

## Contemporary Issues in Teacher Education and Training

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### Abstract

*Teacher Education has been an important component of education since time immemorial. This is because all societies in the world have always needed teachers to propagate their cultures from one generation to another.. Without quality teachers, there cannot be quality learners. Teacher Education will continue to influence social, political, economical, and technological developments in our world today. Therefore, teacher education and training should be understood in terms of on-going education innovations which answer contemporary issues that impact teacher education nationally and globally. These are: Indigenous teacher education, Change agent, life skills, leading and managing, different cultures, action research, teacher professionalism, globalization, Facilities and resources, information communication system, and conserving environment. Therefore, teacher training should produce ideal teachers who are ready to answer the challenges of the contemporary issues mentioned. The answer is in training teachers, whose curriculum is designed in an integration innovation with multi disciplinary design to produce productive citizens of the world. It is thus recommended that the teacher training programs should be reviewed, teacher professionalism should be emphasized, and support associations and quality assurance mechanism be put in place. In conclusion, societies should make Teacher Education meaningful and productive to the socio-economic realities.*

**Key Words:** *Teacher Education, Training, Contemporary Issues*

### INTRODUCTION

Teacher Education has always been an important component of education since time immemorial. This is because all societies in the world have always needed teachers to propagate their cultures from one generation to another (Ssekamwa, 1969). Without quality teachers there cannot be quality learners (White Paper, 1992). Education reform since 1980s on teacher education has been a target of blame, and it has been and still is the focus of the renewed attention for improvement. There is dissatisfaction, in most countries of the world, with the present arrangements for the education and training of teachers (Kaahwa, 2005: Fullan, 2001). The complaint that the quantity of entrants to the teaching profession is insufficient to meet the increasing demand for education at all levels is familiar to those responsible for teacher education and is a criticism that they tend to regard as acceptable (Kaahwa, 2004).

This paper focuses on contemporary issues and teacher education and training in Uganda. The Ugandan Government has and still acknowledges the quality of its teachers and recognizes the importance of well trained teachers and the role they play in setting the effective links between the school and the community, influencing national development programmes in preparing the human power that is essential for national development (White Paper, 1992: Kaahwa, 2005). Teacher Education is and has continued to influence social, political, economic and technological developments in Uganda and the world at large. The Government of Uganda has been, and is working hard to improve training facilities and pre-service and in-service curricular in teacher education.

### DISCUSSION

#### Concept of Education

The word education is from Latin language *Educo/educare* which means to nourish, to raise, to draw, or to develop from within (Kaahwa, 2006). Education is the process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed (Bloom, 1968). Education is the process of cultural transmission and renewal, the process whereby the adult members of a society carefully guide the development of the culture of the society (Adeyemi, 2001). It is the art of making available to each generation the organized knowledge of the past. Adeyinka (2000) defines education as the process of transmitting the culture of a society from one generation to the other. According to Ssekamwa (1976), education is the process of acquiring and developing necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to make young and old useful member of the society. Therefore, Education is a process for lifelong and continuous

activity that never ends, but continues throughout life. Conclusively, this paper will treat education as a means of acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to empower the individuals to be self-reliant, self-confident and contributing citizens to the society.

### **The Concept of Teacher Education**

Teacher education is a key factor in achievement of both the Education for All (EFA) goals and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which has its roots in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 which was articulated at the world Conference on education for all in Jomtien in 1990 (Act, Policy, Guidelines, Regulations, 2010). Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures, programmes designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community (Fullan, 2001). The modern meaning of a teacher educator has a strong bearing as teaching is the conscious attempt to evoke imagination, creativity, and nurturing of those with-in elements in the learner. Therefore teacher education in this paper will mean guiding the processes of learning and teaching in the classroom and the society at large.

### **The Concept of Contemporary Issues**

The word contemporary means modern, current, present-day or existing challenges. In this context, Contemporary issues in Education refer to the various events, policies, initiatives and developments in educational in nature, which exist in the modern world. Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. Kaahwa (2005) asserts that teacher education is the main pillar of any established system of education and the custodian of the society's culture, and economic, and social, spiritual development.

### **Indigenous Teacher Education**

Teacher Education in Uganda traditionally was arranged according to tribes and each tribe had its own education system (Ssekamwa, 1997). The content of traditional curriculum was derived from the spiritual environment, and every event for example birth of a child, death, sickness, flood or drought was accorded spiritual significance. Teacher education focused on religious teaching instruction. Young children received instruction on the influence of both good and bad spirits, and purification practices; they were also taught the value of propitiating the spirits to avert such disasters as sickness, death and pestilence. Therefore indigenous education in Africa centred on religious training. Religion played a key role in the life of children and adults alike, this resulted in communally accepted values and norms such as honesty, generosity, diligence and hospitality (Ocitti, 1971). African traditional education focused on the training and skill development of the individuals in various local communities. It enabled every member of each community to be gainfully employed. It had its foundation in the five principles of preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism and holism. Its content was based on the physical, social and spiritual environments of the time (Adeyemi, 2000). Most modern teacher training lack the qualities of preparationism, functionalism, communalism, perennialism and holism, for a well balanced teacher education revisiting indigenous education would bring a big change in curriculum of teacher education and training in these modern times.

### **Teachers as Change Agent**

Teachers should be trained as change agents. Teachers Education requires new intellectual capacities, pedagogical skills, personal characteristics, and planning talents. According to Fullan (2000), the teaching profession has to go deeper and wider meaning to reframe relationships, partnerships, and alliances to the outside world. If teaching has to change, it requires change in teacher education. Kaahwa (2006) says that reforming schools will mean reforming teachers, which means that quality teachers are reformers of teaching schools and society. According to the research study by Kaahwa (2005), Teacher Training Colleges do not equip teachers for the realities of classroom; many teachers struggle with their problems and anxieties privately. The only relevant curricular is to train the teachers as change agents, since change is inevitable part of life, which should be undeniable part of quality training. Training teachers as change agent will help in reformation in recruitment, selection, status and reward, redesigning teacher education,

induction into profession, standards, and decision-making in the day-to-day activities. According to Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (2000), no change reform can succeed without the ownership of active participation and ownership of the teachers.

### **Life Skills**

Life skills subject should be introduced in the curriculum of Teacher Education so as to equip the teachers with life skills and attitudes to enable the teachers to interpret and operationalize different non-formal education curricular in relation to developmental contemporary issues. Life skills should be introduced to enable the teachers to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into action. It promotes the development of wide range of skills that help adult and young people to effectively cope with the challenges of everyday life, enabling the teachers to become socially and psychologically competent. Life skills can include cooperation, negotiation, communication, decision-making, problem solving, coping with emotions, self-awareness, empathy, critical and creative thinking, dealing with pressure, and awareness of risk, assertiveness, and preparation, for the world of work. It has been found by the Non formal education that life skills are needed by teachers at all the times, in all places and in all situations of life (Module 111, 2005). Life skills are abilities needed by an individual to deal effectively in society in an active, constructive and satisfying life (WHO, 1997). According to UNICEF life skills are survival and social skills required by everybody to function confidently and completely with themselves, with other people and with a wider community. Conclusively, life skills are large group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills, with which assists the people to make informed decisions, communicate effectively and develop coping and self management skills that may help an individual to lead a healthy and productive life (WHO, 1997). Life Skill Education will help the teachers to develop a balanced self-determined individual; will enable individual teachers to relate successfully with others and the world in general in order to perform the tasks at a given time, in areas of human development; to help in recognizing and assessing risky situations; to avoid unhealthy and unbecoming behaviour by promoting healthy; encourages teachers to be role models; encourages good practices; promote positive attitudes; to promote and explore feelings and emotions to create greater self-awareness and develop the skills to manage them; unleash learner the social, economic, and potential influence on the learner's behaviour; and to help the teachers based on which self-discipline and respect for others are important values (MDG, 2000).

### **Leading and Managing**

In teacher education leadership and management education should be made a professional and core course so as to empower the teachers in the present generation with management and leadership skills. Teachers should be trained as transformation leaders, who cause changes in individual and social systems. According to NCHE (2012), a transformational leader is the one who causes reconciliation between task and learners dimensions of leadership. Teacher education occupy central position in the society, learners equal their teachers (White Paper, 1992). Teacher training should make leadership and management one of the core classes for every novice teacher. Teachers should be trained as transformational leaders. While managing is planning and budgeting, but leading is setting the direction for the school (Alhas, 2005). Also management requires structuring, and staffing the school with people and monitoring school activities. But leadership goes beyond these functions by inspiring teachers to attain the vision. The teachers in their respective capacities should keep staff focused on moving their schools towards its ideal future, motivating them to overcome all the obstacles. Also in leadership, there is supervision which is guidance, support, and provides corrective feedback for the day to day activities, which is very relevant in the teaching training National Council of Higher Education (NCHE, 2012). The teachers should be encouraged to read widely so that they are knowledgeable in mission, vision, motto, and culture of schools and communities they serve. The teachers, as leaders, should be trained to influence others to attain the school goals; their job should also be to create visions for their learners. Teachers' as leaders should be —painters of the vision (Vision is mental image of possible and desirable future state of the school) and architects of the journey (NCHE, 2012). Teachers of the modern should be able to connect their stakeholders' sense to identity and self to the mission and the collective identity and self to the mission and collective identity to the school; being models for followers who inspires them; challenges followers to take greater ownership for their work and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of followers, to align stakeholders with tasks of optimizing their performance. In conclusion, the teacher as transformational leader will be equipped with individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence so as build schools for the globalized world.

## **Design and Formulating of Policy Frame-Work**

Through this strategy the concepts of teacher education and teaching training profession will be provided; guidelines for organizing and administering this curriculum shall be stated; the proper structure and procedures for administering the curriculum will be provided. This may reduce the existing politicization in the training of the teachers. The colleges during admission let the colleges take in students who are able academically. The status of the teacher should be given respect, confidence, and fair salaries so that able novice teachers are able to attract other teachers (Kaahwa, 2005).

## **Different Cultures**

To teach children from diverse backgrounds effectively, teachers themselves must learn about cultural differences. They need to understand the concept of culture and its changing meanings. As part of the teacher preparation, teacher education should explore other cultural identities and how these they impact on their own lives. By sharing their stories and hearing their classmates' stories, pathways learners can learn much about cultural differences. Studying the history and literature of the different cultural groups represented by children will yield important insights, confidence, and acceptance of other cultures. The teachers would be able to understand diversity in learning and teaching styles in intellectual development of learners and this will create stimulating, participatory learning environment (MDG, 2000).

## **Relevant Curriculum**

The teacher education of this time should avoid getting trapped into ritualized teaching techniques and programme presentations that are void of life (Kaahwa, 2006). When the teacher education has lot of inquiry and problem-solving programmes, the teachers will be inventive, creative and open to new experiences and to life styles and values that differ from their own. The teacher education curriculum should have clear defined objectives and learning outcomes for the programme; A coherent and well-constructed curriculum that imparts all the knowledge and skills in a logical sequence; A good assessment policy and suitable assessment methods for checking whether the learning outcomes have been achieve. A graduation project protocol and, where applicable, work placement protocol. The new training of the teachers should add on the curriculum reflective-specific-problems in practice in professional development. A reflective practice is a tool of current development consisting of continuous feedback that targets specific problems in a particular school setting (Pike, Graham & Selby, 2004). The teacher educator and the researcher and role model encourage students to put theories they've learned into practice in their classrooms. Inserting journal writing to answer some of the cotemporary challenges is a must! They will be equipped with powerful tools of communication, problem-solving, progressive thinkers, willing to change so as to meet the new educational challenges. The above will result into more experiential learning, inductive, hands on-learning, more active learning, diverse instructional methods, and more collaborative activities.

## **Action Research in Teacher Education**

In Teacher Education and training, there should be an element of action research in the curriculum. Action research refers to change process based on the systematic collection of data and then selection of change action based on what the analyzed data indicate. It is a combination of both action and research. It is an attempt to understand educational practices in order to act in ways that may bring about both improvement and understanding (Price, 2000). According to Elliot (1991), Action research is the study of a social situation with a view to improve the quality of action within it. Action research can be understood in three types: it can be an individual researcher (Teacher researcher), it can focus on classroom change; it can also be a collaborative action research these can be two or more; or it focuses on changes in one classroom or more. It can be school wide action research common to all problems and this focuses on school improvement, students learning on the areas of collective interest (MacIntyre, 2000). The following are the benefits of action research to the teacher education training curriculum: it will improve education by applying innovation; teacher educators will work together; there will be a reflection and sharing about teaching; it will empower relationship among teacher educators; it will also establish self-critical communities of educators; it will increase systematic learning and teaching; it will empower the teacher educators with critical analysis of their place work; it will increase the cycle of planning, acting,

observing, and reflecting and finally the teaching and learning processes will be justified. Action research will enable them to answer the contemporary issues by diagnosis, analyzing, and feedback.

### **Teacher Professionalism**

Professionalism is as an organized approach to life-long learning for school staff members, therefore teachers should be able to be lifelong learners themselves, because the traditional notion about professionalism is inadequate and insufficient for the tasks at hand for the teachers (Kaahwa, 2005). Professionalism is being knowledgeable of education system, demonstrating understanding of government policies in the area of education; being exemplary in behaviour and conduct. Teacher professionalism should be understood as an on-going process. Today, there is a lot of confusion over what teacher education means and what it does. It is traced from the period of colonial era, where, emphasis was on pedagogy rather than training and development of school teachers and how the curriculum was conducted. The need is to broaden the teacher education curriculum to include areas that are being demanded by the modern, technologically-oriented society, like parenting, home economics, guidance and counselling, and using modern technology in instruction. This will ensure that teachers are equipped with relevant competencies to manage emerging challenges in education and the society. This is the major short-coming of the present teacher preparation Education.

### **Facilities and Resources of Teacher Education**

The issue of facilities and resources for preparing school teachers is critical. The status of current materials for preparing school teachers is pathetic. These are inadequate, obsolete, dilapidated and unsuitable for producing a competent teacher who can operate in this century. This state of affairs raises concern about the quality of teachers serving in the school system and has negatively affected the image of these teachers (self-esteem and how the society views them) and their integrity. While these teachers may appear incompetent and fail to reflect the expected image of what a good teacher should be, the causes of this state lies elsewhere. They are victims rather than owners of the teacher preparation education. There is an urgent need to lift the face and to put up more structures for teacher education. This is a need from all over African teacher education colleges (NCHE, 2011). Teachers of present century should be trained and recruited in model building for example libraries, laboratories, classrooms, and learning-centres. Though a lot of reform has taken place in teacher education, more is needed. This should be done to reflect modern needs, and demands in teacher education locally and globally. But for this process to succeed there must be adequate and reliable sources of funding and good will from political establishment which is the government and society. The colleges should have enough facilities to train the teachers as Maslow puts it —health mind should be in a healthy body.

### **Globalization**

Globalization is both an opportunity and a challenge (MDG, 2000). This is a process which should be customized to teacher education to share on the opportunities of interconnectedness and interference of economies and societies. It is the process of occurrence changes to any system through international processes and transactions (NCHE, 2011). Globalization of teacher education is a new development affecting the whole world. This is the process of sharing experiences, ideas and technologies globally in administration of teacher education through the use of technological appliances, exposures and expertise. This process tends to bring its own unique demands in the teacher education curriculum which no one can competently manage. These demands are varied in nature and sometimes traumatising. Among these demands are increased cost of financing teacher education, development and provision of suitable facilities and resources, reviewing of the existing teacher education curriculum, administration of suitable programmes in teacher education and introduction of new and sophisticated information and communication technology (ICT) systems which the developing world including Uganda cannot afford. The teachers need to be trained in a global perspective. This will give them a priority to active based teaching methods, conflict resolution skills, peer-learning, problem-solving, community participation and peace education activities.

## **Information and Communication Systems in Teacher Education**

There is need for a new type of teacher sensitive to development issues, to the one who would be trained as agents of change. It is because, any change means adopting new skills, or finding a new meaning in new ways (Kaahwa, 2005). There is no way change can be instrumental unless the following obstacles are minimized: overload of work, Isolation in classes; group think which paralyzes individual thinking; creativity; narrowness of roles of the teachers and poor professional development (Bilbao, 2006). To change the face of teacher education, teaching profession and school teacher training for the better, new educational communication and technology materials need to be adapted and adopted. That is to design, develop and use modern educational technology to prepare schoolteachers. This will improve the training and instruction of teachers and teacher-trainees. These packages (computers, satellite technologies, etc and their accessories) will educate, inform and expose these individuals to the needs and challenges of the modern society that they are expected to serve. The initial costs of adapting to and adopting these systems may be costly but the eventual benefits are rewarding to the society.

## **Conserving Environment in Teacher Education**

Teacher Education should include the environment in curriculum, because teachers have to study the causes and effects of the destruction of, threat to, principal local and global ecosystem and range of alternative solutions, put forward for their protection. Teacher education should include natural resources because both teachers and students should know about the location, extraction process and usage of the world's natural resources and understanding the causes and effects of the depletion of non-renewable resources. Teacher education should learn under the environment how to conserve the projects from the local to global levels. Pollution notion should also be included, it is important for the student teachers to know about the causes and effects of pollution (of ground, sea, and air) locally, and globally, knowing the measure to combat it. Teachers should learn about the current usage of available land and the principal developments and arguments concerning land use reform and land reclaim (Kafu, 2003). Therefore, each nation and country must prepare itself well to deal with changes in teacher education.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has discussed Teacher Education and Training in the context of contemporary issues. Globally and locally, all great minds of all times have realized and accepted that the teacher plays a vital role in the community, therefore, the curriculum should be made relevant to answer the contemporary issues of the societies. Since global education and international education are important in the day-to-day lives of average citizens around the world, global studies should be introduced in teacher education training. Though, Teacher Education and training has gone through a lot of reforms world-wide, but still a lot is desired to meet the new demands. It is therefore, the responsibility of the world in their unique societies to make Teacher Education meaningful and productive to the socio-economic realities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. There is an urgent need to review the policies, administrative structures, recruitment of staff and students, financing of teacher education and teacher education curriculum. This should be according to the need of the modern society locally and globally. But for this process to succeed there should be enough and reliable sources of funding from the stakeholders.
2. Teacher education should emphasize professional growth, where a teacher gaining an increased experience should examine the teaching systematically. Professionalism empowers a teacher in initial training, induction courses, in-service training and continuous professional development within school settings and outside.
3. Teacher Education should form strong associations to face real challenges together and to speak as one voice, and this will render strong supportive environment for teacher education. This will result into be sharing of experiences ideas, and best practices from different countries' situation about teacher education.
4. Teacher Education and training needs a collaborative approach, and leadership which will engage the stakeholders in implementing educational changes to produce quality teachers. The country is as great as their teachers (White Paper, 1992). All teacher trainers should be inducted in quality assurance.

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