with modern ICT equipment with computers connected to the internet to facilitate sharing of information and research. The colleges also need to be adequately equipped with libraries and laboratories for practically oriented subjects as this is what can make a quality teacher. All this have got heavy financial implications for the government and the colleges but the benefits of implementation will far much out way the costs in future. To supplement government funding, the institutions should also be given the latitude to start income generating activities for self growth and sustenance.

Shift from teaching Practice to Internship: The concept of internship ought to be embraced as the country gears towards achieving vision 2030. Teaching Practice (TP) normally concentrates on the effectiveness of the teacher in content delivery at the expense of other professional competencies outside the classroom. If the aspect of internship is upheld, then all the aspects of the teacher's competencies will be brought into perspective. A teacher can be good in matters of content delivery but may lack the moral ethos of professionalism. Teaching practice does not have the provision of evaluating teachers in extracurricular activities such as music, drama, sports etc. This is what internship will be aimed at correcting. This approach, unlike TP, will require the full cooperation of cooperating teachers as well as the administration of cooperating schools. This is so because the interns' assessment is supposed to be done on a regular basis of

which the colleges alone cannot manage. Therefore coordination of education departments and the cooperating teachers is adjudged necessary.

This approach will be beneficial in the following ways:-

- There will be strong linkages between schools and teacher education colleges. This will help to break the isolation between the two.
- The cost of supervision will reduce as the cooperating teachers will be used as supervisors
- Supervision will be continuous and on a regular basis with the aid of cooperating schools
- The evaluation of interns will be holistic i.e. it will encompass the evaluation of all professional teacher competencies rather than classroom content delivery which TP focuses on.

Change of admission policy: Before one is admitted to the teacher education colleges, they need to pass an aptitude test. This test is deemed necessary because it is through it that one's interests and readiness to join the teaching profession can be judged. This should be followed by an oral interview whose purpose is to ascertain the communication ability of would be teacher trainees. It is worth noting that communication ability of the teacher is essential in making one to be an effective teacher. This is considered an important attribute since teaching is about passing of knowledge through demonstration and illustration of facts. Without this attribute one cannot be said to be an effective teacher. Ascertaining the interests of the potential trainees beforehand will also help to reduce the brain drain that is already being experienced in the teaching profession. This approach will see teachers who will take teaching as a divine calling, thus reducing teacher attrition rates significantly.

Establishing comprehensive teacher education colleges at each county: To ensure equity and access, the government should set up at least one teacher education college in each of the 47 county. To reduce the cost of setting up the colleges for primary and secondary teachers separately and owing to lack of space, it should explore options of establishing comprehensive colleges of education to cater for the two levels of teacher education. This approach will ensure that no region will be denied access to teacher education opportunities as Kenya gears to becoming the knowledge hub in the region and fulfilling the Vision 2030.

In conclusion therefore, as Kenya seeks to achieve the knowledge economy status by the year 2030, the issues raised concerning teacher education must be addressed in order for the programme to be aligned well towards achieving the vision. These issues though, should not be seen in isolation; they are interrelated with other sectors of the education system such as the primary and secondary sectors. Quality in school education can only be achieved if there is quality in teacher education, thus the underlying principle is that quality begets quality.

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