

Theme: Teaching in a Changing Africa.

Topic: Teacher Quality: Kenya Focus

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Abstract

Teacher quality is critical to quality of education which is the engine of development. Teachers are a country's determinants of competitiveness and capacity to create more jobs and growth. They are an important means of passing on values, skills, knowledge and attitudes required for democracy, citizenship, intercultural dialogue and personal development. Research has found that teacher effect is much larger than the effect of school organization, leadership and financial conditions. However, Kenya inherited from colonisers a practice where those with the lowest academic grades trained as teachers. The study set to trace the level of education of primary school teachers, evaluate the mode of teacher training, establish whether there is an effective structure in place for continuous teacher professional development. Kenya educational Policy Document were analysed. Darling Hammond's theory "differential teacher effectiveness is a strong determinant of differences in student learning" guided the study. It was established that educational policy documents advocate for quality teachers yet primary school teacher training colleges admit aggregate KCSE grade 'C'; continuous teacher professional development is weak. Teaching is teacher centred. Teachers score low in tests they set for students. Recommendations made were that primary school teachers be trained in university. Continuous teacher professional development should be strengthened. Entry requirement for teacher trainees should be raised from 'C' plain to 'B+.' Emphasis should be laid on teaching practice and pedagogy.

Key words: Quality, engine of development, teacher effect, professional development, pedagogy

Introduction

Quality teachers greatly contribute to students' achievement and they are the system's principal resource. Teacher quality is critical in determination of quality of education which is a country's engine of development. The teachers' effect and influence on a child's learning is much greater than the effect of school organization, leadership and financial conditions as teachers are an important means of passing on knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required for democracy, citizenship, intercultural dialogue and personal development (European Union 2010). The teacher effect is positively correlated to pupil achievement as together with the parents teachers

design the destiny of a child. Research has established that students whose teachers answered mathematics items correctly posted larger mathematics gains between 8th and 10th grades, even after controlling for whether teachers held mathematics-related degrees (Kupermintz Autumn 2003). Studies have further found a significant relationship between the quality of preschool classrooms and children's pre academic development (Temple C. Dickinson, St. Pierre, & Pettengill, 2004). Thus, it is reasonable to seek to provide high-quality professional development on early literacy to improve teachers' abilities to support young children's language and literacy development and quality teachers are a country's great resource in this regard.

Kenya after colonialism unfortunately inherited a practice where those with the lowest education became teachers. Sifuna (1975) reports that the settler dominated government paid little or no attention at all to the problem of quality in African education. This was as result of the attitude of Europeans of the time towards Africans. Sifuna further reports that in dealing with the African, the White felt they were dealing with savages and an African represented a somewhat lower homo-sepiens as compared to the Aglo-Saxons. They therefore felt that Africans should receive practical education to teach them skills useful in the farm. The White people felt that the African had low IQ for literary curriculum. There was also fear that quality literary education would make the African child desire to work in office (Report of Education for the East African Protectorate 1919 in Sifuna 1975). The report classified primary school teachers as Pupil teacher to have passed class four (4) examination, certificate teachers- passed class seven (7) examination, some Africans who converted to Christianity were given sketchy teacher training and became teacher which resulted in poor teaching. African education indeed was mediocre. The education Ordinance of 1932 provided for low quality primary teacher certificates. A primary teacher certificate holder could teach up to class six (6) or form two (2). The candidate should have passed Junior secondary examination and taken a two years teacher training course in an approved institution. Lower Primary Teacher Certificate- qualified holder to teach up to class primary four (4) and to have passed primary school examination and undergone two years teacher training course; An Elementary Teacher Certificate; qualified the holder to teach up to class two (2) and one should have passed primary class four (4) examination with one year training in an approved institution. The Jean's Teacher Certificate was the fourth (4) category. They were to have lower primary teachers certificate and one year teacher training at Jeans Kabete. The quality of teaching remained poor. In 1948 the teacher classification was reorganized but quality still remained poor. A teacher certificate T4 replaced Elementary teacher certificate and qualified the holder to teach up to class four (4), holders were class six (6)

graduates; Teacher Certificate three (3), replaced the elementary teacher certificate, and qualified the holder to teach up to class six (6); Teacher certificate 2 qualified the holder to teach up to form 2 and hold a form four (4) certificate. A teacher certificate one (1) was Makerere teacher and could teach up to form four (4).

Generally the teacher training was inadequate for the demand placed on them. The duration of training was short and the courses were very crowded. Active pupil oriented teaching through such teachers is doubtful since they are likely to lack inner security (Sifuna 1975). Unfortunately most people who were taught by such mediocre teachers are still teachers today.

To date the teaching profession admits teacher trainees with low grades—Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) grade 'C' and 'D' where the highest grade is 'A'. This does not augur well to quality of teaching and learning and quality of education. The outcome and impact are great.

Research Findings on Quality of Teaching in Kenya primary schools

A most disturbing report is by Otieno (Standard News paper Thursday August 21st 2010), from a study by African Population and Health Research Centre and Ministry of Education, who reports that some teachers are not competent to teach the subjects they teach in primary schools and that a teacher scores 17% in a test set for students in the subject the teacher teaches. Actually untrained teachers teach children. Oriedo (Standard Newspaper Wednesday September 1st, 2010 page 28 and 30) report that the main cause of poor student performance in school is poor teaching methods. About 8.6% of the teachers indicated that they did not have any experience in teaching mathematics yet they taught it. This is like a blind leading another blind to unknown destination. There are many untrained teachers teaching in schools. The mean score of literacy and numeracy was below the standardized mean of 300. The study established that only about half the pupils attained the desirable levels 3 and 4 of competency in literacy, indicating that there is still a large number of children whose performance is below average. The implication of the study is that teachers require professional development. Research has clearly indicated that reading skills among students in the primary school are very low limiting a child's potential achievement and success (USAID 2011, Research Triangle Institute 2010). The most critical requirement in formal education is having highly qualified classroom teachers. Every child should enter the formal education system with the prerequisite skills to be globally successful. However a large number of children join the formal education process unprepared and this

becomes a major cause of long term failure to cope with school challenges for many children and ultimately the failure of the education system.

Hardman (2009) in another research reports that in class sessions, the discourse was found to be made up of teacher initiated question and answer sessions interrupted by brief lectures. Cued elicitions and teacher checks mainly functioned as ritualized participation strategies designed to keep pupils involved other than requiring an answer to a question. Teacher explanation, teacher question and cued elicitions made up majority of initiation move. Yet the learners should be active participants in their own learning. A teacher should realize that learners have their potential and require a focused determined teacher to bring that out of them. A teacher with mastery of content and pedagogic knowledge is a great resource for a country. About 95% of the teachers' questions tended to be closed, requiring recall of information. Pupils' questions were very rare; most answers received no teacher follow up. Classroom practice encouraged mere memorization of facts and not reconstruction of knowledge; a practice which is not in congruence with the current international shift in teaching and learning.

Kisirkoi (2011) found that classroom teaching was dominated by Lecture and rating in a classroom observation was as follows: Lecture 80% of a 30 and 35 minutes lesson; question and answer 12%, group work 4%, individual work 2%, discussion and others like role play 2% of the lesson time. The Teacher Advisory Centre (TAC) tutors also reported that the main teaching learning approach they had observed when they visit schools to observe teaching in the classroom was lecture and text book teaching, where learners answer questions from textbook which the teacher wholly depended on. Odini 1999 had found that TAC centres were ineffective in teacher professional development which was confirmed by Kisirkoi (2011)

Statement of the problem

With consideration of the research findings that teacher quality contributes to pupil performance, this study set out to review documents on requirements for primary school teacher training requirements and the measures taken to ensure primary teacher quality.

Objectives

The main objectives guiding the study were to:

1. trace the level of education of Primary School teachers.

2. examine the mode of teacher training in Teachers Training Colleges.
3. establish whether there is continuous teacher professional development for primary school teachers.

Guiding questions:

- a. How many subjects are offered to P1 Teachers in Kenya?
- b. Is the training concurrent or consecutive?
- c. Is there a link between training and actual classroom practice?
- d. Is there a continuous teacher professional development programme?

Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by the theory that "differential teacher effectiveness is a strong determinant of differences in student learning" (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The statement emphasizes that there are two distinct variables-teacher effectiveness determines student learning outcomes. The single largest factor affecting academic growth of populations of students is differences in effectiveness of individual classroom teachers" (Sanders 1998). Students learn more from teachers with higher test scores. In mathematics, degrees and coursework performance appear related to teacher effectiveness.

The study was also provoked by the following concern:

We are not likely to have good schools without a continuing supply of excellent teachers. Nor are we likely to have excellent teachers unless they are immersed in exemplary schools for significant portions of their induction into teaching. [But] Herein lies a dilemma. What comes first, good schools or good teacher education programs? (Goodlad, 1994, p.1).

This paper is based on the need to train quality, focused, enthusiastic, passionate teachers who will provide quality education in interactive child friendly learning environment where learners are facilitated and free to construct knowledge. In agreement with Goodlad we say, good teacher education comes before good schools because quality teachers make good schools.

Methodology

Analysis of documents on education policy: Syllabus for P1 MOE (2005), Session paper No. 1 of 2005 and Master Plan on Education and Training (1997 – 2010) was employed.

Findings

The majority of Kenya primary school teachers are trained as Primary Teacher One (P1); which is a certificate course. The entry requirement is Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) aggregate grade C (plain) according to latest syllabus (MOEST 2004) with D in Mathematics, C-(minus) in English. That was an improvement from the previous one where the entry requirement was KCSE aggregate D+ (plus) which are very low marks implying that teaching is not held with high academic regard. These are indeed poor grades for one to train as a primary school teacher. One wonders how the student teachers are able to grasp the content of the professional education syllabus which includes challenging content in areas such as educational psychology, philosophy, curriculum studies, tests and measurement and research methods. The certificate course takes (two) 2 years training which includes pedagogy and subject content mastery. The specified duration two (2) years is too short to raise the low entry requirement to quality grades and develop desired pedagogic skills for learning in the challenging 21st century. No wonder the teacher training colleges have continued to produce traditional conservative teachers who are resistant to change, less innovative and unable to manage modern instructional methods such as construction of knowledge which should be emphasised.

Mode of Training:

The P1 certificate course is a 2 year residential training course where students take 10 subjects in the 1st year and take practical teaching. The subjects in the first year include mathematics, English, Kiswahili, Science, Religious Education, Social Studies, Professional studies (Education), Creative Arts, Physical Education and Information Communication and Technology. In the 2nd year the students take nine (9) subjects and practical teaching. The subjects taken in second year are five (5) core and four (4) optional in the science and Art option. The core subjects are English, Kiswahili, Professional Studies (Education), physical Education and ICT. They then either take option A – Science subjects- Science, Home Science, Agriculture, and Mathematics or option B – Arts subjects- Music, Art and Craft, Social Studies, and Religious Education. After graduation, ironically, they teach all subjects taught in Primary schools (both science and Arts) whenever there is teacher shortage. The course is examination oriented. The college administers Continuous Assessment Tests. At the end of first year the students sit a mid course examination and at the end of second year take another examination administered externally by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC).

The course is concurrent; both pedagogic skills and content mastery are developed at the same time. The link between the theoretical and practice is weak; more emphasis is laid on theoretical work; the practical teaching emphasises examination scores.

The Master Plan on Education and Training 1997-2010 advise that in improving Teacher Professional Development in both pre-service and in-service emphasis will be placed on inculcating practical pedagogic skills and approaches which prepare the teacher as a medium for translating teaching-learning. First the teacher will be trained to appreciate and practice the translation of centrally developed curriculum guidelines into interesting classroom activities which nurture the initiative and the creativity of learners. Teachers will be trained in the art of continuously evaluating and shaping pupil's learning; using the local environment as a learning resource. Teachers will be trained to appreciate that both cognitive and emotive needs and social economic status count in pupil's learning. The ideas in the Plan are good but they have not been effected. Such a teacher will need to be of very high education.

The Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 (MOEST 2005) reports that there is a mismatch between the skills learned in training institutions and skills demanded in the industry and that some teachers are inadequately trained and the mechanisms for quality assurance are weak and teacher professional development is weak. The paper acknowledges that the two years training are inadequate for a trainee to acquire content mastery and pedagogic skills. It also reports that there is inadequate in-servicing of teachers. The paper proposes establishment of teacher professional development programme and regular in servicing of teachers. Research report by Hardman 2009 and Kisirkoi 2011 reveal that Teacher Advisory Centres which are mandated to conduct teacher professional development tend to be ineffective. Kisirkoi 2011 further found that the TACs in Nairobi County do not effectively conduct teacher professional development activities but engage in administrative duties of the Ministry of Education. They spend about 60% of their time performing administrative activities. No TAC tutor had been found to have held an in-service course as ones initiative.

Conclusion

Given that those who train as primary school teachers had scored weak grades D+ or C with D in Maths and C- (minus) in English, we do not expect quality education at primary level which is unfortunate; yet education is the engine of development and no education is higher than the

quality of its teachers. It is critical for social, political and economic development. This calls for rethinking of entry requirement for teacher trainees. The two years training duration for the course is too short especially because of the many subjects required to be taken. Primary school is the foundation of a child's formal education and given that teacher quality is critical to quality of education, one could conclude that education in Kenya is in jeopardy and development of the country is at stake; it requires urgent corrective action.

Recommendation

1. Raise entry requirement for teacher trainees from C plain to A and all teachers should be trained at University level.
2. There should be a link between training and classroom practice. Emphasis should be laid on teaching practice and pedagogy.
3. The curriculum should be revised to produce pragmatic, creative teachers with the capacity and ability to efficiently manage the challenges of education in this century and beyond.
4. Teacher training course should be a five year training programme to provide enough time to ground the trainees in content and pedagogy and to effectively link the theoretical work with classroom practice.
5. Teacher training should be consecutive where learners take three years acquiring content mastery and two years acquiring pedagogical skills in real classroom environment.
6. There should be induction training for all teachers in their first three years of training.
7. Teachers should continually learn; there should be sustained teacher professional development programme.

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