

Teacher Education Systems in Africa in the Digital Era



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Teacher Education Systems in Africa in the Digital Era

Edited by
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and
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Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DAKAR

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BP 3304 Dakar, 18524, Senegal
Website: www.codesria.org

ISBN: 978-2-86978-608-0

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Typesetting: Daouda Thiam
Cover Design: Ibrahima Fofana
Distributed in Africa by CODESRIA
Distributed elsewhere by African Books Collective, Oxford, UK
Website: www.africanbookscollective.com

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CODESRIA would like to express its gratitude to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Danish Agency for International Development (DANIDA), the French Ministry of Cooperation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Open Society Foundations (OSFs), Trust Africa, UNESCO, UN Women, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the Government of Senegal for supporting its research, training and publication programmes.

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Preface

What ends should teacher education serve? What is the role of teachers in the effort to realise those ends? What are the major challenges facing African society in the digital age and how can teacher education be structured to meet those challenges? These are some of the recurring questions in African education today. To argue that teacher education is strategic or important in any society is, indeed, to say the obvious. But that cannot be the end of the argument as any national educational policy, as well as its implementation in any education system, is pivoted by the quality of teachers and teacher education within that system. It is the product of teachers and the education system that dictates the economy of any nation. Models and frames of teachers' professional development, school management board, education for all and even the millennium development goals revolve around the frames of teacher education. Several issues on teacher education exist in literature but recurring is the word 'quality' within the concept of indigenous knowledge, knowledge explosion and knowledge economy.

Again, many nations have no substantive baseline data on their teacher education system, especially those that inform practices on the job. Establishing teacher education institutions for excellence can be the beginning of quality for many other institutions, and education in general. However, more is demanded of the teacher educator in the digital age as obsolescence seems to glamour the existing classrooms. To survive in a globalized world, every teacher needs some basic survival skills, which include the ability to reason, the ability to readjust one's own terms to cultural flux and the ability to control and spend one's uniqueness while participating harmoniously in the new modernity.

It is also important to note that a functional teacher education in Africa can help its citizens explore the networking of the world as a global village. This is achievable through a systematic mobilization of our national resources and a modernized cadre of scientific and technological manpower. Teacher education therefore needs to equip our teachers at all levels to be capable of self-learning. This will make them not only consumers of information but also creators, originators and inventors of information. The belief is that the more we are able to reflect on prescribed goals, the more we are not likely to be exploited,

manipulated economically, socially and even culturally. Teacher education at this level serves as a link between the unpredictable world in which man lives and the tools to cope with the numerous challenges created by the digital age, otherwise known as globalization.

However, it can be explained that the extraordinary changes brought about by ICT in all facets of human endeavour make it imperative that similar changes be brought into the school system, and the first place to start this revolution is the teacher education institutions. Teacher trainees need to be taught how to take advantage of the dynamism of the digital age, to demonstrate and demystify some difficult-to-understand concepts, theories and principles. This will make the classroom livelier, with learners being more creative and actively engaged in effective learning.

Given the laudable impact of ICT on teaching and learning, it becomes necessary that both teachers in training and those in-service become knowledgeable about the use of relevant digital skills to support their teaching. No teacher can survive this modern trend without at least a foundational or elementary knowledge of ICT. The teachers will become unproductive and obsolete if they are not rich in ICT knowledge. They may find it difficult to access information or teach current findings in their subject areas. There is therefore the need for teachers to be exposed to basic training on the use of ICT in pedagogy.

It should be emphasized, however, that the benefit of using ICT to students is greatly dependent on the skill of the teacher and the teacher's attitude to the introduction of such skills in teaching. Hence, this book is entitled *Teacher Education Systems in Africa in the Digital Era*. It is a culmination of theories and practices for the benefit of teachers in the classrooms, teacher trainers, policy makers, funding agencies and other stakeholders. Although the ideas expressed in each of the chapters are entirely those of the authors, the issues and depth of analyses are quite impressive. Overall, the common stand that cuts across the chapters seems to be that teacher education in Africa needs to be refocused to adequately face the challenges of digital age, and that teachers need strategic digital skills to make teaching and learning in African classrooms meet the demand of the new age.