Reimagining Teacher education in Higher Institutions of Learning: A case for Ugandan Universities

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Abstract

In an attempt to ensure quality education, Uganda has made numerous adjustments in its curriculum in secondary schools. However, notwithstanding the above changes, curriculum implementation has been marred by the fact that little emphasis has been made to strengthen University teacher education. This study, therefore, sought to identify the gaps/weakness in the University teacher training programs for Secondary teachers with a view of suggesting recommendations for strengthening this sector to ensure successful curriculum reforms and improvement in the delivery of quality education. Seeking a deeper understanding to the issues concerning teacher education in Uganda from responses of the different categories of people interviewed, the study adopted a qualitative research approach. Primary data was collected from two public and two private Universities, the Ministry of Education and Sports and the National Council for Higher Education. It was established that there are no uniform policy guidelines followed by the Universities on teacher training, in addition to the absence of a unified curriculum for teacher education.

Key Words; Curriculum implementation, Quality Education, Teacher education,

Introduction

The Ugandan Education system that comprises of pre-primary education, primary education, post- primary education and the tertiary and University education puts the teacher at the centre of activities carried out therein. Teachers do provide lifesaving information and skills that help to provide meaningful life after school in addition, to bringing a sense of stability and hope in a community. As a result of the above Teacher education is key factor in achievement of Uganda's national vision of education. The Vision expresses Education as a basic tool for transformation of society, national integration and development. It is against this background that this study examines the policies relating to University teacher education in Uganda.

Historical Background

Formal education in Uganda was introduced by the Christian Missionaries in the 1880s who largely managed the education sector including the teaching. In 1925 however, the colonial government took over some degree of control in the sector. As the sector expanded so was the need to expand teacher education. The initial teacher training was largely for primary education carried out by the numerous Teacher training colleges spread throughout the country. To cater for secondary education teachers, some of the Teacher training colleges such as Muni established in 1947 and Kyambogo

established in 1948 were transformed into National teachers' colleges to train teachers handling the Ordinary secondary education section. Makerere established as a technical college in 1922 pioneered university teacher education in the country and continued to be a major player in the field. However, with the 1988 liberalization of provision of Higher Education Services in the country a number of

universities emerged to the total of 45 by 2019. Many of these universities are providing University teacher education for secondary teachers the focus of this study.

Conceptual background

The terms teacher training and teacher Education have been often used interchangeably. However, a critical examination of the two may reveal slightly different processes. Teacher training may be taken to refer to that activity which involves training staff to undertake relatively routine tasks. On the other hand, the term Teacher Education as adopted by this study, implies the preparing of staff for a professional role as a reflective practitioner. In essence Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require in the classroom, school, and wider community. It entails two major components, namely the Inservice teacher education and pre service education. Owing to the argument that teaching is considered as an art and science, where teacher acquires not only knowledge, but also skills that are called tricks of the trade. Teacher Education in this study is thus based on the theory that teachers are made, not born.

Theoretical background

Given that Pedagogy as an academic discipline that deals with how knowledge and skills are imparted in an educational context, in addition to considering the interactions that take place during learning; This study was guided by the pedagogical schools of Herbatianism. This theory was put forward by Johann Friderich Herbart (1776-1841). It highlights five components of pedagogy namely the *Preparation* that involves getting ready for the instructional process, the *Presentation*, that refers to the actual teaching and learning process, *Association,* a process of bringing ideas or events together such as in memory/ imaginations. Or a mental connection / relation between thoughts, feelings, ideas and-or sensations. The fourth component being the *Generalisation*, signifying either reasoning from detailed facts to general principles, or the formulation of general concepts from specific instances. The fifth being *Applications*, where what is learnt is put in to practice.

The above components are pertinent to teacher education and should be incorporated in teaching and learning processes. Teacher educators should employ relevant pedagogical strategies in their teaching, this so because, quality instruction is key to educational processes and it is dependent on pedagogy. Thus, given that pedagogical

strategies stem from pedagogical theories, the study examined the extent to which teacher educators were knowledgeable about the above theory.

Contextual background

The primary aim of teacher education in Uganda is first; to develop educational skills that are compatible with education policies and secondly to enable teachers to deliver these policies. There are five teacher education training types currently being undertaken in Uganda. These are the Pre-primary teacher education, Primary teacher education, Secondary teacher education, Vocational teachers training and Higher education programmes. The Pre- primary and primary Teacher Education are carried out in Primary Teachers Colleges. However, upgrading primary Teachers can also access both National teacher colleges and Universities. Secondary Teacher Education, vocational training and Higher education programmes are by National Teachers colleges and Universities. The emphasise of this study is on Higher education programmes that involve Teacher education at Universities.

In Ugandan education system, an education degree course at the university takes three years. University Teacher education is conducted at the respective faculties of

education following basic minimum standards as guided by the National Council of Education and as enshrined in the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA), 2001 (as amended). However, with regards Bachelor of education there are neither specific policies and guidelines nor set standards on how universities should handle teacher education. This partly explains the existence numerous names for education programmes leading to professional qualifications at Bachelor degree level across universities in the country. In addition to the above, to date, the 1992 Government White Paper on Education is largely still the key policy document that outlines several areas where the quality of teacher education should be emphasized, unfortunately, it lacks the rapidly changing dynamics of the 21st century secondary education. And neither does it articulate professional development of Teacher educators nor their induction. This is against the background where teachers and teacher educators are presently are under intense public scrutiny in the sight of the public than in any previous time in history.

Problem Investigated

Teacher education has and continues to be a subject of intense political and academic debate in many African countries, Uganda inclusive. It is seen as key to better qualified teachers who are able to educate pupils and students for the demands of the 21st century (OECD, 2005). Indeed, as noted “No country can be better than the quality of its education system and no education system can be better than the quality of its teachers.” (Kajubi 1989). In Uganda, the rapid expansion in secondary education from the 1980s up to date and the 1988 liberalization of provision of Higher Education Services in the country has inappropriately affected the quality of Teacher Education. The drastic growth of secondary schools led the increased demand for teachers which

opportunity was exploited by Universities leading to mass training of secondary education teachers. Unfortunately, policies that govern the teacher education and management at the university level have not been clearly articulated and disseminated. As a consequence of the above, most teacher educators are not conversant with the policies and guidelines regarding and ensuring the quality of the teacher being produced. Incidentally, policy makers have not given much attention to providing guidelines for teacher education. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to identify the weaknesses in the current teacher education policy guidelines and recommend ways of how this could be addressed as a mechanism of improving the quality of teacher education.

Research Objective

The study sought to;

1. Examine the existing policy guidelines with regards to teacher education in Uganda;
2. Identify the gaps/ weakness in University teacher education policies/programs in Uganda

Research Questions

What are the key features in current policy guidelines for teacher education in Uganda?
What are the gaps in University teacher education policies/programs in Uganda?

Literature Review

In their examination of the nature of teacher education in Uganda, Ngobi, Otaala, Maani, and Bakaira, G noted that for the existence of quality teacher education, is dependent on policy guidelines in relation to the actual contact hours between Teacher educators and teacher trainees, students 'lecture attends, the amount of content covered and the pedagogy used by teacher educators. In this same line of

argument Hanushek, (2003); Barber & Mourshed, (2007); Varga, (2007), too do agree that although a number of factors affect the quality of education in schools, many of these stems from policy inadequacy. These observations are pertinent issues that inspired this study to dig deeper into establishing the nature teacher education policies that exist in Uganda in relation to provision of quality education.

The OECD (2005) report based on an analysis of teacher training policies in 25 countries cogently comes to the conclusion that teacher quality is the most important factor in an education system to which this study concurs. Significant to point out that the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) Handbook on teacher training policies (2010) highlights the importance of teachers in the education system. It states that all Uganda's education systems must be manned by trained teachers/instructors/tutors. However, the 2008 Education Act which is the major legal instrument that guides the education sector does not handle university teacher education. The study therefore

wanted to establish whether there are other policies that specifically handle university teacher education in the country.

Rawal (2103), points out that although numerous studies show that teachers are the strongest school level predictor of student learning; he urges that for this to happen the quality of the teacher must be put into consideration. This study dug deep into the above assertion with a view of establishing the extent to which the current policies do enforce the quality of training offered to university teacher trainees. With regards to the weakness in the existing policies, the remarks by Nampijja (2019), that the autonomous nature NCHE grants universities in the running of academic programs as enshrined in Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA), 2001 (as amended) comprises the quality of education being offered in universities was further examined in the study.

In addition, to concurring with Barber & Mourshed, (2007) that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers"; the study was inspired by the desire to establish the weakness in the polices currently in use that are intended to guarantee quality teacher education in Ugandan Universities. The study made further analysis on observations of Fernandeze, Hauge and Moller (2000) supported by Huberman (1993) that there is limited research in the field of Teacher Education and that policy markers do pay less attention to teacher education.

Research methodology

Seeking a deeper understanding of the issues concerning teacher education in Uganda, the study adopted a qualitative research approach from responses of the different categories of people interviewed. Creswell (2014), points out that a qualitative research approach is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals in a group ascribe to a social or human pattern. The approach focuses on an individual meaning and importance of rendering the complexity of the situation. The study started with a desk-review of literature on teacher education in Uganda with particular reference to policies relating to teacher education.

A purposive sampling procedure was utilised in which two public Universities of similar standards (Makerere and Kyambogo universities) and two private universities (Ndejje and Muteesa I Royal Universities) were identified. Purposive sampling was used because of the researcher needed to corollate data from the two oldest public universities in the country with the recently established private ones; with the intention of wishing to establish whether there is uniformity in teacher education among Public and Private Universities.

Data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, Open-ended questionnaires, lecture room observation and document analysis (Policy guidelines, the education Act and The University and Other Tertiary Institutions Act), from the

Ministry of Education and Sports, National Council for Higher Education and the Parliament of Uganda.

The sample of 5 interviewees from respective universities was randomly selected using nonprobability sampling – based on researcher's choice of accessibility and availability of respondents but who were quiet representative from schools/faculties of education. Responses were also received from face-to-face interviews of 20 key informants. These were officials from the Department of Teacher/ Tutor education and Training in the Ministry of Education and Sports as well as from the National Council for Higher Education, a statutory body in charge of higher education in Uganda.

Content from responses from interviews and lecture room observations were analysed using the narrative analysis. In order to improve on accuracy credibility and validity of the research, respondent validation was employed using the interview process. Under this technique initial findings of the study were summarised to the interviewees and later asked to comment and make a critical analysis of the findings.

FINDINGS

With regards to objective 1 of examining the existing policy guidelines with regards to teacher education in Uganda;

There are a number of policies enshrined in various Acts of Parliament that guide the education system in Uganda in general and teacher education in particular. These include; The Government white paper on Education (1992), The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995, The University and other tertiary Institutions Act (2001) as amended, The Education Service Act (2002) and The Education (Preprimary, Primary, Post-primary) Act 2008.

In addition, to the general guidelines, The Education (pre-primary primary and post-primary) Act 2008 singles out the issue of promotion of quality control of education and training in the country. Part v section 11 to 23 of the Act states that "No person shall teach in any public or private school of any description unless he or she is registered as a teacher or licensed to teach under this Act. While Sec 13 subsection (1) and (2) provides guidance on persons entitled to be registered which of course includes academic qualifications. The inclusion of academic qualifications was intended to provide guidelines on the quality of the qualifications a teacher should possess.

The MOE&S established the Department of Instructor and Tutor training that is mandated to facilitating recruitment of tutors, instructors, and Lectures with relevant experience, knowledge and skills, those that are self-driven, committed and hardworking.(Handbook on teacher instructor 2010) This measure was to ensure that the MOE&S takes over the responsibility for the training of teachers for primary schools, teachers for secondary schools, tutors for primary teachers' colleges, tutors for health training institutions, instructors for technical training institutions, and lecturers for the specialized training institutions including Colleges of Commerce,

Technical Colleges, Agricultural Colleges and National Teachers Colleges responsible for producing teachers in the lower secondary.

It was further established the training of teachers for Secondary education is done at two levels i.e., at the National Teacher Training Colleges (NTCs) and at the university level.[1] The pre-service programme in NTCs consists of two years of training in content and pedagogy, with two school practice periods of 8 weeks each. The University Teacher education is three years with two school practice periods 6 weeks each. The control of the NTCs fall directly under MOE&S while the Universities are supervised by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE). This in essence means that NCHE is mandated under Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act (UOTIA), 2001 (as amended) is to establish and maintain minimum standards for courses of study. This is to help in ensuring that what is taught in Ugandan universities, produces graduate competences that are comparable.

With regards to objective 2 of Identifying the gaps/ weakness in University teacher education policies/programs in Uganda; the following were established;

With regard to guidance on the curriculum, the MOE&S has had no meaningful engagements with both public and private universities in as far as teacher education is concerned. For instance, though, the department of Teacher Education and Training under the MOE&S is mandated under policy to liaise with Universities both public and private in respect of their teacher /instructor /tutor development programs, the policy does not give the department direct control over what takes place in the respective schools/faculties of education. Thus, as a consequence stemming from policy inadequacy, it was established from respondents that the department of Teacher Education and Training in the period under study for example, neither held workshops nor carried out inspections in their respective faculties. This definitely has negative bearing towards the quality of teacher.

The study found a discrepancy in the teacher training policies. For example, whereas The Education (Pre-primary, primary and Post primary)

[1] The teachers from the NTCs hold diplomas and teach only the lower secondary. The teachers trained at the university hold bachelor's degree and teacher both levels of the secondary education.

Act, 2008 aims at giving full effect to education policy of government functions and services by government; And mandates Government to promote quality control of education and training; it was established that whereas all NTCs follow a nationally approved curriculum under the MOE&S for quality control purposes, the Universities that are under NCHE mandated by UOTIA, 2001 (as amended) do run their individual curriculum. It was reported in the discussions that NCHE holds institutional autonomy and academic freedom for Universities as sacrosanct. It's standards only prescribe the body of knowledge below which Universities must not teach but leave the University with the freedom to design their courses based on the minimum standards. The Universities are free to add to these minimum course contents to meet their vision, mission, and individual uniqueness. It is in here that lies the weakness that comprises quality as each University eventually handles its own curriculum.

It is was also found out that whereas the MOE&S under Handbook on Teacher/Instructor/Tutor Education and Training Policies (2010) has well laid down guidelines upon which it directly monitors the quality teachers in the lower secondary this lacks with University teacher education. The MOE&S ensures that competent tutors are produced in the NTCs through well set out curriculum and guidelines, this unfortunately lacks with regards to University lectures that do handle teacher trainees. Such an anomaly has given room for lack of standardized

products in terms of teachers being passed out. In addition, closely related to the above, at the university level there are no pedagogical guidelines given as the case is with the NTCs.

It was further established that in all the existing policies that deal with Teacher Education in the country, for example The Education (Pre-primary, primary and Post primary) Act, 2008 and Handbook on Teacher/Instructor/Tutor Education and Training Policies; there is none that prescribes a uniform type of qualification leading to the award of a bachelor's degree in professional qualification in education in terms of nomenclature. As a consequence, different universities use different names interchangeably to refer to the same qualification such as; Bachelor of Arts with Education, Bachelor of Arts Education, Bachelor of Education, Bachelor Education with ICT, Bachelor of Education (secondary), Bachelor Vocational studies with education and so on. This therefore makes it difficult for both the harmonization of professional qualification in education and production of teachers whose qualifications are mutually recognizable and comparable. This thus compromises the quality of

teacher education owing to the fact that the crux of the entire process of teacher education lies in its curriculum, design structure and organization. The nomenclature definitely has a bearing on how the curriculum and design structure will be organized.

Finally, one of the fundamental lacunas identified in the existing policies such as The Education (Pre-primary, primary and Post primary) Act, 2008 and Handbook on Teacher/Instructor/Tutor Education and Training Policies and UOTIA, 2001 (as amended) was the failure to put in place the idea of professionalisation of university teacher educators and a framework for their continuous professional development. As a result, the qualification of university lecturers to handle student teachers is largely based on academic credentials other than professionalism in the education service. This has bearing on the quality of teacher trainees that come out of universities if not handled by individuals guided by professional standards. Significant to note like any other educational intervention; if quality education standards are to be achieved it would be easier to reshape individuals' attitudes towards development of quality education through professional commitments.

Conclusion

Although Teaching is one of the oldest and respected profession in the world however, the role, function, and competence of the teacher has kept on changing due to both the changing times and community needs. Consequently, as a way of ensuring quality teacher education in the country, these changes do also necessitate changes in the way teacher education should be conducted in Ugandan Universities. The best way to do this will be a critical examination of the existing teacher education policy guidelines with a view of addressing weakness therein.

Recommendations

As part of the minimum standards, NCHE working in conjunction with the Department of Teacher Education and Training, should in addition to enhancing the development and management of teachers, provide a framework to standardize the teaching across all universities. Issues of a uniform curriculum that embodies pedagogies and epistemologies that exemplifies the teaching profession should all be included.

To not interfere with the autonomous nature of Universities, the study recommends NCHE to mainstream cross-cutting issues in Teacher Education at Universities as

one of the mechanisms of standardization. This should be alongside a similar pedagogical approach.

The MOE&S should endeavour to disseminate the policies and policy guidelines that have been initiated to be implemented to all faculties/ schools of education in the

Ugandan Universities. This will clearly enable the adaptation of well-articulated and disseminated policies that govern teacher training and management in the country.

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