

Teacher Education and Progress in Africa: The Challenges and Prospects

Chang'ach JK*

Department of Educational Foundations, Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

*Corresponding author: Chang'ach JK, Department of Educational Foundations, Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya, Tel: 0722640148; E-mail: jkchangach@yahoo.com

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Opinion

Teacher education is a program is designed, developed and administered to prepare and produce school teachers. It is a critical program since it is a foundation of all the required expertise for the progress of individual and society. The teachers who are produced are prepared and mandated to develop and nurture required skills in learners for various sectors of the economy. These skills include life, intellectual, academic and physical skills.

Teacher Education is dynamic; it is always adaptive and progressive. It is looked upon as the source of innovations and creativity. Quality teachers will influence the initiative, creative and innovative tendencies among the learners and members of society and this will spur development. Therefore, the rationale of Teacher Education is to initiate and sustain transformation of 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 society.

Teacher Education is supposed to empower beneficiaries to contribute to national development in varied ways. This includes promoting literacy, developing and instilling relevant skills in individuals to engage gainfully in varied sectors of the economy and participation in international affairs. These are critical instruments for the progress in any society. The vital question is "has Teacher Education in Africa subscribed to these aspirations?"

In many African countries Teacher Education program has been and is still viewed merely as a program of preparing school teachers. The consequences of this are the development and use of inappropriate, outdated and decrepit facilities and resources for preparing teachers of all cadres of education. This scenario has contributed to preparation of teachers of poor quality with little impact on development in Africa and adversely ruined the image of the program, teaching profession and the teacher. Teacher Education in Africa over the years has been managed as routine practice, where the political class treats this just like any other education programmed yet this is special. The program is not efficiently and effectively managed. The mismanagement of such sensitive programmed can hardly add value to society.

African countries have not made serious effort to review Teacher Education program to give it the paradigm shift it needs. It has remained irrelevant to the changing times in Africa. This is a big catastrophe to this great continent.

In most countries in Africa the design and management of Teacher Education is not based on political philosophies of the countries. This makes the Teacher Education program alien and irrelevant to aspirations of the people of Africa. More often than not, this program is based on and reflects the nature of Teacher Education of the 18th century Europe.

Consequently, the Teacher Education program 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 globalization in Teacher Education has made the program irrelevant and ineffective in modern technological era.

In summary the challenges of Teacher Education program in Africa are

- Poor or lack of clear philosophy of Teacher Education program
- Misconceptions about this program in Africa
- Poor designs and management of the program
- Irrelevant Teacher Education curricula
- Non-performing national economies
- The amorphous status of the program

This is the context in which the suggested strategies of increasing prospects in Teacher Education in development in African are presented. There is need to introduce paradigm shift in the design and management of the program. The approach to conducting the program requires radical changes in respect to planning, administration and supervision of the program.

Teacher Education curriculum should be broadened and inclusive. The curriculum should prepare school teachers for the emerging challenges in education and modern African society. This will equip the school teacher with relevant expertise needed for this century and beyond.

Currently, Teacher Education, teaching profession and the person of a teacher are highly despised entities in Africa. There is need to invest adequately in the program so as to attract and retain the best brains in the society. This move will facilitate the development and use of modern facilities and resources needed to prepare and produce a relevant school teacher in Africa. This progress will boost the morale of educators and trainees to promote the image of Teacher Education program.

In summary, these strategies required to make Teacher Education program relevant to the needs to modern Africa include paradigm in Teacher Education, designing, developing and administering relevant philosophy of Teacher Education. This will be a vehicle for directing how this program of education should be customized to the local needs in this continent. The second strategy is to broaden the scope of Teacher Education program and especially curriculum to include emerging issues in the society that go beyond teacher training exercise. Thirdly, countries in Africa should invest adequately in Teacher Education program 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. Finally, 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 program, create and maintain appropriate policies and structures for administering this program and facilitate the streaming of the present amorphous status

of Teacher Education. This will improve the image of this program and attract the needed investments.

In conclusion, two important issues arise. First is the fact that the program is the “mover and shaker” of development in any society provided it is prudently designed and managed. The second is the fact that Africa has not adequately exploited the potential of Teacher Education is development. This has been the missed opportunity for the development in this continent. However, the hope of progress in Africa lies in embracing Teacher Education by new generations Africans and new breed of African leaders.