EMERGING TRENDS IN TEACHER’S EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Akorode, Serifat F. Ph.D
Institute of Education,
University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Abstract

Teachers’ education courses are in transition phase because of the rapid change in technology and students’ changing values. A substantial effort is needed to understand the underlying dynamics of teaching and learning principles of students of the recent time. Teacher’s education courses must therefore incorporate the learning and teaching psychology of students and teachers respectively. Such courses should also incorporate the developmental stages of pre-service teachers to enhance their learning. They should be educated in supportive and conducive environment in which they expect to educate and groom young students. Such courses should target to develop social consciousness and reform mindset among perspective teachers. Pre-service teachers should be able to teach confidently in their domain by using new pedagogical approaches that are appropriate to their specific students requirements and also commensurate with the capabilities of students. They should be conversant with the learning stages of their students and also be critical, compassionate and socially engaged knowledge imparter who can contribute in the process of teaching improvement and social change (Cochran-Smith, 2000 cited in Arvind and Shahid 2013).

INTRODUCTION

Teacher’s education is in the transition phase because of the rapid change in technology and student’s changing values. A substantial effort is needed to understand the underlying dynamics of teaching and learning principles of students of the recent time. Teacher’s education courses must therefore incorporate the learning and teaching psychology of students and teachers respectively. However, teachers’ education system is facing problem of inaptness and irrelevance. There is a visible gap between how students live and how they learn. Hence, the concept of technological interface is missing in teachers’ education in most part of the world. The drive to bring synergy between technology and teachers’ education and enhance human capacity building is the main motive for this paper. It therefore made a rigorous review of the various trends in teachers’ education in order to ensure that all prospective pre-service teachers have equal access to the new technology regardless of their economic background. This is tailored towards bridging the gap between modern teaching methodologies and existing traditional teaching methodology. The traditions of American teacher education reforms were reviewed and a new model of teachers’ education programme known as ‘A proactive teacher’s training framework was adopted and critiqued. It was concluded that a proper model needs to be sought out and conceptualized. It must have the right amalgamation of technology and tradition based on regional requirements. This is because most part of the developing country is not uniformly developed in terms of educational infrastructure and modern teaching aids. So adopting a complete developed country teacher’s education model in developing countries may not be successful. It is recommended that developing countries should embrace the new technological model in order to meet-up with the global standards.

Keywords: teachers’ education, technology, new model, 21st century, developing countries

Once teachers have a thorough understanding of the teaching content, they would never lose that expertise. So knowledge about the subject matter and feeling comfortable in delivery are equally important for good teachers (Adigun 2011). Sometime they try to link knowledge in varieties of different way while disseminating the information to students while engaging them in effective learning. Today we have competent teachers who have a whole new set of resources and techniques that evolve around the use of technology. Technological aid should not be seen as separate tool in learning rather it should be taken as an integral part in effective pedagogical process. It is therefore pertinent that Universities and other technical institution should prepare teachers for future generation students. They need to be given opportunities to teach in modern classroom because that would give them a sense of practical experience related to the teaching theories to handle the responsibility of quality teaching.

The other concept is mentoring where teachers are groomed and mentored by qualified and experienced teachers in their field of specialization. That means the knowledge base that grows overtime can be shared between new comers and experts. The mentors could be colleagues, researchers, retired teachers or senior teachers from reputed university. They could also be people from industry who are developing new ideas and products. This concept can take the teaching level beyond expectations. But such concept has its practical limitation in the context of real classroom teaching, (Arvind and Shahid 2013).

These days teacher’s education system is facing problem of inaptness and irrelevance. There is a visible gap between how students live and how they learn. Schools and colleges have struggled to keep the pace with the rate of change in students’ lives inside and outside the educational institution. Students and scholars spend their adult lives in multitasking, multifaceted, technological-driven, diverse and vibrant world. But, the very same concept of technological interface is missing in teacher’s
education in most part of the world. It must be ensured that all such prospective pre-service teachers have equal access to this new technology regardless of their economic background (Cochran & Fries, 2001). Then the gap between modern teaching methodology and existing traditional teaching methodology may be bridged to certain extent.

Zeichner and Laston (1990) have suggested that throughout the twentieth century, there were four clear traditions of American teacher education reforms such as:

1. Academic Tradition
2. Social Efficiency
3. Developmentalist tradition
4. Social Reconstruction tradition

The Academic Tradition: Is concerned with the mastery of subject matter because it is considered to be the most important goals in educating teachers (Zeichner and Laston, 1990). Teachers should not only be educated in their subject matter at university, but should learn how to teach in the company of more-experienced teachers. This approach to pre-service teacher education would attract academically talented students in teaching profession. It will also serve as a platform for practical experience in co-tutoring and mentoring for future teachers.

The Social Efficiency Tradition
This tradition examined the nature of teacher’s work in order to provide basis for studying teaching. Skills and knowledge are set before hand along with the criteria to measure teaching proficiency. Teachers are viewed as an effective instructor after exhibiting such proficiency in pedagogy. The focus here is on teaching methodology. Hence, it measures teachers’ proficiency or competency in terms of the skills exhibited in the use if diversified methodologies. This Competency/Performance Based Teacher Education (C/PBTE) trend became well accepted in teaching education in USA and worldwide, although it received criticism on behavioural aspects (Zeichner and Laston, 1990). Since 1990, this approach has become increasingly evident in teaching education reforms (Cochran-Smith and Fries, 2001).

The Developmentalist Tradition
It emphasized that the natural development of the learner provides the basics for determining what should be taught to pupils in the school and their teachers (Zeichner and Laston, 1990, P.9). The developmentalist tradition’s focus is the characteristics of the learners. Hence, the learners age, intelligent quotient, exposure, etc should be ascertained first, before the decision of what to teach. Three metaphors can be used to describe its manifestation in the twentieth century.

It proposed teachers as following:
(1) The teacher as naturalist
(2) The teacher as artist
(3) The teacher as researcher

The Social Reconstructionist Tradition
It focused on two crucial elements such as schooling and teacher education for more equal and empowered society (Zeichner and Laston, 1990). This tradition encourages prospective teachers to seriously look at the ongoing social and political orders that are related with education. This tradition is much more concerned with the educational policies and social values of a particular country. This should therefore be taken cognizance of in deciding the kind of education to give to would be teachers.

A new teacher’s education concept has evolved over past few years in the United States of America, it emphasized that formal programmes of classroom preparation have generally failed to represent the knowledge, skills and disposition needed for the development of digitally literate students and Netizens. This tradition would be most suitable for the developing countries since they have also embraced ICT and most students are now internet friendly.

The above conceptualizations gives an indication that not one single tradition is better to devise a sound framework for teacher’s education programme. But, taking the social reconstructionist tradition as a base, a new model could be proposed.

The change brought by technological, economic and cultural forces in the early twenty-first century was very fast. These changes were mostly pronounced in the developed world. But their effect was also apparent in the developing world. Societies across the world were rapidly changing in fundamental ways, especially with regard to the availability and easy way to access digital information and communication technologies. However, teachers and their predominant classroom practices in the developing world rather remained traditional in this era of rapid change. It was content focused, teacher directed and didactic instruction focused on content delivery and reproducing the same remained the rule of the pedagogy.

Also, educational curriculums at all levels were very narrowly defined for students in many developing countries in the era of the information technology. Formal education experiences such as high test scores were viewed primarily as instrumental to achieving career goals. Higher grades and good marks in exams were the only criteria to judge student’s competencies. Preparing students for their complex and increasingly technological futures were probably never been taught in any teaching methodology or policy. Hence, education institutions still continued to prepare students for a future in which their teachers and administrators were familiar and well conversant.

Since teachers tend to teach as they were taught, the instructional workforces were reasonably not prepared to meet the increasingly digital demands of the twenty-first century knowledge landscape. Such workforces were not able to meet the digital skill expectations of prospective employers and students as well. Digital literacy embodies the abilities to appropriately access, synthesize and utilize both analog and digital information sources to achieve a defined teaching purpose. Technology usage is where a teacher and learner is equipped with a portable, wireless electronic device capable of accessing internet content
and enabling a wide range of digital collaboration methods across different place is the future of education. Younger generations raised in this ocean of digital information are familiar with the intricacies of digital world. Therefore, a key question need to be addressed by teacher’s education programme such as how teachers learn and refine knowledge, skills and proficiency to teach such digital literate audience.

Technology has revolutionized every industry and each component of our culture and society. Now, it is revolutionizing the teacher’s education in all parts of the world. It is therefore important that teachers can be prepared not only to use today’s technology but should be able to handle systematically and analytically about what technology is going to become and evolve afterwards. Today’s technology need to be integrated from the tomorrow’s technology to achieve the best synergy in quality pedagogy. Educators must be well prepared to work on with such future development.

To prepare more teachers to teach in underdeveloped and developed region, a professional collaboration between universities and schools should be created. Teacher’s education should be supported by updated curriculum, novel technological aids and modern teaching methodologies. Prospective teachers should be given opportunity to review case studies and examples of teachers who really can’t control a classroom as well as teachers who can effectively control a classroom and prepare instruction lessons more valuable.

In order to acquire and refine the skills needed for digital literacy, teachers of all generations need to engage in active production and consumption of multimedia content. The availability of digital curriculum for twenty-first centuries learners would be having a dramatic impact on the way teachers and educators prepare tomorrow’s classroom leaders.

A New Model for the 21st Century
A proper model needs to be sought out and conceptualized. It must have the right amalgamation of technology and tradition based on regional requirement. This is because most part of the developing country is not uniformly developed in terms of educational infrastructure such as availability of good teaching professional and modern teaching aids. So, adopting a complete developed country (US, UK and Australia) teacher’s education model in developing countries may not be successful.

Figure 1: A proactive teacher’s training framework proposed by Arvind and Shahid 2013.

In the proactive teacher’s training framework, a modern and future oriented teaching is proposed. Here a pool of qualified teaching professionals will be engaged. They will make use of new teaching methodologies and updated curriculum that are policy driven. All the efforts will be digital and ICT driven and used to nurture the personality and performance level of students, in order to meet the global standard.

However, in order to meet with the 21st century technology, the focus should be on more paths of communication between the teacher and students in our universities.

Figure 2 below will give us a more comprehensive mode of communication required in the 21st century.

Figure 2: Emerging Trends: More Paths of Communication
Source: Cox, M.D (1995)

The emerging trend now shows many new two-way paths connecting not only teacher and student, but also teacher and teacher and student and student (Figure 2). For
example, the classroom assessment techniques can inform teachers and students immediately of expectations and realities about learning before traditional assessment-exams on papers takes place (Angelo & Cross 1993 cited in Cox 1995). Also student portfolios can give the teacher a measure of improvement over time and provide opportunities for students to analyze their own learning (Murnane 1993 cited in Cox 1995). Finally, the faculty colleague is accepted increasingly as collaborator and mentor (Austin and Baldwin, 1991).

CONCLUSION
In adopting these emerging trends, first, faculty needs to learn about the teaching approaches that are emerging. Second, they should analyze critically the value and appropriateness of these trends with respect to their discipline, courses, students, teaching styles and classroom experiences. Finally, each individual must place emerging trends in context and balance with successful approaches that have worked over the years. Blending these approaches bit by bit will result in a recipe whose gourmet creation will wet the appetites of students. Teaching and learning are complex and as teachers, we must sample the many flavours- old and new and determine the ingredients and mixtures that best enhance learning (Cox 1995). Mentoring should be made compulsory for teachers in training.

REFERENCES


Zakariya, 2012; Medley, 1977; Resenshine, 1978; Brophy, 1979), but they represent the “break-through in the science of teacher behavior.