

History and History of Education in Search of Disciplinary Identity in the 21st Century

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Abstract - *In recent past there has been a raging debate on the disciplinary position and place of history of education, and its profound role in teacher education. This study aims at establishing the diminishing role and position of history of education in teacher training within the framework of the mainstream history from the perspective of interpretive traditions that have been established and carried forward over generations globally in teacher education. This paper is a product of an extensive research based on qualitative research design that basically involved oral interviews that targeted history and history of education researchers, students, scholars and lecturers as well as critical analysis of secondary sources of information. The results of the study has revealed important role played by history of education that is slowly and silently diminishing in teacher education. The study will be significant to educational historians, educational curriculum and policy planners, teacher educators and other educational stakeholders and will be used as a basis for future research and studies in history of education and in reconstructing the disciplinary need for current and future training of prospective teachers*

Keywords: *Education, Discipline, History, Perception*

INTRODUCTION

Conceptualization of history of education requires deeper reflection and critical understanding of the mother discipline; History. The understanding of history in this case is critical from its definition, methods and perceived relevance. History is an essential academic asset that provides required information needed by historians of education. It is a reflection of past human experiences that sharpen, shape and mold both current and future human society; which includes and not limited to education prospects. History is a mirror that reflects all aspects of the society [1].

Himani Bannerji [2] argues out that; History brings the unknown and the absent to the present and the known and similarly light where such light does not. The invisible are made visible - the voices and words of social events are heard and read by readers, through different forms such as inscriptions of gesture and signals. Works of historians which include written representations of the past provides a lot of knowledge by taking us through the realm of space and time, events, institutions, subjects, relationships and moments. This marks both moments and events of absence and presence- obviously at second level of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction.

Education should be viewed both as a process and as a product. Barasa [3] explains the process of education by citing the analogy of the learner and a manufacturing plant. He notes that the learner similarly like raw material is taken through a manufacturing process for transformation into refined marketable product. At this level teachers crucial and critical similarly to plant engineers. The product that comes out of the education process must be outstanding and of very high standards having gone through all the refinery stages. An educated person must be endowed in all spheres of life which should be evident and practical in an individual's life. History of education seeks to impact in the training of teachers; teachers who will live an exceptional accepted life.

Sifuna and Otiende [4] bring out the what? In education as systematically organized, planned and maintained and sustained dissemination of knowledge and instruction meant to transfer and transmit not one or two but a variety of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes in abundance required for life. Aristotle projects education as a creation of a sound mind in a sound body. Practically, History of education is that part of History dealing with the past educational developments and events which is not limited to curriculum and teaching techniques but

wider educational practices. This is done within the general historical context of both socio-economic, political and technological reform.

Smeyers Paul and Bruno Vanobbergen[5], have argued that, History of education helps to reject “this forgetting” and fits in the idea of education, which is not concerned with preservation of the past, but foremost by guarding the future. It includes a reflection of what was valuable or valueless and what necessitates social dynamism, change and the nature and characteristics of the adopted change. In this case you cannot determine the future by the circumstances of the present or the past however all future events bear a significant mark of the past and present, which is of historical significance

METHOD

This study sought to establish the diminishing role and position of history of education in teacher training. The study was based on qualitative research design that basically involved the use of oral interview as well as secondary sources/ written text in data collection. Purposive sampling technic and snowballing technique was used to identify the required respondents. Collected data was verified and coded using the historical methods of internal and external criticism. Corroboration of data was done and organised into themes.

History and History of Education Disciplinary Bond

What happens in the academic jungle? Does a food chain exist in the academic jungle? Can history of education survive on its own? Does it have space of its own? Does it predate on a particular discipline to exist? Is the relationship with its prey symbiotic? According to Aldrich [6] the soul responsibility of a historian of education is to critically search, piece up, mold and construct past events as fully with accurate facts. Such duty solemnly belongs to the mainstream Historian. It's arguably understood that History of education methods depends absolutely on the main stream History. In an extensive research a clear explanation by Chisholm, Friedman and Sindoh [7] pointed out the methodological absence in history of education that makes it totally dependent in history and further difficult for non-historians to study:-

At universities of technology, history of education is understandably not a major focus per se, given their historically technical orientation, but there have been efforts to include it in teacher preparation.

Here, students would not have done history beyond Grade 9, and this was also true for some universities (Interviews 9 & 18: 27 September 2016). At one university of technology, a cross-cutting course that all students have to take has a strong emphasis on encouraging the students to reflect on their histories and experiences, particularly their journeys from childhood to university. In the process, they are required to conduct oral histories of their families and to share these with other students. In reflecting on the course, the coordinator said that 'the course has more to do with history, about having to write something about historical events' than any other discipline, even though the intention was not to teach 'History with a capital H' (Interview 38: 2 October 2016). Another includes history of higher education as part of a focus on recent developments in higher education and the history of technical and vocational education as part of an advanced diploma. At universities, it is generally taught as a stand-alone, but one interviewee noted that 'it is embedded in everything that we do, from the start to the end' even though it was only taught over a 4-5 week period. When the course dealt with 'our different histories and life-stories and our indirect knowledge,' it treated history as an integral and not abstract and isolated body of knowledge.

What History provides to us is the memory and the curriculum vitae of the human race based on his/her past experiences, of which history of education just like all the other disciplines depends on. A prominent critic of historical discourse [8] contends that history of educational practice in a historical perspective has the burden of great value, significance and proposals necessary to improve and transform our current educational situation.

Historical facts in education can be procedurally examined objectively through historical method of data analysis. At this stage validity and reliability of the data at hand becomes paramount by picking only events with historical significance which will be interpreted to give historical meaning.

Historians of education create a niche of body of facts after a defined process of investigation, collection of data, hypothesis testing and modification, thematic presentation of data to ensure validity and reliability. At this point room for preconceived ideas are never created to alter the search for and validity of truth. Once the truth has been established they are generalized and organized in a standardized historical order to present a clear and detailed interpretation.

To achieve factual objectivity Historians of education must stick to traditional Historical methodology, any attempt to invent and introduce new or foreign methodology, will be a suicidal and detrimental to the discipline, Depaepe [8] points out the danger of departing from the historical script, by educational stakeholders and teacher educators through making improper use of historical methodologies suffer the risk of primarily realizing their own agenda which is a form of negligence in education that has led many nations coming up with a sequence of impractical and failed policies, theories and practices. This is pointed out by Aldrich [6], contends that the moral responsibility of educational historian is to bring forth constructive voices that have been long forgotten. The voices makes us mirror on the best of educational theories and practices and universally accredited teacher education, training and instructional models for the 21st century. Such voices can only be tapped from History.

It is the obligation of historians and historians of education to take up the moral responsibility of visualizing the future educational practices that will be of essence in the 21st century and beyond.

Global state of History of Education

Why social foundation of education disciplines in the 21st century: why history of education at this point? What went wrong? Who is to blame? In the attempt to unravel the mystery of why history of education? arguments by Christou [18] presents answers on the diminishing position of educational history courses in teacher education and training and similarly the decline of other social foundation disciplines which is both local, international and widespread, arguments also brought forth by Depaepe [8]. The significance of educational history as a discipline may be said about all the other educational foundations discipline although our focus is on history of education similarly much may be said about other educational foundation disciplines. The sad part of the narrative is that most educational institutions have integrated and compressed the course into one semester course.

Ideally the discipline of History of education is social sciences which over time have never been taken seriously. Validity of this assertion is seen in Christou [18] who has consistently debated that humanities and more particularly educational foundations courses are in identity crisis among teacher education courses. Smeyers Paul and Bruno Vanobbergen [5] alludes,

that the authority under which the social of foundation disciplines in education stand on and more fascinating he quotes history of education, philosophy, psychology and sociology of education has faded, been eroded and their institutional standing exist no more.

Kerr, Dmandzuk and Raptis [9] give a clear presentation of how history of education has been sacrificed at the altar of injustice 20th Century up to the 21st Century. This disciplinary attack is in the manner in which the discipline has been conceived and perceived by both teacher educators, prospective teachers and other educational stakeholders. A vivid explanation by Chisholm, Friedman and Sindoh [7] points out the global reality:-

History of education is taught in universities' teacher education faculties, mainly as a module in the four-year undergraduate BEd, as part of the foundations of education, or in the one-year Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) Although it is a compulsory module for all first-year BEd students in several universities, and numbers can be large (going up to 2,000), the time allocations are normally not more than four weeks per annum. In isolated cases, it is taught as part of another focus area, or at other levels. The allocation of staff and resources to the subject indicates not only that it is a low-status subject, but also that financial pressures on universities are having negative effects on the quality of what is taught and how it is taught. Both declining funding to higher education since 1994, and the subsidy formula that places education on one of the lowest rungs of the funding hierarchy, militate against effective staffing for teacher education (Balfour 2015). A government report of 2013 found that South Africa's budget for universities as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) was just 0.75%, lower than the Africa-wide proportion of 0.78% and the global proportion of 0.84%. It also falls short of the proportion of 1.21% spent by OECD countries. The committee also found that in the decade between 2000 and 2010, state funding per full-time equivalent student fell by 1.1% annually in real terms (DHET 2013: 7). But each of these students' fees increased by 2.5% annually during the same period. This declining budget against increasing fees lay at the root of the student explosions of 2015. The effects on history of education, very low down on the food chain, was marked. A distance education institution, which boasted a staff of 34 in the field of history of education in 1988, now has two members of staff. At another, a year-long course has been reduced to eight days in the PGCE and four weeks

in BedHonours: 'so there isn't time for much more than skimming the surface' (Interview 18: 27 September 2016). At others, including urban liberal and rural universities, classes are so large that unqualified markers, with no background in history are appointed to conduct assessments. One lecturer at a reputable urban, historically white liberal university was taking early retirement because the pressure of numbers with no additional staff to support marking was making it untenable to continue; the option of employing unqualified people at low rates was not feasible, as far as she was concerned (Interview 28: 1 September 2016; see also Interviews 21 & 23: 22 & 29 September 2016). Class sizes also affect overall quality by impacting on methodology. One lecturer noted that you can find yourself in an auditorium where you have about 500 chairs and 500 students are standing, kneeling against the wall. And you have no sound system. . . . And you are not sure whether they can hear what you are saying. . . . We try to raise our voices, but it's difficult. (Interview 26: 4 October 2016) Another said that 'students end up getting bored, playing with their cell phones, they talk, they do this and that, so lectures would be a bit of a mess, chaotic' (Interview 24: 25 August 2016). In this 'survivalist' context of teaching large classes, it was considered virtually impossible to induct students into historical modes of doing and understanding (Interviews 21 & 23: 22 & 29 September 2016).

In support of Chisholm, Friedman and Sindoh [7], the situation is not only in institutions of higher learning in Africa but also in Europe. Christou [18] discusses the disciplinary challenges history of education is facing as it struggles to create a niche, his assumptions have been supported by Kerr, Dmandzuk & Raptis [9] who argue that the reasons for this disciplinary negligence. They have further noted that teacher education has been characterized as being 'long on classroom practice and analysis,' but 'short on philosophical and historical analysis' (Liston, Witcomb & Borko [10]). Since students have always ranked educational foundation courses as less useful compared to methodological units in teacher preparation. Liston, Witcomb and Borko [10] Quoting Crocker and Dibbon [11] the study of Canadian case, argues that graduates perceived history and philosophy of education as of less significance among 18 programs. This is further brought out Crocker and Dippon [10] debates that most prospective teachers are unable to translate educational foundational knowledge into real school practice, noting that as

early as 1969, Neville Scarfe, Dean of education at the University of British Columbia, pointed out that preserve teachers and generally teachers find it hard to translate educational thought into practice.

What Ought To Be Done And By Who?

Scholars in the field of educational History need to rethink the mode of presentation of historical concepts and content in education. There is need to end the old age idea of teaching history of education from a generalized point of view with amalgamation of content from classical civilization to modernity. Schools and faculties of education need to focus on specifics in the wider training of teachers. Chisholm, L, Friedman and Sindoh, Q. A. [7] have argued that history of higher education as part of a focus on recent developments in higher education should be taught to the target group and in this case post graduate students while the history of technical and vocational education as part of an advanced diploma for technical discipline students, other than being taught as a general teacher education course. They further noted that an interviewee noted 'it is embedded in everything that we do, from the beginning to the end' even though it was only taught over a four to five week period. When the content became more practical and reflects on distinct histories and generational-stories and focuses on what we don't know,' history became an integral and not complex, abstract and isolated body of factual knowledge.

Polenghi [12], notes that the methodological stance is significant in making it possible to address historical issues in education. This is by identifying the best suited approaches to guide research process which should at all level stick with the main stream history.

A blend of oral and thematic discourse ought to be adopted. Weiler [13] like Tamura [14] urges educational historians to be more focused, critical, philosophical and aware of the stages and processes involved to reconstruct 'history of education' out of the dust of archive and free space. Historians of education should explore these alternatives and bring on board a new disciplinary breath. Tamura's [14] notes, in 'Narrative and oral tradition History and Theory', that historians of education should be committed to ancient, traditional and indigenous oral and narrative history to 'create space to theoretical work and interrogations.' She sites her own professional exodus from traditional narrative

historian to philosophical theorist. Tamura examines historiographical debates of the 1980s and 1990s among historians who were challenged to reflect and refocus historical discourse. Tamura's analysis proposes the academic conflict between description of historical facts which takes the form of chronicles or sequence of events, and critical analysis or interpretation of historical facts, which uses philosophical theory to bring out evidence of the past to reflect on the present and view that past.

Other scholars like Gardner [15], Eick [16] and Janesick [17] have justified the inclusion of oral history in history of education by re thinking and reevaluating oral historical approach. Gardner, P. [15], argues,

'if we mix-up, confuse or conflate the ability and capacity of human memory to inform history as well as to sustain identity we are unlikely to make the best use of that which oral historical recollection has to give. But, if in our efforts to engage the life of the past, we are guided by the principle of hermeneutic understanding as well as the historical explanations of events, then we cannot afford to eschew the narrative human voice. And we will learn that human memory is the medium through which we live our lives in history as well as the resources which enables us to bear witness to history's power in shaping our lives'.

Janesick [17] argues in modern and postmodern era, educational historians using oral history should use all the available evidence to tell the story of the evolution of education and teaching practices.

Of What Value?

Christou [18] quotes Kliebard [19] in his 'Why history of education?' points out that pre service teachers, through understanding history, will be able to focus more rationally and examine their current educational context. They will be able to predict the future, correct the present mistakes, reflect on the past and offer practical solutions to issues affecting education. The value of History is to demonstrate that change is inevitable.

The illustrated factors bring out a clear need of this program to a prospective teacher. Kliebard [19] proposes the most significant role of history of education is its duty in fostering good and exceptional professional and desirable behaviors and habits. Through the study of the discipline other teacher professional courses are taught in its wider

content which enlightens and widens the mind of the pre service teachers. This knowledge is constructively vast and cumulative, and therefore adopt relevant attitudes that will be useful in their future tasks as professional teachers; such are only those who have been keenly taken through the study of education history.

Kipkorir [20] argues that;

I was recently informed by E. Gichui (who took over as Academic Registrar in 1979) that there was a strong objection from senior academics from one region of the country on grounds that one who had obtained a PhD degree based on a school study could not be promoted to professorship.

Kipkorir [21] in his PhD thesis "*The Alliance High School and the origins of the Kenya Africa Elite*" demonstrates the strong bond between history and history of education. This with no doubt points out that History of education enhances personal and the professional ability of the teacher to critically and intellectually investigate and reinvestigate, examine and reexamine, evaluate and reevaluate, accept or reject and position and their cultural heritage and hence transform and be an educational critic who is capable for cultural transmission and change.

The disciplinary bond that history has with history of education can be obtained from the functions of history, thus; i. History studies the past to shape the present and make projection into a promising future. ii. History makes careful inquiries into the past to determine the cause and effect of historical occurrence. iii. History records, archives or holds the memory of places/things events said and done for subsequent referencing. iv. History enables man extend his knowledge and imagination to judge the present events and prognosticate, that is, learning from experience and experience as the best teacher of man. History and its symbiotic relationship with history of education in teacher preparation and education can be seen from the goal and core function of the teacher educator which is to prepare students to become competent teachers, and the goal of teachers is to act professionally—and sufficiently knowledgeable, morally and ethically, in helping others to be knowledgeable. Assertions summarized in the words of Sherman and Kirschner [22] who maintain that "for one thing, it seldom is useful directly that is, as clinical study, such as internship portion of teacher preparation. This assertion sees history of education as

dependent to History and indispensable in teacher education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study is significant since it has revealed important role played by history of education that is silently diminishing in the training of prospective teachers as well as tried to establish a disciplinary niche. The study will be resourceful to educational historians, educational curriculum and policy planners, teacher educators and all other educational stakeholders in the training of prospective teachers and will be used as basis for future research and studies in history of education. The study will further be used by educational historians in reconstructing the disciplinary need for current and future training of pre service teachers. This study strongly recommends the review of history of education curriculum in teacher education to meet individualized teacher education training program. The study was limited to the fact that it focused on one course within teacher education program and involved a limited number of respondents. A similar study ought to be done to cover the entire region and a large number of population sample.

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