

CURRENT TRENDS IN PROFESSIONAL PREPARATIONS

Dr. Pardeep Gautam

Assistant Professor, G.D. College of Education, Bhuna-125111(Fatehabad)

Abstract

Teacher Educators play a key role in Teacher Education and Education in general. Worldwide, Little is known about preparation and professional development of teacher educators. This paper critically examined teacher educators' preparation and professional development in the context of educational reforms and mushrooming of teacher education institutions. The document review method was used to analyze and review relevant literature. The analysis of findings indicates that the preparation of teacher educators receives considerable attention and focus in undergraduate programmes with little attention in postgraduate programmes. The professional development of teacher educators is limited and characterized by few professional development activities. It is suggested that the preparation of teacher educators should be well structured and enhanced with effective professional development of teacher educators are also provided.

Keywords: Teacher educators; preparation and professional development; teacher education programmes.

Introduction:

The teacher educator has been identified as the most influencing factor in the preparation of high quality teachers; robinson & Macmillan, 2006). However, little attention has been paid to teacher educator research). Little is known about teacher educators and their professional development: how they are trained and educated and what makes a good teacher educator. How best to prepare good teacher educators has remained a challenge. Worldwide, There are varied interests on teacher preparation with very little interests on teacher educator's preparation. Although, recently, there has been an increased research interest on teacher educators, it still remains a relatively new area of research concern hence few literatures exist. Similar to the situation in other countries, the profession of teacher educators has received.

Little attention in research and educational literatures reports that the current understanding about teacher educators is much informed by research on western developed countries and emerging research in Asian Countries. Generally, research on teacher education and teachers educators in particular is very low. This review paper attempts to address such research and fill in the literature gap.

Roles and knowledge base of Teacher educators Being at the universities and colleges, teacher educators like other academic staff are required to teach and conduct research as well as undertake consultancy. However, teacher educators seem to have multiple roles based on their tasks of educating teachers. Lunenberg et al, (2014) identified about six teacher educator's roles which are; teacher of teachers, researcher, coach, curriculum developer, gate keeper and broker.

What constitutes the knowledge base of teacher educators has recently attracted attention among researchers of teacher education and teacher educators in particular (ibid.) owing to the fact that how teacher educators are educated for their roles is not well know with exception of is real where teacher educators are formally educators. In an attempt to define the knowledge base of teaching, shulman (1987), p.8) suggested seven categories of teacher's knowledge which include " Content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values, and their philosophical grounds". He further suggested that pedagogical content knowledge is the most important category of teachers' knowledge. Since these categories of knowledge are expected to be developed by student teachers during their teacher education course, they also apply to teacher educators who are primarily responsible to make these categories of knowledge explicitly and accessible to student teachers. This has been described as the pedagogy of teacher of education (Field, 2012; loughran, 2006). Field (2012) suggests that teacher educators especially the novice ones need to develop the understanding of pedagogy of teacher education in order to excel in their roles.

Professional Development of Teacher Educators:

Professional development refers to formal and informal increase in knowledge and skills. It is regarded as the key to professional practice in all professions. Villegas-Reimers (2003) contends that the professional development of teacher educators is not popular as compared to teacher professional development of teacher educators is not popular as compared to teacher professional development. Studies have indicated that teacher professional development is one of the influencing factors in students learning and achievement (Darling-hammond, 2000; villegas Reimers, 2003) Similarly, the professional development of teacher educators is a critical factor for preparation of quality teachers (Snoek et al, 2010, Robinos & Macmillan, 2006). Chambulila (2013) defines teacher educators professional development as " formal academic and professional advancement courses aiming at equipping educators with relevant and up to date knowledge and competencies essential of quality enhancement" (p.51). Smith 2010 defines professional development as an internal process in which professionals engage with a formal or academic and professional advancement courses aiming at equipping educators with relevant and up to date knowledge and competencies essential for quality enhancement" (P.51.) Smith 2010 defines

professional development as an “internal process in which professionals engage within a formal or informal framework. Rooted in critical analysis of professional practice” (p.681). According to smith (2010) the purpose of teacher educator professional development is four fold; improving teacher education, meeting external standards, internal drive to learn and improve and strengthening the professional status within higher education” describes various routes to professional development of teacher educators with range from formal to less formal, individual to whole staff development. These include higher academic degrees, in service workshops, and seminars, staff development with the institution and peer tutoring. Kennedy (2005) provides a framework for analyzing models of continuing professional development which consists of nice models of professional development. The models include; training, award bearing, deficit, cascade, standard based, coaching mentoring, community of practice, action research and transformative model (pp.236-237). Although kennedy’s models are meant for teachers of lower levels of education particularly primary and secondary education teachers, some of the models are relevant to teacher educators since teacher educators are also teachers with more advanced roles such as research scholarship and consultancy.

Methodology:

This was a review study about teacher educator’s preparation and professional development in the context of educational reforms and mushrooming of teacher education institutions. This was linked to the current international understanding about the emerging profession of teacher educators. All the obtained literatures were summarized into main points. This allowed the researchers to extract and incorporate key information about preparation and professional development of teacher educators into this paper. The examples drawn in this review study reflect the context of public teacher education institutions especially the university of Dares Salaam, the open University of Tanzania and the teacher’s colleges. The selection of these institutions as cases was based on their influential and leading role in provision of teacher education in Tanzania. The roles and characteristics of teacher educators were used to explain suggested by Smith (2003) and Kennedy (2005) were used to analyze professional development of teacher educators in Tanzania.

Discussion:

This part presents the findings and discussion of the study according the order of research objectives.

Preparation of Teacher Educators.

This part reviews the preparation of college and university teacher educators. The focus is in on how they are educated before assuming their roles. College teacher educators are normally

educated in universities which provide teacher education programmes. According to the Education and Training Policy, a bachelor's degree is the minimum qualification for college teacher educators. Undergraduate programmes related to education at the University of Dares Salaam include Bachelor of Education (Which has various specializations), bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science with Education (B.A. B.Ed. and B.Sc. B.Ed.). The Bachelor of Education in Science (B.Ed. Science) Were designed for preparing teacher educators to work in teachers' colleges while the other two programmes for preparing secondary school teachers.

Professional Development of Teacher Educators. Teacher educators professional development activities range from formal to informal activities. The professional development to teacher educators in has not been well formalized since the profession of teacher educators is characterized by low qualifications as some of them lack the basic qualification (MoEVT, 2008), Lack of professional development. Low professional status and development of teacher educators is caused by under qualified personnel and ineffective professional development strategies. Lack of professional development is also a common problem to primary and secondary school teachers (Mulkeen, 2010; Komba & Nkumbi, 2008). Building from the works of Smith (2003) and Kennedy (2005) this part describe the professional development of teacher educators (both college and university teacher educators) in Tanzania based on higher degrees, research activities, workshops and seminars as well as mentoring.

Conclusion:

This review study has reported the current status and practices of both preparation and professional development of teacher educators form public teacher education institutions in Tanzania, there exist a considerable number of private teacher colleges and universities that provide teacher education. Similarly little is known about preparation and professional development of teacher educators working in private teacher education institutions. It is evident that various initiatives are needed to improve the quality of teacher educators in Tanzania in order to enhance the quality of teacher education and education in general. The currently implemented educational reforms which emphasize learner-centered and competence-based education necessitate substantial changes in both preparation and professional development of teacher educators and teacher education at large.

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