

# Challenges that Faced Teacher Education in Kenya During the Colonial Period

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**Abstract:** Teacher education is a cornerstone in producing competent teachers equipped to deliver quality education that aligns with the national development. Well educated and competent teachers greatly impact the expertise and competencies of their learners. This study examines the challenges that faced teacher education in Kenya during the colonial period, some of which are still prevalent today. The study adopted a historical research design as the phenomenon under study is a historical survey of the challenges that faced teacher education during the colonial period. Secondary and primary sources of data were used. Research instruments used were; Document Analysis and Focus Group Discussions. Qualitative data analysis was used, with documents analysed using both internal and external criticisms. The results revealed that teaching is considered a noble course, and teachers are very key in determining the various aspects of a nation's developmental scheme. In Kenya, various challenges face teacher education compromising its quality over a period of time. Some of these challenges include limited funds, resources, inadequate infrastructure, uneven admission of the educators across training institutions, inadequate staff and inadequate supervision of the educators during teaching practice. Most of these challenges are witnessed today. The introduction of Competency Based Education has greatly underscored the long-standing gaps in teacher training, teacher preparedness, emphasizing the need for adequate teacher training and preparedness to attain the current educational demands. Despite the challenges in teacher education, it has also experienced considerable success due to the changes in technological, political and social advancements.

**Keywords:** Teacher Education, Teachers, Challenges, Teacher Training, Learners.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### ➤ Background to Study

Teacher education is a vital requirement in promoting the efficacy and quality of education to the learners (Nyankaga et al., 2013). As such, access to pedagogical and professional training that satisfactorily equip the teachers to navigate the ever-evolving demands and complexities of the educational landscape is significant. Teacher education is relevant in unlocking skills among the learners. Teachers play a significant function in facilitating learning to achieve the current skills, including communication and collaboration, critical thinking, creativity and learning to learn. According to Kajoro et al (2013), a teacher is a crucial factor in defining the learners' achievements. Subsequently, adequate teacher preparedness leads to the propagation of quality education. A quality teacher possesses excellent mastery of the subject matter, effective pedagogical skills and desirable attributes (Amon & Reichel, 2007).

McKenzie and Santiago (2005) posit that teacher quality is a vital variable which affects learners' achievement

in school. Therefore, as claimed by Hawken et al (2007), the quality of a given teacher is a reflection of the teacher education training/ program he or she underwent. As such, it is important to regard teacher education as an essential factor to quality education.

Universally, in the current era, nations have stipulated common goals towards efficacious education achievements and borrow from other effective teacher education programmes and practices to enhance their educational systems. However, varied and similar challenges in education, especially in teacher education have been experienced in various countries worldwide. In Africa, for instance Tanzania and Uganda are grappling with inadequate funds to train teachers and with the issues of adequate staffing in the primary schools. This is as a consequence of the ballooning classes following the enactment of free primary education; in attempt to broaden the universal goals in promoting education to all the citizens (Oketch & Rolleston (2007). These countries are grappling with the challenge of achieving meaningful learning in the teacher training institutions. Other countries are faced with issues of retaining

quality teaching staff, others have issues with poor infrastructure, while others have issues with policies to regulate and ensure quality teacher training. On the other hand, other nations are planning on how to enhance teacher education and how to improve teachers' skills and knowledge for quality education (Mckenzie & Santiago (2005). This paper examines the teacher education in Kenya, during the colonial period and its challenges, some of which are still prevalent today.

#### ➤ *Statement of the Problem*

Regardless of various attempts by the government to improve teacher education, there are some challenges that are still prevalent. The challenges ranging from traditional ones to contemporary issues persist over time, greatly impacting the efficacy of teacher training. It is key to note that addressing these challenges is key in preparing competent and confident teachers who are well positioned to shape the country's future and take part in educational advancements.

Whereas existing literature on teacher education in Kenya gives significant insights, most of these studies only focus on the challenges facing the teachers, neglecting the institutional and systemic challenges most of these educators face as far as teacher training is concerned. This study addresses this research gap by examining both the systemic and institutional challenges. Subsequently it suggests actionable solutions to the Government and educational stakeholders to enhance teacher education, primarily aligning teacher training with the current Competency Based Education and the emergent pedagogical approaches.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### ➤ *Categorization of Teacher Education in Kenya*

Otunga et al (2011) highlight different levels of teacher education in Kenya. Each category portrays a clear teaching programme and their objectives towards the production of qualified educators in each teaching level. The levels vary from early childhood teacher education to tertiary teacher education (Andiema 2017). It is worth noting that the levels include subject knowledge, professional disciplines as well as teaching subjects. The levels include Early Childhood Development Education, primary school teacher education and the graduate teacher education (Nyankanga et al., 2013).

ECDE teacher education though very vital, has over the years been neglected in the Kenyan teacher education system. The teacher has been overlooked by the government, ultimately leading to learners with poor foundations. Muthanje et al., (2019), ECDE integrates education approaches and programmes that promote the growth of intellectual, physical, social and emotional well-being of children. This level represents a key stage of educational foundation development of young children. Surprisingly, Nyankanga et al (2013) in their study revealed that ECDE teacher education over the years has been ignored and only left to unregulated agencies who offer differential training to the teachers. Subsequently, most of the training facilities offering ECDE teacher education are sponsored by churches, the teacher students and members of the community.

The next level is primary teacher education. It comprises of three certification levels such as P1, P2 and P3 certifications. A teacher with P3 training certificate must have undergone through 8 years of primary education, and 2 years of teacher training. Currently, this level has been scrapped. To attain the P2 certification, the P3 teachers were to further train for additional three years to raise their status (Wambugu & Kyalo, 2013).

In Kenya, for one to teach at the primary schools, one must have the P1 certificate; this includes successful completion of O-level and training for two years at the teacher training centres.

(Namunga & Otunga, 2012; 230). Recent policies and reforms in teacher education dictate that primary teacher education should be offered at degree and diploma levels. In Kenya a number of private and public teacher training colleges offer primary teacher education. The facilities have played a critical role in offering training opportunities and facilities for teacher training, in attempts to improve the quality of education in Kenya (Namunga & Otunga, 2012; 230).

The Bachelor of education level educates teachers for the Kenyan secondary schools. The programme is offered in various specializations such as Science, Arts, Early Childhood, Technology, guidance and counselling and primary education studies. The popular Bachelor of education specializes in Sciences and Arts. The programme has two key components including professional components and subject teaching components. As part of the programme, teaching practice is compulsory and one has to excel to be awarded a certificate (Otunga et al, 2011).

#### ➤ *Challenges that Faced Teacher Education in Colonial Kenya*

There was no distinct clarity on what teacher education really implied. It has been regarded by others as just teacher training; that is, education programme which equips the trained teachers with pedagogical content alone. Another school of thought regards teacher education as training and preparing and developing the teachers (Karanja a 1995). According to Karanja, the teacher education concept prepares schoolteachers in both academic and pedagogical content. In this thought, importance is laid in equipping the teacher with relevant and adequate competencies in academic and pedagogical content. It also entails preparing the teacher for issues in contemporary life. The indistinct definition of teacher education tended to impact the preferred approaches (modes) of teacher training and quality of teachers produced to work for an education system during the colonial period.

A major challenge in primary teacher education was the problem of quality in teacher training. Sifuna in A Brief Survey of Primary Teacher education before 1952 postulates that the factors important in determining education quality in the Primary schools are; the general education of teachers in the system as well as the kind and amount of training they have undergone (Sifuna 1975; 29).

It is worth noting that the Kenyan education system in colonial Kenya faced numerous problems including inadequate teacher educators and shortage of resources. In colonial Kenya, most of the primary teacher training centers and institutions had unqualified or inadequate teacher educators. This was brought about by mismatch between the job description and their qualifications. The shortage of the educators was attributed to lack of experience as well as motivation as highlighted by Al Shabibi and Silvennoinen (2018:261). The shortage resulted to the deterioration of quality teacher training in Kenya. Albez, Yıldırım, and Ayık (2020: 612) states, 'an education system is as good as its teachers'. Therefore, there isn't the doubt that teachers form the most fundamental dynamics of effective education; the impact cascades all through the education system.

Although there had been a general African resistance to the formal education, some Africans developed interest in the education when settlers began paying highly for writing and reading ability on the new farms (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006:180). It is essential to note that this African enthusiasm to formal education was exploited by the missionaries; they trained the teachers hurriedly and sent them out to teach in the bush schools. Some adverse aspects resulted from this inadequate teacher training. First, there was stiff competition between the Protestant and Catholic missionaries' group; this led to races and division in constructing schools; as close as possible to those of the competing group. Both the groups consciously taught their learners not to trust their rivals, resulting to animosity.

Most of the African missionaries were not adequately prepared for teacher education. There was inadequate cash, trained teachers limited in supply, and there was no suitable curriculum available to help train the teachers (Sifuna & Otiende, 2006:180). Some of the missionaries who were not educationally trained were expected to train the 'bush' schoolteachers. They themselves had various backgrounds; some had very little education beyond the missionary training, while others were graduates. The training was very superficial and only relied on rote learning, aiming primarily on simple literacy and religious teachings.

Campbell (2008; 357-385) postulates that little emphasis of values in the teachers' code of ethics and conduct is another challenge affecting teacher education in the colonial period. Campbell further explains that although the teaching profession's ethical nature is often not taken into consideration, ethics and teaching are inevitably intertwined and integrally compatible. Thus, prominence on professional ethics is of great importance in developing a competent teacher. However, the teacher training colleges and the teachers' employers during colonial period did little in educating novice teachers on the way they are required to carry themselves out in the profession. Instead, ethics and values were just brushed off; this costed the career of many novice teachers as a consequence of being involved in offensive behavior, for instance failure to adhere to the ethical educational standards. Subsequently, this tainted the integrity and image of teaching as a noble profession during the colonial period.

Various changes in teacher education that seemed impossible after their conception during the colonial period are currently seen as common educational programmes. Continuous teacher Professional Development programs have been implemented in education policies. The programs stress collaborative projects and technology integration in teacher education. It is important to note that these programs have been funded by various organisations including CEMASTEPA and are tasked to train teachers on technological implementation in teaching pedagogy (Mutende, 2015). Consequently, these in-service training has enhanced the capability of most teachers to use technology. Besides, teacher education is undergoing an enhanced level of teacher training. Presently, primary school teachers are required by the Teachers' Service Commission to train at diploma level. Teachers are also encouraged to go for further studies with support of study leave.

#### ➤ *Challenges Facing Teacher Education Currently*

The Kenyan education system rooted in the colonial era gave priority to rote learning and never emphasized on teacher-centered approaches. This long-lasting legacy continues to influence teacher education as teacher training facilities have constantly struggled with inadequate funds and out-of-date infrastructure since Kenya's independence (Gachago & Peart, 2022; 62).

Consequently, teacher training institutions like Asumbi, Tambach, Kericho and Kagumo Teacher Training Colleges still depend on colonial-era amenities, with staff shortages and under qualified staff, undermining the quality of education the educators receive in these various training institutions (Gichuhi & MŌmbone, 2012). Recruiting underqualified teacher-educators has jeopardized teacher training and preparation, with unqualified teachers (to reduce teacher shortages experienced) who are unable to serve the different needs of the modern century. McKenzie and Santiago (2005) postulates that achievement of the learners reflects the teacher quality. As such, unqualified teacher educators are unable to convey sufficient skills and knowledge as is required of a competent teacher.

Just as was experienced in the colonial period, the use of unsuitable curriculum in training and preparation of the teachers leads to the massive production of incompetent educators. Moreover, the short training duration (three years for primary teacher training) enables a platform which hinders exhaustive practical activities (practical learning, i.e teaching practice) in teacher education. The time allocated for teaching practice is inadequate for the teachers to exercise their expertise. Katitia (2015) highlights that the time allocated for the teaching practice is not enough for prospective teacher trainees to adequately apply and analyse the educational pedagogy and knowledge gained from the teacher training facilities.

Inadequate funds are another challenge currently faced in teacher education. It has been observed over the years that the government of Kenya has not adequately invested in teacher education. Financial stability and support are key in operating in-service training that enable teachers to enhance

their instruction levels and teaching pedagogy. Notably, the inability of the government to roll out enough in-service programs has led to some teacher education programmes like ECDE getting minimal attention. Besides, inadequate funds and support to the teacher training colleges have resulted to poor educational facilities and resources presently used in teacher training programs (Katitia, 2015). Consequently, the prospective teachers are unable to fully incorporate some modern aspects like technology in learning and teaching.

In attempts to address these challenges, post-independence educational reforms have been put in place to improve the teacher education system, including consistent teacher adjustments and evaluations to educational funding models. Nevertheless, declining budgets in the current years have reduced the service quality in the teacher training facilities (Institute of Public Finance Kenya, n.d). The introduction of Competency Based Education has greatly underscored the long-standing gaps in teacher training, teacher preparedness, emphasizing the needs for adequate teacher training and preparedness to attain the current educational demands (Murithi & Yoo, 2021).

### III. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

#### ➤ *Research Design, Research Instruments and Data Collection Techniques*

This study adopted historical research design as the topic under study is historical in nature. The study aims to unveil historical facts on teacher education during the colonial period. Both primary and secondary sources were used to obtain information for the study. The research the research instruments consisted of ex-Asumbi students, retired educationists, civil servants and church leaders all selected through the snowballing and purposive sampling. To ensure good data management the collected data was immediately coded to ease categorization as suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994).

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were utilized to analyze the collected information. Documents used in the study were analyzed through internal and external criticisms. According to Suter (2006), external criticism examines the genuineness and authenticity of a given research document. On the other hand, external criticism examines the accuracy of the information contained in the genuine documents. Documents analysed in the study are; Education Reports, School reports, Mission Reports and official correspondences.

### IV. FINDING AND CONCLUSIONS

Teaching is considered a noble course, and teachers are very key in determining the various aspects of a nation's developmental scheme, necessitating effective and quality education as vital if a nation must move forward economically. Besides, teachers are the key implementors of a given curriculum, as well as the key determinants of effective teaching, therefore, it is significant to greatly invest in their education.

It is ideal for the teachers to be equipped with pedagogies, skills and knowledge that will enhance efficient quality teaching in the modern educational landscape. Teachers need to be taught how to embrace the current skills and how to transfer the same to the learners. To be at par with the changing trends, the teachers need to be equipped to integrate reflective practice and action research for continuous growth and improvement. Notably, continuous Teacher Development Programme is inevitable to enable the primary school teachers to manage the ever-evolving world.

In Kenya, various challenges face teacher education that has compromised its quality over a period. Some of these challenges include limited funds, resources, inadequate infrastructure, uneven admission of the educators across training institutions, inadequate staff and inadequate supervision of the educators during teaching practice. It is worth noting that inadequate standardization in teacher training, especially during the yearly teaching practice, aggravates the challenges, thus resulting to discrepancies in the experiences and skills of the trained teachers (Lucksnat et al., 2024). This inconsistency greatly undermines the entire effectiveness of the country's education system, as teacher education shapes the quality of education and the next generation.

The introduction of Competency Based Education has greatly underscored the long-standing gaps in teacher training, teacher preparedness, emphasizing the need for adequate teacher training and preparedness to attain the current educational demands. Post-independence educational reforms have been put in place to improve the teacher education system, including consistent teacher adjustments and evaluations to educational funding models. Nevertheless, declining budgets in the current years have reduced the service quality in the teacher training facilities (Institute of Public Finance Kenya, n.d).

Despite the challenges in teacher education, it has also experienced a good share of considerable successes due to the changes in technological, political and social advancements. Kafu (2013) in his study suggests that the impact of current developments on teacher training programs is felt in both in the national development and teaching profession.

Various changes in teacher education that seemed impossible after their conception during the colonial period are currently seen as common educational programmes. Continuous teacher Professional Development programs have been implemented in education policies The programs stress collaborative projects and technology integration in teacher education. It is important to note that these programs have been funded by various organisations including CEMASTEAM and are tasked to train teachers on technological implementation in teaching pedagogy (Mutende, 2015). Consequently, these in-service training has enhanced the capability of most teachers to use technology. Besides, teacher education is undergoing an enhanced level of teacher training. Presently, primary school teachers are required by the Teachers' Service Commission to train at

diploma level. Teachers are also encouraged to go for further studies with support of study leave.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

A successful teacher education is largely dependent on the institute reforms and policies. Various teacher education policies are significant in creating teacher training standards that improve quality in teachers' preparedness. Notably the policies set should set expectations to be met as far as teacher education is concerned. Besides, the policies should offer accountability in teacher education and set pace for educational reforms. Given the dynamic nature of the universal space, there is need to embrace change in the education sector, especially teacher education to meet the current needs of the learners and for the teachers to be at par with the new curriculum. Contrary to the teacher training offered in the colonial period, educators are required to adopt teaching pedagogy that enhances collaboration, communication, critical thinking and an overall student-centered approach that adopts technological aspects. It is in this regard that there is a deliberate need for policy changes which necessitate technological progress in teacher education; the policy will enable the incorporation of technological facets in training the teachers, thus improving the quality of education these educators receive.

The environment has an effect on teacher education. This is in terms of attracting the top minds for teacher training and a motivation for further training for the teachers already employed. Better packages for quality teachers and good working conditions are likely to motivate the educators to pursue advanced teacher training, and at the same time attract qualified teacher trainees. It is recommended that with frequent rewards and adequate support motivate the teacher trainees to reach their potential.

There is a challenge of teacher retention and recruitment to the teacher training facilities. It is in this light that policies that will help retain and attract recruitment of competent educators into the profession and in the various training facilities should be implemented and adopted. The policy should not only encourage incentives and support for teacher professional development but also enhance the educators learning and working conditions.

In as much as there are numerous challenges facing the Kenyan education system, especially in teacher education, efforts need to be put in place by the government and educational stakeholders to emphasise on the achievements as they address the challenges. Various policies need to be put in place for the current teachers to excel in positively imparting the lives of their students.

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