

Teacher Training and Management of Schools: An overview of practice in Kenyan Institutions

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the quality of teacher training on school management in Kenya. The term school management was used to denote the skills used by education managers to coordinate, direct and control the school programmes and to ensure that the goals of the school have been achieved. Among the objectives of this study was to determine the main characteristics of teacher education in Kenya with particular emphasis on the nature and location of any obstructions; offer suggestions for removing the blockages and recommend a number of projects to ensure uninterrupted motion along the education training and development in Kenya.

Introduction

Human beings, unlike bees and ants, are not born with social instincts. Men become 'human' by learning the culture that surrounds them. Every society has to educate its young. In simple societies, there is little formal education, although religious rituals and simple medicine are taught by deliberate instruction. In such societies the young acquire the culture of the society by observing and imitating their elders and the educational process is part of the wider socialization of the young.

In modern industrialized societies the educational institutions have become differentiated (differentiation means the extent to which one social activity has become separated from others) from other aspects of socialization. Hence, the child in modern society receives formal education at school complemented by informal socialization through the family and peer groups to which he belongs.

The education enterprise in Kenya is not under a single institution but spread within a number of Ministries and other government departments. Even within the Ministry itself, there are divisions, departments and specialized agencies which have not always co-ordinated their work very well

The teacher plays a very vital role in ensuring the success of his students during examinations. This success can be attributed to the teacher's preparedness which would enable him execute his duties expertly (Moyana, 1991). During their training, teachers are usually asked to employ professionalism in carrying out their duties (Martin, 2008). Proper school management and preparation for teaching are included in these aspects of professionalism. Teachers are therefore faced with situations in which more efficient and effective school management requires new and improved skills, knowledge and attitudes to cope with a wide range of new demands and changes. It is thus necessary to provide the school managers with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes through teacher training programmes.

The Concept of Teacher and Teaching

In olden times when the social life was very simple, the family provided the child with all the activities and experiences needed. Occupations were centered round home or village or the family, thus the local community served as a school for life. This led to the creation of a formal agency of education called school.

The term teacher and teaching has been used to refer to specialized activities in our societies. Teaching is referred to as the process of providing information, knowledge and skills to others. Teachers then refer to “the people who are involved in the process of providing information, knowledge or skills to other people” (Kombo, 2005).

Teaching is also defined as unique professional rationale and human activity in which one creatively uses one’s knowledge to promote learning and welfare of others.

In Kenya there are two categories of teachers, i.e., trained or untrained. Teachers also fall under three categories of age: old, middle aged and young teachers. Their behavior and mannerism would also be dictated by their age. Normally, older teachers tend to portray old fashioned manners and rigidity while younger teachers on the other end tend to be more liberal. This at time causes conflicts within the profession.

Historical Development of Teaching as a Profession

Traditionally, teachers enjoyed high status and prestige. In African traditional societies elders used informal teaching to pass over skills and knowledge that was essential to society. Greek sophists are believed to have been the earliest known teachers. They consisted of a group of well learned teachers who moved from place to place teaching for a fee for the services they provided. The Greeks begun to discourage charging of fees for teaching during the time of Socrates because they believed that fee payment would degrade or lower the value of education (Kombo, 2005).

The term ‘teacher’ became more pronounced when the Romans conquered Greece. The Romans introduced two groups of professional teachers. The first one was ‘literator,’ “a teacher in primary school and “ludi Magista” a teacher who taught in the Roman grammar schools. This period marked the beginning and appreciation of teaching as a profession (Kombo, 2005).

The need for modern teacher education in East Africa arose immediately western Christian education was established from the middle of the 19th century (Bogonko, 1992).

At independence, Kenya inherited an education system with an under developed teaching profession. It was lacking in both quality and quantity. Generally, there were few teachers and majority of them were untrained. The training colleges enrolled a small number of students and the majority of them were untrained and had very low academic qualifications.

With the increase in enrolment both in primary and secondary schools, the government had to consolidate several existing training centers. Early teacher training colleges or centers were adjuncts to secondary and intermediate schools (Bogonko, 1992). These have over the years developed into fully independent colleges at various levels of specialization under the administrative management of the Ministry of Education.

In the decade preceding independence in Kenya, the teaching profession was given better status and recognition by the formation and existence of two semi autonomous bodies whose responsibility was to see to the training needs and professional growth of teaching profession. In Kenya, teaching profession has steadily grown both in status and quality over years. By June 1960, there were 20, 360 teachers in schools in Kenya with over 4000 students in teacher training colleges. In January 1991, there were over 300,000 teachers in schools. In 1992 there were 8000 students training for the teaching profession at University level (Bogonko, 1992). Teaching has become a big industry in Kenya, employing many people throughout the country. However, with the large number of the educated joining the teaching profession, poor pay and lack of motivation, the teaching profession does not enjoy high status in the society as it did before.

Teacher education is carried out in colleges of education which have vocational as well as educative objectives. Student teachers should therefore be better informed, respond to the intellectual challenge with experiences that have enlarged their understanding and sympathy and, with some understanding of the community, its problems and prospects.

However current controversies concerning the balance of studies and methodologies used in teacher training colleges revolve around the relationship between theory and practice, between professional and personal education, relations in education and its related disciplines and in academic fields. Field experience or practical teaching is the aspect of teacher educational programmes most directly and specifically linked to existing schools practice. It is useful, as it gives the student teacher an opportunity to familiarize him / herself with conditions under which he / she will work as trained personnel.

Methodologies used in Teacher Training

Various methodologies are used in teacher training programmes. Some of these include: lecture, discussion, question and answer, role playing, dramatization, project approach and demonstration methods.

Issues in Teacher Education

Development policies in the education sector govern wastage or attrition, feminization of training and teacher mobility and transfers. Policy options deal with selection, recruitment and teacher preparation, promotion and incentives, posting and transfer of administrators. There is the high proportion of over age students, repeaters or late entrants' enrolled in schools. High rates of repetition and dropout impair the efficiency of the education system, increase the cost of education and cause wastage. Therefore teacher training colleges should aim at:

Producing experts: The Traditional characteristics of a good teacher will not be the only attribute needed but its importance should not be under-estimated. Teachers are asked not only to be knowledgeable and innovative but also highly disciplined, strongly motivated, dedicated and result oriented.

Pedagogical know-how: This characteristic continues to be central as well, although it should focus on transmission of a range of high level skills, including motivation to learn, creativity and co-operation rather than on information recall and performance in test.

Understanding of technology: This is a new key feature of professionalism in teaching, requiring an understanding of the pedagogical potential of technology and the ability to integrate it into teaching and management strategies. Teacher trainees need to become familiar with distance education and new technologies.

Organizational competence and collaboration: Professionalism in teaching can no longer be seen as an individual competence but must include the ability to function as part of the 'learning organization'.

Flexibility: Teachers have to accept that professional requirement may change several times in the course of their careers and must not interpret professionalism as an excuse to resist change. Teachers must be lifelong learners.

Mobility: A particular form of flexibility is mobility. This is capacity and willingness to move in and out of other careers and experiences that can enrich teaching ability.

Openness: This ability means being able to work with parents and other stake holders in ways that complement the teacher's professional role. Teachers' openness to work with other stake holders promotes a harmonious relationship that can result in better teaching and learning processes.

The Dimension of Education –Vs- Teacher Training Programmes

The purpose of education is to train human societies worldwide to become better managers and at the same time handle their roles in the community. Consequently, the quality of teacher training has great impact on dissemination of knowledge and in the day to day management of the school. Training must therefore be planned, developed and implemented to reflect the four dimensions of education, which are:

Cognitive Dimension

This dimension refers to the acquisition of the knowledge and understanding and is referred to by other authorities as the knowledge criterion of education (Edalia, 2002). In this category, education, particularly modern formal education has been associated with schooling. It involves the process of acquiring knowledge which, not only has a wide perspective and depth of understanding at its higher levels but that it must be worthwhile. Education must provide learning opportunities that result in the scope of understanding since it is a lifelong process. Therefore, teacher training colleges should strive towards development of competent managers and the emphasis should be on knowledge, skills and management.

Dialogical Dimension

This dimension highlights the methods of teaching and learning. It recognizes education as a human phenomenon where communication takes centre stage. Toward this end, the learner's intellectual capacities should be developed to the fullest, in an atmosphere of participatory

involvement of the learning process. Teaching and learning process should be conducted in dialogical approach where the teacher engages each learner in a discussion or debate. The same process should also be applied in school management.

Normative Dimension

This is concerned with the role of education in providing moral and ethical values in the lives of each individual person. The normative aspect of education is thus involved with those activities that are considered worthwhile in society. Education is therefore the process of socializing the young into accepted goals and values.

Creative Dimension

In the creative dimension of education, the human is viewed as a rational being endowed with intellectual abilities to be creative. This is an education that teaches adaptability and applies new knowledge to new circumstances.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Teacher training institutions have a responsibility to ensure that they produce quality teachers, because it is from these teachers that effective school managers will emerge from. We therefore recommend that:

1. Effective ways of improving management skills for school managers should be developed using research based approaches.
2. Teacher education institutions and teacher professional associations need to nurture professionalism among all stakeholders.
3. Involve students in the assessment of performance of school managers and teachers.

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