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RE-IMAGINING TEACHER AND TEACHER EDUCATION FOR OUR FUTURES: THE KENYAN EXPERIENCE

- **A Keynote Address presented during the Conference on Re-imagining Teacher Education for our Futures,**
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Questions to be explored in the paper

- ❑ Who is an educator and what makes a distinction between an excellent one (educator) and one that puts in the bare minimum to retain the job?
- ❑ What aspects of teacher education and teacher practice need to be re-imagined and why?
- ❑ In what ways would it be said of teacher education programmes that they produce communities of learning and not just people focused on acquiring paper certificates?

Who is a teacher or educator?

- ❑ Wondifraw (2023), sees a teacher as a *catalyst for change*, as a *model* teacher, and as the *source of new ideas and information*.
- ❑ Teachers' primary functions are to (i) provide *ideas and suggestions*, (ii) *to solve problems*, and (iii) *to intervene and point out better ways of doing things*.
- ❑ Teachers' role is to *transfer* the predetermined/ pre-selected and pre-sequenced *body of knowledge to the student-teachers*.
- ❑ According to Honey (2017), teacher education is the *process by which a person attains training in an institution of learning in order to become a teacher*. Teacher education, thus, equips both pre-service and in-service teachers with the necessary professional body of knowledge and skills necessary for classroom instruction

Why quality education is central to any nation

- According to Gathumbi, Mungai, and Hintze (2013:3), “*the destiny of a nation is shaped in its classrooms*”, and this implies that educators play a pivotal role in the socioeconomic development of countries. A common statement holds that:
 - “Destroying any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or the use of long-range missiles. It only requires lowering the quality of education and allowing cheating in the examinations by students”.

Rhetoric and action

Bunyi, Wangia, Magoma, Limboro and Akyeampong (2011) articulated the discrepancy between responsive PTE policy statements and non-responsive actual PTE practice as follows:

With regard to the quality of teachers, although virtually all post-independence education commission reports and reports of such other bodies, as well as policy statements on education have had something to say about the quality of teachers and teacher training, the rhetoric has not been matched with action and interventions to improve the quality of teachers through teacher education.

Re-imagining our education requires putting our resources where our talk is rather than engaging in empty rhetoric and lofty statements devoid of tangible action. This is more so at the university level where funding of programmes is left largely to the individual universities to mobilise resources as opposed to being funded by the government

What are the characteristics of effective teachers?

□ Lupascu, Pânisoar and Pânisoar (2014) cited Hammond, Bransford and LePage (2005) who indicated that “Good teachers understand what students everywhere can confirm: *teaching is not just talking, and learning is not just listening*. Effective teachers are able to *figure out not only what they want to teach, but also how to do so way that students can understand and use the new information and skills*”.

- Stronge (2007:11) observes that:

When we consider the complex task of teaching, effectiveness is an elusive concept. Some researchers define teacher effectiveness in terms of student achievement. Others focus on high performance ratings from supervisors. Still others rely on comments from students, administrators, and other interested stakeholders. In fact, in addition to effective, we vacillate on just how to refer to successful teachers.

Stronge (2007) notes that Effective teaching involves:

- Teachers who *desire to improve their own performance* through *analysis and reflective* practice.
- *Teacher leaders* who are engaged in mentorship, peer coaching and collaborative schoolwide improvement.
- School administrators and department heads who *supervise and evaluate teachers*.
- *Staff development specialists* who plan and deliver training focused on improving instruction for the range of abilities that exist in classrooms.
- *HR specialists* who are responsible for recruiting and selecting high-quality teacher applicants.
- Teacher and administrator educators who can *use research* in their teacher training and instructional leadership programmes.
- Policymakers and staff who are responsible for *developing tools and strategies* for state or district teacher development and evaluation processes.

Effective teacher

Walker (2011) provides the following outline of effective teachers:

- ❑ **Prepared:** in terms of subject mastery and time management
- ❑ **Positive:** has positive world view (sees the glass as half-full); available to students, communicates to them and concerned about their progress, gives praise, employs strategies to enable students to learn
- ❑ **Sets high expectations:** and consistently challenges students to do the best, builds learners' confidence and helps them to believe in themselves
- ❑ **Creative:** encourage students to reach their targets and identify and nurture their talents

Effective teachers: continued

- **Fair:** by giving opportunities, privileges and clarify requirements for assignments given and understands the issues that affect students
- **Personal touch:** connects with students in a personal way, creates interest in students to enable students to learn as much as they can.
- **Helps learners to develop a sense of belonging:** and at the end of every session makes learners feel that it was a privilege having spent time with them
- **Admits mistakes:** this not only brings out the humanity in the educator but also encourages the students to open up to the teacher

Effective teacher continued

- ❑ **Sense of humour:** able to break ice and able to create scenarios where learners can laugh without laughing at others
- ❑ **Respect for students:** irrespective of their unique learning rate, learning styles (audio, visual and kinaesthetic)
- ❑ **Forgiving/accommodating:** trying to their level best to begin on a new slate every day
- ❑ **Compassionate:** this refers to taking personal interest in students and getting concerned about what obstructs a student's progress.

Areas/aspects that need to be re-imagined

- Entry Qualifications for educators/teachers
- The curriculum
- The professional development framework
- Integration of ICT in teaching and learning
- The career growth and progression
- Student Assessment
- The Teacher Training duration
- Research, Innovation and commercialization
- Shift from Local to producing global citizens
- Teacher Educators' Motivation and productivity

The 2nd area for re-imagining Teacher Education: The curriculum

- ❑ Caballero (2021) observed that the traditional curriculum focused on the teacher rather than the learner. However, in recent years, there has been a paradigm shift; moving the emphasis from teaching to learning; a more student-centred curriculum. This change has impacted on the curriculum design process with a greater emphasis on the learning in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies within intervention/ learning materials. The focus is on how learners learn and the design of effective learning environment. There are fewer studies of teacher quality in developing countries, but those available confirm that differences in teacher quality can significantly impact student achievement. One such study found that in Peru, teachers with high achievement in math increased student achievement on standardized math tests by about 9 percent of a standard deviation

- ❑ The Primary Teachers Training Colleges syllabi in Kenya provide for:
 - ❑ Five core subjects that are compulsory for all students – English, Kiswahili, professional studies, physical education and information communication and technology (ICT).

 - ❑ Two options each with four subjects for the student teachers to choose one of the options. Option A comprises science, home science, agriculture and mathematics while Option B comprises music, art and craft, social studies and religious education. In the first year, students study 10 subjects, mathematics, English, Kiswahili, science, social studies and religious education, professional studies, creative arts, physical education and ICT. In the second year, students take the five core subjects (English, Kiswahili, education, physical education and ICT) and the four subjects in either Option A or Option B.

Areas of focus in Curriculum

- ❑ Professional studies which include the education disciplines such as foundations of education (philosophy, history, sociology and comparative education), curriculum studies, education psychology including educational measurement and evaluation, and educational administration as well as Special Needs Education (SNE), guidance and counselling and legal issues in education.
- ❑ Other than what is offered by Teachers Training Colleges, universities are also seeking to align teaching to 21st century skills. The aspect in focus is:
 - i) Critical thinking
 - (ii) Communication skills.
 - (iii) Creativity.
 - iv) Problem solving.
 - (iv) Perseverance.
 - (v) Collaboration.
 - (vi) Information literacy.
 - (viii) Technology skills and digital literacy.

Areas of re-imagining teacher Education

- i) Pertinent and Contemporary Issues (PCIs)
- ii) Community Service Learning (CSLs)
- iii) Indigenous Languages
- iv) Exploring different pathways in career choices

The professional development framework for educators

- ❑ Whitworth and Chiu (2015) observe that teachers join professional development opportunities with different backgrounds, confidence, and motivation.
- ❑ The schools and districts they work within have different policies, approaches, and visions. The size, resources, working conditions, and leadership styles of administrators are also unique. These differences account for variations in their aspirations from TPD. This implies that “one-size-fits all” approach to TPD is misaligned and may deter participation by teachers thus derailing its implementation.
- ❑ TPD focusing on the school level embraces each unique situation which can be addressed based on the local contexts. However, Masika (2022), cited the TPAD report that identified major flaws in the key areas which should have been emphasized such as:

Areas of improvement:

❑ technology integration,

❑ innovation and

❑ creativity; all of which are key competencies required to drive the country to realize the Vision 2030. Masika (2022) further noted that psychological-based aspects of the competences such as *motivation of teachers, job satisfaction, personal career development and school cultural values which have direct impact on employee benefits existed to a very low extent. The school culture was highly cited as the main source of psychological-based competences among teachers.*

Integration of ICT in teaching and learning

- ❑ Tunjera (2019) observes that the 21st century is characterised by an influx of information from various sources. This presents the education field with both a challenge and opportunity in utilization of ICT. Technology advancements have made it increasingly easy to share and access this information almost instantly.
- ❑ The challenge is that not all the available information is useful or even meaningful, therefore students the 21st century requires that students acquire the 4Cs (communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity) on how to engage with the information and not just receive it.

ICT integration...

- ❑ The mandate on educational institutions is therefore to make use of technology-enhanced practices to facilitate acquisition of these skills. The teacher development programmes must therefore seek to retool educators to keep abreast with emerging technological advances.
- ❑ The position is supported by Kafwa, Obondo and Kisaka (2015) who aptly note that the 21st century has seen the permeation of digital technology in all spheres. There are now e-banking, ecommerce, e-marketing, e-ticketing. The breakout of COVID-19 and other attendant factors escalated uptake of digitalization of education. At University level there are e-learning platforms that enable learners to access their education electronically.

ICT Integration

- ❑ Though the integration of technology in teaching and learning has been slower than most sectors it is slowly gaining root and has led to significant improvements in the efficiency of school administrative processes such as scheduling classes, managing budgets, tracking students, and monitoring security, which have all been automated and immeasurably strengthened; though there is still more to be done.
- ❑ Masika (2022) cited the TPAD report that confirmed that ICT integration is a major problem with 73.8% of heads of schools reporting a lack of access to networks and over 50% of teachers failing to comply with ICT. Failure to address the problems translates into the misalignment of teachers' needs with TPD.

The career growth and progression

- ❑ Muchanje (2015) observed that career progression is an essential process for all employees. Each employee in any organization hopes to have an accelerated career progression because this gives them a chance to develop and serves as a source of motivation in their work place. According to the study by Bernard, Nzuki, Kilika and Nzulwa (2014), the TSC career development policies were found to affect the career progression of graduate teachers in public secondary schools in Makadara District positively.
- ❑ This meant that a positive relationship existed between career development of graduate public teachers and the TSC career development policies. This means that an adherence to the TSC Policies which are in place will contribute to more graduate teachers progressing in their career. The relationship was found to be significant ($\beta=0.317$, $p=0.000$). However, according to the study; the individual factors which were presumed by the researcher to have an impact on career progression were found to have negative relationship with the career progression of the graduate teachers in Makadara District. A unit increase in the scores of the individual factors would lead to a decrease in the scores of the career progression by 0.03.

Assessment

- ❑ In developing the teacher education curriculum, the curriculum developers must consider the aspects of teacher education, including whom (student-teacher), who (teacher-educator), what (content), and how (teaching strategies) (Kapur, 2018). Kafwa, Obondo and Kisaka (2015) noted that research findings point to a change in learner's needs and the culture of how we learn is continuously shifting and developing. There is therefore a need to refocus on an alternative teacher preparation practice that will address reflective teaching approaches and strategies amidst existing challenge in the current teacher preparation institutions.
- ❑ The concern is approaches in developing teachers for a brighter, better and inclusive future in which technology brings improvement in enriching self and the society – which in essence is a Paradigm Shift. In the Kenyan scene, there is a departure from the traditional grading of “Poor or Fail” to embracing a rubric that indicates that learners “Exceed expectations, meet expectations, approach expectations...” among other forms of grading.

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The Teacher Training duration

- ❑ Whereas the basic teacher training for primary school teachers has been two years, the introduction of CBC has led to re-thinking of the duration of training programmes. Three years is proposed and in use in Teacher Training Colleges for primary schools.
- ❑ Diploma Programmes usually take three years. More emphasis is now on the need for practicum and teaching practice which is longer to deepening the pedagogical anchoring of teachers
- ❑ Universities are exploring reducing the training of teachers from four years to three but then have a whole year of internship. There are questions of programme cost.
- ❑ Under the aspect of duration of the training programmes; there is a concern that the cost of the internship may end up becoming so expensive that it may necessitate increment of fees. Alternatively, the internship may become a duration in which there is little academic and professional support to trainee teachers.

Shift from Local to producing global citizens

- ❑ What is the balance between production of teachers for local market, the region and the global arena? Given that Kenya is a member of the East African Community and is bound by the East African Community Vision 2050; how should this commitment to this vision be translated education wise?
- ❑ What does the African Agenda 2063 inform education not only in the country but also in the region? How should countries in the African region train their human capital in light of African Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA, 2016 – 2025)?

Teacher Educators' Motivation and productivity

- To what extent are teacher educators satisfied with their jobs? What aspects of educators' jobs would be rated as the worthiest of attention to policy makers?
- All the foregoing areas; among others require to be addressed.

Parting shot:

- Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” “Everyone can rise above their circumstances and achieve success if they are dedicated to and passionate about what they do.”
- Nelson Mandela- Former President of South Africa
- Let’s re-think our education for sustainable future

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