

TEACHER EDUCATORS IN THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO CONTEXT: Perspectives From the Field

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Quality education is sought after by all countries and much effort is expended to ensure the preparation of quality teachers. There is, however, another component of the education loop which is often overlooked and that is the teacher educator - the teacher of teachers. A commonly held belief is that to ensure quality education, there is need for quality teachers and, as such, quality teacher educators become a critical element. Yet, in Trinidad and Tobago, little is known about teacher educators. This study, therefore, seeks to explore their work, roles, responsibilities, and contribution in the sphere of teacher education. Semi-structured interviews, an open-ended questionnaire and document analysis were employed to gain insights into the nature of their work as it is perceived in the Trinidad and Tobago context. Preliminary findings revealed that teacher educators perceived their work to be multi-dimensional and multi-faceted and that they see themselves as a powerful influence in the sphere of education. Yet, in their view, teacher education is a job for which there is little preparation and professional development is, in the main, unstructured, and self-directed.

Background/Introduction

Trinidad and Tobago has a rich history of teacher education, which began in the 1930s, with a focus on teacher education at the primary level. This history incorporates the recruitment of teachers from England and the Normal Schools in Jamaica and Antigua, the introduction of a teacher-pupil system and the establishment of teacher training colleges (Quamina-Aiyejina et al., 2001). In 2005, the School for Studies in Learning, Cognition and Education, now called the Centre for Education Programmes, was established at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (Steinbach, 2012). It replaced the teacher training colleges and has responsibility for teacher education, not only at the primary level but also in the area of the early childhood, secondary and special education. Teacher education for teachers at the secondary level began in the 1970s at the School of Education, The University of the West Indies, the main Higher Education (HE) institution in the country (Ali et al., 2012). At this institution, teacher education was also provided in the early childhood, primary and special education areas (Quamina-Aiyejina et al., 2001). At the core of this history is a strong belief in the importance of teacher

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education and a deep desire to place professionally prepared practitioners in the classrooms of the nation's schools. Teacher education, particularly at the primary level, has therefore received targeted attention throughout the years. It has been the focus of many initiatives, one of which was the shift to pre-service teacher preparation for all levels in 2005 (Teacher Professional Development Unit, 2005; Steinbach, 2012).

In the midst of this, however, there is little mention of the teacher educators, those whose responsibility it is to produce the quality teachers that are desired. The Marriott-Commission (1931-1932) underscored the importance of a centralised teacher training institute and signalled the need for research in the sphere of teacher education. The MUSTER report (George & Quamina-Aiyejina, 2003) focused on the state of teacher education at the primary level. It highlighted the importance of teacher education and its contribution to the quality of education offered locally. However, despite the fact that the teacher educators are acknowledged in the report as critical to teacher education and that there is need for their continuous training, they are only referred to indirectly and in reference to the needs of the teachers engaged in teacher preparation.

In addition, to date, little is known about the policy that governs their recruitment, development or terms of employment. There are no national standards that determine the output and quality of the work of teacher educators. This persists in spite of the fact that higher education programmes can be accessed for the professional development of teacher educators and despite the efforts made by the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) to develop regional standards for teacher education and teacher educators in the Caribbean (Caribbean Community Task Force on Teacher Education Technical Team, 2013). Consequently, we concur with Berry (2016) that,

... there seems a strange discrepancy between, on the one hand, a pressing need to prepare high-quality teachers, and on the other, a relative lack of organised preparation for those whose responsibility it is to prepare these future teachers. (p. 40)

This discrepancy gave rise to the question about the perception of teacher educators in the Trinidad and Tobago context and led to an exploration into the nature of their work, their roles, responsibilities and contribution as well as the means whereby they are sustained in the profession.

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Significance of the Study

In the education system of Trinidad and Tobago, teacher educators are often overlooked and their work is largely left unexplored and undocumented, even though it is acknowledged worldwide that quality teacher educators are critical to quality teacher education and that they play a significant role in the attainment of quality education (Murray & Male, 2005; Snoek et al., 2011). Their centrality to the entire process strongly indicates that more needs to be known about teacher educators as a professional group in the local education arena and this gave birth to the study. It is anticipated that the findings would reveal the essential elements of their work and serve to underscore their significant role in the education loop. It is also hoped that this would result in what Loughran (2014) has identified as a critical need - making their work public and ensuring that they are more visible in the system. In addition, this study can serve to bring to light major issues related to their practice and trigger the need for further research in the area.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study are:

- How are teacher educators at the higher education level perceived in the Trinidad and Tobago context?
 - What is the work of teacher educators?
 - What are teacher educators' roles and responsibilities?
 - What is the contribution that they make in the education arena?
- What measures are employed to prepare and sustain the teacher educators for their job of preparing teachers?

Literature Review

Who is the Teacher Educator?

Berry's (2016) definition of teacher educators includes:

... those who teach pre- and in-service teachers in higher education settings, those who act as mentors of teachers in schools (both pre- and in-service) and professional development providers working in government or private organisations. (p. 40)

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This definition indicates that teacher educators belong to a wide and varying group of professionals who work within the sphere of education but in significantly different contexts, with specific focus on different areas of teacher professional development. Therefore, they are by no means a uniform, homogeneous group (Berry, 2016; Lunenburg et al., 2014). In fact, the many differences related to teacher educators, in terms of recruitment procedures, job focus, qualifications, background experiences, role expectations, the nature of the work performed and the varying spheres of operation which exist, testify to their heterogeneity. In addition, teacher educators are recognised not only for their expertise in a content area but also their pedagogical abilities and their knowledge of the dynamic world of teaching (Berry, 2016; Murray et al., 2009). They therefore form a body of professionals who possess a unique combination of competencies which sets them apart from teachers in the sphere of education.

Within the European Commission report (2013), it is recorded that teacher educators belong to a teacher education system, engaged in the process of ensuring that teachers are developed professionally and remain effective classroom practitioners throughout their careers. The literature, however, does not provide much insight into the degree to which teacher educators embrace and accept this comprehensive and all-encompassing view of the work that they do. In the Trinidad and Tobago context, there is the sense that teacher educators do not have full cognisance of that continuum and their contribution therein. It is also questionable whether that notion of a system, inclusive of policies and appropriate provisions, does indeed pervade teacher education locally. This is indicative of the fact that, indeed, the concept of the teacher education continuum needs to be promoted and promulgated throughout the sphere of teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2003; European Commission, 2013).

The Nature of Teacher Educators' Work – The Complexity, Dynamism and Demands

Teacher educators' work encompasses a wide range of tasks. They engage in initial teacher education, which calls upon them to be curriculum, pedagogical and evaluation specialists and play a major role in programme design and evaluation (Kosnik et al., 2015). They also share responsibility for the site-based monitoring of teachers' classroom performance; on-site faculty support and teachers' continuous professional development (European Commission 2013; Lunenburg et al., 2014). However, their

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primary task is the professional development of teachers and, as such, their work is largely performative (Berry, 2016). In addition, teacher educators are called upon to engage in administrative duties, linked to the central task of teacher development (Dengerink, 2016).

Teacher educators also act in the capacity of resource personnel and technical advisors to different stakeholders within the education fraternity. They engage in scholarly activities associated with their own professional development and their desire to bring about improvement in the field. An additional element of their work is providing service through their participation in innovative projects, both nationally and internationally and engaging in community work (Dengerink, 2016). Added to this, they conduct research and, consequently, continue to investigate the field in which they operate and bring to it new knowledge and insights (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Murray & Male, 2005; Smith, 2015; Tack & Vanderlinde, 2014). Underlying all of the above is a deep sense of moral and social responsibility, which is integral to the work of teacher educators (Murray et al., 2009). Indeed, teacher educators are called to bring to their job specific knowledge, skills and attitudes linked to the multiple and diverse tasks that face them and for many, especially the beginning teacher educator, this can be daunting (Kools et al., 2015).

Berry (2016) highlights an additional complexity attendant to the work of teacher educators. She speaks of the intricate nature of the core task of teaching others to teach. Not only do teacher educators have to teach content, they also have to teach others how to teach that content while at the same time being models of the good practice that they are trying to inculcate. A task which often confronts teacher educators, then, is to change students' preconceived notions about teaching and learning and to encourage and foster different beliefs and attitudes (Korthagen et al., 2006; Vanderlinde et al., 2016). Loughran (2015) asserts therefore that learning to teach is not an automated, routinised activity but that 'sophisticated thinking, decision making and pedagogical reasoning ...underpin [teacher educators'] pedagogical expertise...' (p. 7). Linked to teacher educators' core task are integral roles and responsibilities, which they embrace. They can be called upon to be, among others, teacher, mentor, coach, model (Dengerink, 2016), gate keepers (Celik, 2011), advocate and activist (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). Thus, as Dengerink (2016) underscores, job complexity is the essence of the work of teacher educators.

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Contribution of Teacher Educators

The literature shows that teacher educators are ultimately responsible for the attainment of quality education in schools. They are charged with instilling and fostering the required knowledge, skills and attitudes in teachers (Goodwin & Kosnik, 2013; Hadar & Brody, 2016; Lunenberg et al., 2007; Smith, 2015), teachers who in turn foster the development of students in the classroom. Therefore, the bold statement can be made that teacher education ‘... has suffered from the failure to ... acknowledge this simple but profound truth, ... that the quality chain begins and ends with the teacher educator’ (Organisation of the American States Hemispheric Project, 2005, p. 17). In addition, it is through the teacher educators that major education policy goals are achieved. They are critical to the success of all educational initiatives that are undertaken. Indeed, Cochran-Smith (2003, p. 5) concurs that ‘... teacher educators ... are now the linchpins in educational reforms of all kinds.’ Through their interaction with teachers, they serve as conduits of both social and professional change throughout the system (Ben-Peretz et al., 2013). They significantly contribute to the sphere of education through their research, which yields insights that can bring about transformation and improvement (Swennen et al., 2017). Teacher educators provide continuous support for teachers; they help to sustain teachers’ growth throughout their professional lives. Consequently, they are indeed major actors in the life of teachers, through whom they ultimately impact the lives of students (Vanderlinde et al., 2016). Indeed, their significance in the education arena is undeniable.

The Neglect of Teacher Educators

Yet, in spite of their significance, the valuable contribution of teacher educators seems to go unnoticed (Murray et al., 2009). The knowledge, skills and expertise, which are expectations for the professional development of teachers, are largely taken for granted and their transitioning from teacher to teacher educator is understated based on the common notion ‘that a good teacher will automatically make a good teacher educator’ (Celik, 2011, p. 24). Therefore, teacher educators may not be recognised as distinctly different from teachers and as a professional group with different needs. In fact, the requirements to teach at a teacher education institution in the Caribbean do not include specialised knowledge of or expertise in teacher education practices (Organisation of American States Hemispheric Project, 2005). Consequently, their

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professional development is not given high priority either. It is based, for the most part, on individual need and becomes primarily their professional responsibility (Kools et al., 2015; Swennen & Bates 2010). According to Berry (2016, p. 39), they are 'on their own'. For teacher educators, professional development is unstructured, occasional and incidental (Berry, 2016). They learn by engaging in teacher education activities, modelling the work of the more experienced educators, participating in conferences, sharing in professional discourse and by conducting research (Kools et al., 2015).

Based on the complex and demanding work which they are called upon to perform and the specialised knowledge and skills which are required, teacher educators deserve much more concentrated attention and institutional support than are normally provided (Cochran-Smith, 2003). It is worthy to note, also, that teacher educators are not a major focus of research in the field of teacher education. Greater focus is placed on the structure and content of teacher education programmes and there is an even greater concern about outcomes (Kosnik et al., 2015). In addition, they are absent from the policy table and, more often than not, decisions are made for them (Lunenberget al., 2014). Therefore, they can be marginalised in terms of teacher education reforms, which impact their work (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Snoek et al., 2011).

Methodology

Qualitative research grounded in social constructivism was undertaken to gain understanding of the perception of the nature of teacher educators' work, their roles and responsibilities, their contribution and the measures taken to support them in their task of preparing teachers. Social constructivism acknowledges that there is no one fixed truth and that reality is socially constructed. There are multiple realities that the participants bring to an issue, which the researcher strives to unearth (Lodico et al., 2006; Merriam, 2019). Therefore, the participants were selected according to the information possessed, that could contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the issue under study. The qualitative paradigm allows for close interaction with the participants in an attempt to draw from them their views of the world, which they inhabit, towards understanding their particular situation (Miles & Huberman, 1999).

The qualitative paradigm also accommodates the use of multiple data gathering strategies. An open-ended questionnaire (OEQ), semi-structured interviews, and document analysis were utilised in the study. The OEQ allowed the participants to express their views openly and

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honestly. The interviews provided the opportunity for clarification and confirmation of the views expressed. The documents that were analysed were job advertisements, job specifications and annual staff review documents. In addition, a single case study design was adopted as specific focus was placed on teacher educators at the higher education level and the nature of their work was given intense scrutiny (Lichtman, 2011).

Data Analysis

Researchers engaged in thematic analysis of the open-ended questionnaire, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) 6-step framework. A semantic approach was adopted, sifting through the explicit content of the data, not searching beyond what was written (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data gathered from each participant was coded manually. During the first phase of familiarisation, preliminary codes were identified. In the second phase, codes were grouped into four categories: the work of teacher educators; their roles and responsibilities, their contribution in the educational arena; and the measures used in their preparation and professional development. These categories provided the framework for further analysis and allowed for engagement in comparative analysis of the data from each participant. As a result, large blocks of data were reduced to common, recurring elements among the participants making it easier to analyse and interpret the data. Through this analysis, four basic themes were identified: the multi-dimensional nature of teacher educators' work; teacher educators' multi-faceted roles and responsibilities; teacher educators' influence in the realm of education; and teacher educators' preparation for and sustenance in the system.

Thematic analysis of the data from the two interviews was conducted and the documents were analysed using deductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). In the content analysis, the work of teacher educators and their role and responsibilities formed the elements of the categorisation matrix that was developed. The documents were carefully read, and the content was coded for correspondence with the identified categories. The information gathered from both the interviews and the documents supplemented the analysis of the OEQ. Data from all three sources were triangulated for confirmability and verifiability.

Limitations

This research was limited to an in-depth exploration of the work of the teacher educators at the HE level. All analysis undertaken and conclusions drawn are in specific reference to this particular group. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to the wider teacher educator groups who operate in other contexts.

Participants' Profiles

The participants in the study were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that rich, thick data would be obtained. The sample comprised six teacher educators (TE) who were engaged in teacher education at the HE level, three recipients of teacher education/professional development, that is, teacher education graduates (TEG) and three curriculum officers (CO) - teacher educators operating at the governmental level. All but one of the teacher educators possessed more than ten years' experience teaching at a teacher education institution. The work of the teacher educators at the governmental level involved the professional development of teachers after initial teacher education. They possessed five to ten years' experience in the field. All the teacher educators were female. The teachers, two females and one male, who participated in teacher education programmes/activities, possessed 5-10 years of teaching experience.

The teacher educators at the HE level can speak intimately of their work as they perceive it. However, the teacher educators at the governmental level, who interact with graduates from the teacher education institutions, can provide insights into what they perceive teacher educators' work to be – what they should know and be able to do and their related responsibilities. The teachers who participated in teacher education programmes/activities themselves would be able to provide insights into what knowledge, skills and disposition they expect teacher educators to possess; what they perceive as their role and the contribution that they make. Each specific participant would bring to the issue perspectives based on their involvement in teacher education. Together, their different perspectives are intended to create a comprehensive picture of who the teacher educator is perceived to be.

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Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: How are teacher educators at HE institutions perceived in the Trinidad and Tobago context?

Sub-question (i) What is the work of teacher educators? The teacher educators at the HE level perceived their work to be multifaceted. This was evident in TE 2's statement:

A teacher educator's work entails modelling teaching in keeping with the approaches extolled in the profession. It begins with planning/designing the curriculum; ...designating ways for teacher learners to achieve desired outcomes; identifying the most appropriate resources ...; utilising an appropriate communication repertoire ...; being aware of how assessment works and how to intertwine assessment with instruction to motivate, promote understanding ...

The multi-dimensional nature of their work was further expounded by TE 3 who stated:

I have had to function ... as academic advisor when supervising their projects. ... researcher when I engage in research on teacher education. As exemplar of good classroom practice in the way I organise learning experiences so that they may be motivated by my passion.

TE 1 saw that the teacher educators also strived to:

... enable teachers to become more reflective of their own role specifically, as subject specialists, in educating children, but also generally, to help teachers develop a more comprehensive understanding of the teaching profession – its genesis, evolution, contemporary challenges and the implications for future teaching and learning – and how they may be located within that milieu (gender, ethnicity, biography, training).

TE 1 further added that the work of the teacher educators also included acting as “Programme Coordinator, Course Coordinator and Resource person for outreach activities ...” CO 2 shared similar views and expressed the belief that teacher educators needed to be:

... technically sound in their subject discipline, ... au courant with research in their discipline and related areas of curriculum design,

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development and implementation, possess technological and presentation skills.

Overall, however, there was an underlying shared understanding and an acceptance of the fact that the core work of teacher educators was to prepare teachers for classroom practice, giving them the tools - the knowledge and the pedagogy - necessary to be effective.

The TEGs showed some insight into the complexity of the work of teacher educators and, consequently, saw their work as going beyond the transmission of knowledge. Their expectations of teacher educators were high. TEG 2 pointed out:

A teacher educator is one who ... know[s] the challenges and struggles teachers experience on a daily basis, and thereby would be able to offer suggestions, advice and insight into workable and practical strategies to overcome such barriers. ...You cannot have a teacher educator offering suggestions to a teacher who is having a problem, if the teacher educators themselves have never encountered that problem.

In addition, TEG 3 succinctly stated:

My personal belief is that a teacher educator is more than the giver of knowledge. ... The teacher [educator] is a multi-layered professional.

The TEGs, speaking from having intimately interacted with teacher educators, were able to bring into sharp focus the complexity of the work that teacher educators are called on to perform.

Except for the annual staff review document, not much data were gathered from the other documents. The job advertisement revealed that the job title was Lecturer and not Teacher Educator and the major emphasis was on the required qualifications (content area knowledge and postgraduate professional development). No details were given in regard to the nature of the job, however. The job specifications consisted of a list of courses that fall under the employee's responsibilities and/or a list of tasks under their purview. In addition, there was the very familiar phrase, "... and any other related duties". The academic staff review documents, however, accurately reflected the depth and breadth of the teaching component of their work, almost exactly as it was perceived by the teacher educators. The major performance criteria for the teaching component included curriculum planning and enactment, curriculum design and development, and examination duties. The review documents also gave insights into the other tasks teacher educators performed and encompassed both the administrative duties as well as the outreach activities to be done within the university and in the wider education system.

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Sub-question (ii) What are teacher educators' role and responsibilities?

The roles and responsibilities of the teacher educators were linked to their work but were extended beyond the core functions to include providing academic and psychological support - nurturing the student teachers along their professional journey. For instance, in TE 5's view, a teacher educator is one "who mentors prospective teachers. A teacher educator guides the novice teacher to become the best teacher he/she can be." TE 3 shared that she was called upon to act as:

a counsellor, for teachers, as adults, frequently bring their personal family problems to the classroom. ... As career advisor when I encourage them to pursue further studies. ... As parent when I admonish them for underperformance.

TE 2 shared:

I ... see myself as a partner in learning with teacher candidates, collaboratively examining issues about teaching and learning that they encounter in the teacher education process and in dealing with the children they teach.

TEG 1 expounded that teacher educators should:

... engage me intellectually without demeaning my contributions. Instead, I wanted them to guide, question and engage me so that I become aware of faulty thought patterns and so shape my analytical ability; be ethical and practise with me what they expected of me in terms of pedagogical practices i.e., they mustn't just teach it but mirror/practice it; be friendly and approachable and have an affinity for helping others.

CO 1 expressed the following view:

...the role of the teacher educator is to inspire and empower teachers to improve their practice with regard to planning for instruction, implementation of curriculum and assessment of their students' performance (formative and summative). I also believe that a teacher educator should (as far as possible) be a model of good practice.

CO 2 also saw the teacher educators' role as providing "support to teachers through training, ... [and] building communities of learners..." while CO 3 believed that they must "function as a guide on the sideand coach the teacher when necessary". TE 3 extended the role of the teacher educators beyond the classroom in her statement: "... I ... feel that my role has to go

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beyond the classroom and involve policy, trade union activity as well as public activism.”

Indeed, teacher educators were seen as performing many roles, all attendant to the core task of preparing teachers to teach. All of the above roles and responsibilities, in addition to the expansive work of the teacher educators, outlined in Table 1, revealed that what they were required to do went beyond the work of the average classroom teachers and that this set them apart as a distinct body of professionals.

Sub-question (iii) What is the contribution that they make in the education arena? It was acknowledged that teacher educators make a valuable contribution in the education arena. They contributed to the development of the entire nation by equipping individual teachers with the wherewithal to touch and change lives and thus they played a significant role in shaping future generations. TEG 1 shared the view that a teacher educator is:

A person who ... understands the magnitude of his/her responsibility because what he/she does can affect the lives of thousands and plays a critical role in shaping the next generation.

TEG 3 shared a similar sentiment. According to her, “the teacher educator is the heart of the society. She shapes the population and has the power to create greatness.”

Research Question 2: What measures are employed to prepare and sustain the teacher educators for their job of preparing teachers?

For the teacher educators, professional development was incidental and unstructured. For the most part, they took their preparation into their own hands and were basically on their own in terms of their continuous professional development. TE 1 confessed:

I wasn't 'prepared' and then became a teacher educator. It was a long process of becoming, even while being on the job, so ...what I learned after assuming the post, continued to prepare me for the work. ... Tutelage by some of the 'greats' or past leaders ...continuing opportunities in the form of staff seminars, discussions, training sessions, from time to time ...

TE 4 shared that professional development was gradual and ad hoc at best:

I believe I experienced development as a teacher educator on an incremental basis while working ...I may have attended the odd workshop ... and also I avail myself of any professional development workshops or course ...

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The experience for TE 3 was indeed unsatisfactory as is revealed in the following response:

I do not think there is any recognition of the need to prepare teacher educators in our system. I do not think there is anything in place to foster and maintain their skills. I do not think there is any real understanding or recognition of what a teacher educator is. There is no programme of development for preparing subject specialists who are hired.

| Research questions | Sub-questions | Findings | Overarching themes |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| RQ1 | How are teacher educators at the higher education level perceived in the Trinidad and Tobago context? | Curriculum design, curriculum enactment, development of teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills, academic advising, engaging in research projects, model of good practice, career advisor, development of students' deep understanding of teaching, programme/course coordinator, resource person for outreach activities. | The multidimensional nature of teacher educators' work |
| | What are teacher educators' role and responsibilities? | Mentor, Exemplar, Facilitator, learning, Activist | Guide, Coach, Partner in learning, Motivator, |
| | What is the contribution that they make in the education arena? | Affect lives Shape the next generation Create greatness | Multi-faceted roles and responsibilities Teacher educators' influence in the sphere of education |

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RQ2

What measures are employed to prepare and sustain the teacher educators for their job of preparing teachers?

On-the-job training, Teacher educators' preparation for and Tutelage by more sustenance in the system experienced teacher educators, Participation in seminars, workshops, training sessions

Conclusions

From the study, it can be deduced that the work of the teacher educators in Trinidad and Tobago is varied and multifaceted as well as complex and dynamic (Berry, 2016; Davey, 2013; Loughran, 2015). Teacher educators were called upon to perform many tasks ranging from curriculum planning and design to assessment. In their view, another major task linked to teacher preparation was changing students' beliefs and perceptions about teaching, the 'altering of deeply held, acculturated views of teaching and learning' that Korthagen et al. (2006, p. 1036) speak of, and bringing them to full understanding of its demands. They considered modelling good teaching as an essential part of their practice as well. In addition to their core work, teacher educators performed other associated tasks, some of which included career advising, conducting research, programme coordination and serving as resource personnel for outreach activities.

Further to the many tasks discussed above, teacher educators provided academic and psychological support for teachers. They played many roles - mentor, counsellor, guide, coach, partner in learning - roles which increased the complexity and dynamism of their work (Dengerink, 2016; Kosnik et al., 2015; Murray et al., 2009). As espoused by Grossman (2013), their role also encompassed shaping the professional lives of teachers, motivating them to be the best they can be. They also saw themselves as activists engaging in initiatives to bring about positive change in the field of education and ultimately, in the nation. Consequently, for them, change was the essence of their work, and they were, therefore, of necessity called to be change agents. Indeed, the belief is that teacher educators have a pervasive influence throughout the education system, touching generations through their work with teachers.

In contrast, however, little was done to prepare and sustain the teacher educators (Kosnik et al., 2015; Lunenberg et al., 2014; Murray et al., 2009). As pointed out by Berry (2016), Swennen and Bates (2010) and Cochran-Smith (2003), they engaged in autonomous agency in an effort to acquire and hone the competencies required in a profession that, according to Loughran (2015), demands from them sophisticated thinking, pedagogical expertise and scholarship. Furthermore, absent was that understanding that they formed part of a teacher education continuum, therefore, they were disconnected from the other teacher educators in the system and were thus denied the support which professional collaboration could have brought. In addition, they did not see themselves as contributing to policy matters, though according to Cochran-Smith (2003),

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they should be seen as lynchpins in educational reform. As a consequence, a significant voice was missing at the education policy table.

Implications

This study points to many issues which must be attended to with urgency in the Trinidad and Tobago context. It is apparent that there is much still to be done and understood about the profession if teacher educators are, as Murray et al. (2009) advocate, to be

granted a place of honour [which] acknowledges the unique theory of knowledge of teacher education, and identifies its distinct tools, language and skills, including the pedagogies and scholarship associated with it (p. 42).

There is need for a comprehensive profile that captures their work, thereby, spotlighting teacher educators who at this time do not have high visibility in the system. There should also be institutionalised support for the professional development of teacher educators. This is crucial, given the heightened awareness of the fact that teacher educators are pivotal to the provision of quality education. It is also essential to develop a teacher education continuum, a system which can serve to coordinate the work of all teacher educators at the various sites of operation. Policy and standards, which govern the work of teacher educators and ensure the quality assurance of same, should be natural off-shoots. In addition, there is implication for the development of a governance body or professional association, as underscored by the Caribbean Community Task Force on Teacher Education Technical Team (2015). Its major goal should be to address the needs of teacher educators and further their advancement as a body of professionals in the system.

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