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Models of Teacher Education: The Case of Cameroon

Abstract

- Models for teacher education would need to be reviewed, if teachers have to assume their role effectively, as well as take their place in the new social order and market economy.

Introduction

- This paper examines models of teacher education in Cameroon by reflecting on the different models that have existed, it is important to theorize about the nature of schooling that influenced how teachers are educated and trained. This type of information is intricately tied to the kinds of intellectual and executive attributes required for quality output both for the learner and the teacher.
- Until we know how these are related, and how they should effectively interact, there can be no clear indications of the models that guide teacher education.
- Quality in teacher education can be described in conceptual and technical parameters that are clearly defined in whatever models in use.

Introduction cont.

- Leke Tambo and Tchombe (1997) in a World Bank study on Models of Teacher Education in Cameroon defined a training programme model as a combination of (1) a selection pattern, (2) programme design pattern, (3) specific duration and (4) certification.
- Eleven models were found to be in use at the initial level of teacher education.
- Three patterns of teacher education were also observed; comprehensive, professional-focused and academic-focused. The models are specific to the different levels of education.
- Models for in-service teacher education were not clearly defined in practice.

Evolution of Teacher Education and Conceptual Issues

- Value judgments about the standards of education are rather mechanistic than constructive.
- From the mechanistic perspective, teachers are expected to be subject specialist, capable of matching their teaching to particular age and are held accountable for the success of their pupil's learning. Performance in examination is the major determinant of teacher quality. Such approach to judging teachers, goes to limit the scope of their education and training, which is seen as providing them only with survival skills to handle and cope with classroom routines and rituals.
- A focus on their classroom activities is responding more to prescriptions such as, for example, the completion of the schemes for the term or the syllabus for the year with no focus on quality learning outcomes.
- Value judgments based on a constructivist approach, would be commenting on successful teaching and educating that would be enriching cognitively and affectively.
- Teacher training and education would need to take training cues from the focus on quality teaching base on constructivist theory that addresses the active involvement of the learner and the philosophy of the co-construction of knowledge.

Evolution of Teacher Education and Conceptual Issues. Cont.

- Formal training of teachers in Cameroon is a relatively recent phenomenon that dates back to about 60 years. Schools in Cameroon during the pre-colonial and colonial eras were responding only to the needs of evangelization and colonialism rather than national concerns.
- Institutionalization of teacher education in Cameroon took off at the same time in both British and French Cameroon but this was more developed in British Cameroon than in French Cameroon. By 1923 school-based teacher training had begun in the British Cameroon while French Cameroon left it till 1947.
- The growth of teacher education witnessed the introduction of a three-year course for elementary teacher training, leading to the Grade III Teacher Certificate with the first batch passing out in 1933.
- Entry was through a competitive examination, with a prerequisite of First School Leaving ("Standard Six") Certificate.

Evolution of Teacher Education and Conceptual Issues Cont.

- After the three years, successful candidates were expected to teach for a year before qualifying for admission to do the two-year Higher Elementary Training Course (Grade II).
- The approach had its value in that teachers were able to acquire more practical school experience before continuing with their professional training.
- Students who qualified for the Higher Elementary Course went to Nigeria. In some cases they did a straight four-year course.

Evolution of Teacher Education and Conceptual Issues. Cont.

- Further growth of teacher education was the institution of the Grade II course in Cameroon in 1945 at the Government Teacher Training College (GTTC). Due to lack of staff, the college was closed down, but with a change in the staffing situation the Higher Elementary course was reintroduced between 1947 and 1950.
- From this period onwards more of such institutions were opened by the Government and private agencies for both Grade III and Grade II courses and in some cases, also for Grade I course.

Evolution of Teacher Education and Conceptual Issues. Cont.

- As regards teacher education in the Francophone sector of Cameroon, early attempts at training teachers was by Private Education. Foullassi the first of this endeavour was opened in 1925 near Sagmelima in the Dja-et Lobo by the Presbyterian American Mission.
- The objective of the college was to train teachers for the primary schools and for evangelization.
- Polyvalent principles prevailed whereby teachers trained could service also as community and religious leaders.

Evolution of Teacher Education and Conceptual Issues. Cont.

- Private Initiatives by missionaries from different denominations and NGOs for institutional and school-based training.

Evolution of Teacher Education and Conceptual Issues. Cont.

- Training is also being offered today at Advance Teacher training college known as (ENS in French) and in the Faculty of Education.
- The University of Buea is the only Higher Education Institution that offers B.Ed. degrees in Curriculum Studies and Teaching and Special Education.

Emerging Critical Issues

- The colonial education policies and practices ignored the significance of African cultural knowledge, traditional pedagogical practices, including indigenous psychology that influenced traditional education. On this account, the colonial system missed out in integrating these issues in their policies. So the problems that raised the need for structural reforms in education in Cameroon could be traced back to the advent of evangelization and colonialism for which schools existed to serve (Tchombe 2001).
- Both the structures and content of the schools responded to the evangelization of mission and colonial needs. Change however, can be brought about when people begin to want to reformulate their own purposes, organize their own means to ensure growth and development.
- African knowledge and systems of organization and management, including their social support systems are gradually being inculcated as content and practice. Educational reform therefore did pose a challenge for teacher education and for practicing teachers.

Emerging Critical Issues

- The ruralisation of Cameroon education, the Re-unification and the emerging issue of harmonization of the two systems of education and the introduction of bilingualism meant that new teachers had to be trained and the old reoriented to meet with new emphasis in teaching.
- Three main problems have hindered its accomplishment: firstly, the inadequacy of the rationale for harmonization; secondly, lack of agreement on both sides as to what should constitute the new programmes, and thirdly the attitude of resistance to change.
- Until these issues are clarified, the challenges of actual reform will infringe on the progress of the school system generally and of teacher education specifically.

Emerging Critical Issues

- The Education Forum of 1995, in section IV. 3.6 on the training of teachers defined the profile of the teacher and gave new orientations for the training of teachers in terms of number of years for training, entry characteristics and specific levels of training.
- Entry into any training programme was only through a competitive common entrance examination.
- These new orientations were promulgated in the law no. 98/004/of 14 April 1998 necessitating a new policy defining legislation in the education and training of teachers in both its initial and in-service training programmes.
- In the nursery and primary teacher training colleges, teachers are trained only for the Grade 1 courses.

Emerging Critical Issues

- Three types of entry characteristics are required determining the duration of the training. Students with five "O" Levels or above or its equivalents, spend one academic year. Students in the second type of Grade 1 Course enter with one "A" level and five "O" levels or their equivalent. These are trained for two years.
- The students who enter with two "A" levels or a first degree spend only one year.
- As evident, these specifications have implications for entry qualifications, duration, and salary category of each programme.

Emerging Critical Issues

- The expansion was also experienced for secondary and technical vocational teacher training colleges. Qualification for entry into these institutions was and is G.C.E. 'A' Level or its equivalent.
- The duration of training is three years, depending upon the student's entry qualifications for the first cycle and two years for the second cycle with different specifications.
- Three sections existed in this first cycle and the length or duration of the courses varied from two to three years and four years for those doing the bilingual series.
- The entry qualifications were either two or more Advanced Levels or its equivalent qualification for the first cycle and degree for the second cycle.

Conceptualization of Teacher Education Models

- Leke Tambo and Tchombe (1997) identified eleven models, six are evident in primary teacher training and five in secondary teacher training programme:
- For the primary teacher programme the six are: (1) 3years grade 1, (2) 2years Grade 1, (3) 1year Grade 1, (4)3 years for private teacher training colleges in Anglophone Cameroon, (5)2years didactics programmes for teacher educators for primary teacher training colleges,(6)2years Sciences of Education programmes for Teacher Educators for the primary education level (In-service).

Conceptualization of Teacher Education Models

- As regards secondary level, for the first cycle there are: (1) 3 years initial training, (2) 4years, Bilingual pre service training, (3), 2years in-service training for second cycle secondary education, (4) 2years for Teacher Educators (in-service), (5) 2 years, Counseling Programme.
- Selection into each of these models is through competitive examination. Entry qualifications are well prescribed by Education Forum of 1995, on the training of teachers and in the law no.98/004/of 14 April 1998 offering new policy, defining legislation concerning the entry requirements of teachers for each training programme.

Entry Qualification and Selection

- Entry qualifications and selective processes have an important role for subsequent teacher quality. If we reflect on the breath and depth of the training programme, we would accept that First School Leaving Certificate or its equivalent provides a weak starting base for teacher education.
- Entry requirements have been redefined to enable quality training to be addressed at all levels and types of training programmes.
- The relationship of the selective process to the aspects of professional preparation and performance is crucial.

Entry Qualification and Selection

- Teacher effectiveness is largely dependent on the nature of the selective process.
- Judgment of the applicant was based on some crude assessment of attainment index, based on their certificates and other relevant documents including a pass in the Common Entrance Examinations. Though there is interview after success at written examinations, this needs to be organized well, with more objectivity and with vigour.

Duration and Programme

- The duration of training was stipulated in two decrees; 1980 for primary teachers and 1988 for secondary teacher training.
- The quality of teacher training is the function, among other factors, of the subject content of the course and the length of time over which it is pursued.
- It is of vital importance that teacher training should be well structured with respect to both the period that it covers (duration) and its subject content (programme).

Duration and Programme

- For optimal success of training, three elements to be addressed are: duration, content and student quality.
- The duration of courses in primary, nursery and post-primary technical teacher training needed to be increased for several reasons:
- Firstly, quality cannot be obtained through an overcrowded programme within a limited time without an adequate base.
- Secondly, school experience requires much time.
- Thirdly, Teacher Education cannot be rushed.

Duration and Programme

- At the secondary teachers college, the duration of courses offered seemed appropriate (from two to five years) except that the programmes required adequate restructuring, to allow for specialization, elective component and in-depth treatment of educational subjects.

Training Programmes.

- Leke Tambo and Tchombe(1997) identified five main components of initial teacher training programme:
- General education, specialized subjects, professional studies, practicum and socio-cultural context knowledge.
- Education course focuses on education theory and principle for practice. This theoretical training also involves studying the academic disciplines or discipline of the level.
- Bilingual training is emphasized given the nature of the country.
- Practicum constitutes a major component of teacher training programmes.

Training Programmes.

- Three programme training patterns are offered:
(a) Comprehensive that focuses on both academic and professional components of teacher education and training. This is commonly practiced in primary teacher education programmes.
- Though at the secondary level both professional and academic issues are addressed, the emphasis is more on academic programmes (b) professional-focused and (c) disciplines or academic focused (Leke Tambo & Tchombe, 1997);.
- Our teacher education can be improved through the identification of specific training procedure or course component, which will lead to the improvement of particular teaching ability.

Certification.

- Criteria for what constitute eligibility for the award of the degrees or any of the diplomas are stipulated and are contingent on regular attendance at lectures, continuous assessment and examination of theoretical subjects and practicum.
- At primary teacher education level, successful candidates obtain the Teacher Grade I certificate or the Certificat d' Aptitude Pedagogue del' Enseignement Maternel et Primaire.
- With respect to secondary and teacher education, four types of certificates are offered at the level: DIPES I for first cycle, and DIPES II second cycle secondary education and DIPEN I and II for first cycle and second cycle teacher education respectively.
- Although these certificates are structured thus, the hierarchical relationship between levels is direct.
- The certificates are independent of each others and attract different salary scales.

Problems and Perspectives

- Teachers in most of our institutions are not trained and those who are trained are not well trained. In-service provisions whenever such is provided do not pay particular attention to teachers' immediate needs. Organizers of in-service training ought to have an operational rationale focused primarily on identifying practicing teachers' needs.
- The need for in-depth study of education courses is a pre-condition for their professionalism; teacher education must reflect this.
- Inadequate time for practicum. Programme reconstruction or reform as of necessity should increase time for professional development with a strong theoretical base.

Conclusion

- Perceived concept and tradition of teacher education in Cameroon does not adequately respond to the changes currently taking place in Cameroon as well as the new role of teachers as a result of the social change.
- There is the need for structural changes to provide the required skills and meet up with standards.
- The structure argued for would offer initial training and subsequently in-service patterns of training that will enable teachers at all levels to continue to acquire and develop highly sophisticated and diverse skills needed for change in the school system.
- Such a change in structure would help to delineate and clarify the objectives of the different phases of teacher education in order to minimize professional wastage.
- This should increased and improved mobility and communication between the various parts of the courses.

Conclusion

- Furthermore, school-based in-service will be encouraged but within a well-structured framework will provide opportunities for teachers to acquire new skills research and teaching.
- There is the need for the creation of teacher education net work and more faculties of education with affiliated or constituent colleges.
- Our students attend classes for approximately 35 to 40 weeks each year. Based on our conventional terms, there may be nine to thirteen weeks a term.
- The school week varies from 26 to 36 hours with not enough time for private study. The school day for most of the time is too long and there is no free day for research or any related activities.
- In the light of the above discussion, teacher education and training models should be restructured to avoid over crowdedness and allow more time for students' activities.

Recommendation

- **Models for Teacher Education in Africa should be reviewed in the light of current trends in education.**
- **Teacher Education in Africa must have scientific base that should among other issues address African culture, epistemology and pedagogy.**
- **The creation of a Network of teacher educators should be a priority issue as an outcome of this workshop.**
- **There should be a scientific forum that meets yearly or once in two years to discuss, debate and encourage scholarly work on issues related to teacher education in Africa.**
- **It could be called the International Society for Teacher education and training in Africa (ISTETA).**

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THANK YOU.