

**RETHINKING THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY IN
TEACHER EDUCATION: THE TEACHER EDUCATION IN
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (TESSA) EXPERIENCE**

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I would like to begin with some pictures. Bilkisu is a teacher near Kaduna in northern Nigeria. She typifies 'par excellence' the benefits of open learning. After her ninth child was born, she decided to become a teacher, working unqualified whilst obtaining her National Certificate of Education at the National Teachers Institute. Teresa works in a rural school in Ghana. She is also taking an upgrading course, as is Sumiya from Sudan, one of the 130,000 teachers studying with the Sudan Open University. All of these teachers, including Mrs Mene from the Eastern Cape, are part of an international research programme on teachers' lives, sponsored by TESSA, the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa programme.

But Bilkisu has few resources. Apart from the world around her she has one, her blackboard. Ninety children are on the roll of her class. They have no books, no writing materials, few desks (although they do have a uniform and they do have eyes that exude motivation).

There is nothing atypical about Bilkisu or the other teachers. Across Sub-Saharan Africa many teachers have a pretty tough time. Although most people sense this is true, it never ceases to amaze me how little is generally known about teachers. The Millennium Development Goals make no mention of teachers. Only in the last few years with the publication of the 2005 UNESCO monitoring report on quality (UNESCO, 2005), the report of the Commission for Africa (2005) and UNESCO's Teacher Training in Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISA) project gaining momentum has the policy community begun to pay attention. Let me quote from each in turn.

'Achieving UPE alone calls for more and better trained teachers. Countries that have achieved high learning standards have invested heavily in the teaching profession. But in many countries teachers' salaries relative to those of other professions have declined over the last two decades and are often too low to provide a reasonable standard of living. Training models for teachers should be reconsidered in many countries to strengthen the school-based pre- and in-service training rather than rely on lengthy traditional, institutional pre-service training.'

(p. 5)

'the push to achieve EFA will certainly never succeed without substantial investment in teacher recruitment, training, retention and professional development.'

(p. 4)

'It is only now that people are starting to listen to those who saw the shortage of qualified teachers as a major impediment to national development and that national and international authorities are beginning to realize that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All objectives depends on the training of professionals capable of the long-term effort to promote education effectively, in particular through the training of teachers and managerial staff in the education system.'

(p. 3)

And we know that improving the quality of teaching improves educational achievement and impacts on a range of economic variables (Lee and Barre, 2001; Lopez-Acevebo, 2004). This is particularly true when we raise the level of girls' education (ICRU, 2005; Hill and King, 1995).

I was particularly struck by a paper I read recently that attributed a large proportion of the rescue of the Chilean economy in the 1990s to the investment in teachers. Teachers specifically, not education in general (Foxley, 2004).

The attention to teachers is, I believe, urgent. In a paper that I wrote for the UK UNESCO committee (Moon and O'Malley, 2008) I argued with my co-author that teaching was in crisis in many parts of the world, a crisis of supply, retention and, the focus of this presentation, education and training.

Universities now play a major role in the education and training of teachers. Many have done so for a long time. Makerere University has had an involvement with teachers since it first opened in 1922. Newer institutions have teacher training as an important priority. The Open University of Sudan and Tanzania, for example, are upgrading the qualifications of hundreds of thousands of teachers. The move of teacher education and training into the University has been a slow, and often controversial process. In the USA this took place in the 1930s, in Britain in the 1970s, and in France and South Africa in the 1990s. But there has always been something of an ambivalence about the change. Whilst medicine and law (comparable professional activities) are enjoying considerable status in the academia, 'education' has always been, and still is, something of the poor relation. Teacher educators have responded to this in different ways. Graduate Schools of Education in the USA, as Harry Judge showed in his seminal study (Judge, 1982), attempted to boost their position by moving away from the low status activity of teacher training. In many countries, especially those of the Commonwealth, the practical preparation of teachers, within University education departments, has lesser standing than many other activities. The reasons for this are complex. There are many more teachers than doctors or lawyers and the esteem which comes from working with an elite is not available to teacher trainers. And in the public mind whilst doctors and lawyers hold knowledge of a 'hidden' kind teachers do not. Whilst few would want to be treated or advised by doctors or lawyers with 'out of date' knowledge, there is little perception of what a teacher should know.

I believe the University has a critical role to play in respect of teachers. But first let me describe the situation of teachers today. In doing this I base my observations on a number of research tasks I have undertaken recently for UNESCO (Moon, 2007) and through the TESSA programme.

I took this photograph in a primary school staff office on the outskirts of Maseru, capital of Lesotho.

Lesotho

NAME OF TEACHER	CLASS	ROLL
Mrs Mokoteli	1	
Mrs Ramokejane		210
Mrs Molotsi	2	
Mrs Mpalami		205
Mrs Thamae	3	
Mrs Liketso		98
Miss Molaoa	4	

The first two grades show the impact of abolishing fees. Enrolment doubled. But EFA meant a class of 210, all in one room for grade 1, and the same in grade 2 again in one room.

Whilst the roll had doubled, the number of teachers and classrooms remained the same. When I sit in seminars about teacher education in London or Washington, or here in Hyderabad, and I hear the rhetoric around promoting active learning, the need for a new pedagogy, I often think back to that hugely overcrowded class in Lesotho and the task that Mrs. Mokoteli had (on the day of my visit her colleague was on sick leave).

It is important to remember that, across the globe, the problems facing teachers have many features in common. Two recent studies I have carried out for UNESCO confirm this (Moon, 2005; and Moon, 2008 forthcoming). Nearly every country in the world has a problem in respect of the supply, retention, training, salaries, working conditions and status of teachers. For what other reason do we see so much government interventionist and regulatory behaviour. In a survey I carried out in 2003, for example, I discovered that every European government except Finland intervened in some sort of way in the situation of teaching, especially their training (Moon, B. 2003).

But let me summarise the crisis, looking particularly at Africa:

- in Sub-Saharan Africa we need 4 million more teachers to achieve EFA and make some small dent in class sizes (globally the figure is 14-22.5 million, Global Campaign for Education, 2006);
- across the region half of all primary teachers are unqualified, in some countries that runs to three-quarters (Commission for Africa Report, 2005);
- salaries and status in many countries is in freefall (Colclough et al., 2003) exacerbated, many suggest, by the macro-economic policies of organisations like the IMF (Action Aid, 2007);
- many teachers, particularly in rural communities teach without paper, books or resources;

- qualification upgrading programme, where they exist, usually provide a passport out of primary teaching;
- professional development opportunities are rare, commonly non-existent;
- HIV/Aids is impacting massively on the teaching population. In Zambia more teachers are dying annually than are leaving the teacher training system (McGreal, 2005). A recent South African report (Education in Labour Relations Council, 2005) was given the media headline ‘A teacher dies every 2 hours’. And HIV/Aids are affecting teachers in other ways. In some parts of the region teachers have classes where a significant proportion of the pupils are orphans;

finally, and there are other issues,

- teachers are both the victims, and unfortunately the perpetrators, of corruption. In Kenya a recent report by Transparency International (2006) showed the Teacher Service Commission to be the third most corrupt public body in the country;
- and Brendan O’Malley has shown that, increasingly, teachers are the victims of conflict, attacked for being the voice, as it is seen, or an opposing group or faction.

There is, therefore, a fair degree of gloom. Read, for example, the report of the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) on rural education to gain further insight into the challenge. But that report, ‘Emerging Voices’, also has some cause for optimism. The report identified that where teachers could be explicitly shown to have good qualifications and training and where teachers, despite the challenges, displayed motivation, so local confidence grew. For me, therefore, one of the key components of a resolution to the crisis must be high quality education and training, and here the mission of this conference does, I believe, have particular importance.

The context I have described for me leads to a number of important assertions.

First the ‘bricks and mortar’ institutions created to meet the needs of teacher education in the 20th century cannot hope to meet the needs of the 21st.

Second, it follows that most teacher education and training, even if University provided, will happen in schools, it will be school based.

Third, if school-based education and training is to impact on student achievement then it needs to be practically focussed on improving the day to day work of teachers rather than mimic the slow pace campus curriculum of, say, a 4-year Bed.

Fourth, that just as the crisis for teachers becomes acute, we have the glimmer, perhaps more, of hope offered by new technologies and new forms of communication.

The technological revolution evolving across the world, perhaps most evident in Africa, has the potential to significantly transform professional learning and we need an urgency around policy makers to grasp these opportunities.

The Digital Education Enhancement (DEEP) project (<http://www.open.ac.uk/deep/>) led by my colleague Professor Jenny Leach, who sadly died last month, has for more than five years been working with teachers to improve the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science through use

of mobile communication technologies. And motor bikes rather than mules provide the driving force (Leach, J. 2005).

The DEEP project was, in part, led by the University of Fort Hare in Eastern Province, South Africa. Fort Hare was, of course, the almer mater of Nelson Mandela and was for many years the only university institution in southern Africa that admitted black students. Fort Hare makes much of its development role in what was and remains an economically disadvantaged area of South Africa. And this extends to supporting the thousands of teachers, many underqualified, who work in often remote rural locations.

Fort Hare provides one model of what I believe all the Universities responsible for teacher education and training should aspire to. Let me suggest seven dimensions that ought to characterise the work of Universities with school teachers. First, it should be ‘a friend’. Teachers are uniquely important to universities and attitudes as well as programmes and practices should reflect this. Secondly, universities need to be ‘flexible’ in the opportunities they offer teachers whether in upgrading their qualifications or providing intellectual sustenance to update knowledge, skills and understanding. Thirdly, more and more universities need to adopt a ‘distributed’ approach to their activities. Whilst campuses will persist, the social responsibilities of universities must be played out in many more formal and informal sites. It follows, fourthly, that universities must embrace the increasingly ‘technological’ forms of communication now available. Planning for this seems especially important in development contexts where demands and need are most acute.

A fifth dimension relates to ‘innovation’. These dimensions, of course, interrelate but the importance and capacity to innovate to address the crisis of teacher education and training is again a question of attitudes as well as processes. In my travels to many countries and many universities I continually come across moribund regulations and outmoded models of curriculum that are barriers to any engagement with teachers. This is especially true of qualification upgrading courses that insist on treating experienced teachers as if they were ‘raw behind the ears’ young trainees.

Sixth, if universities are to play a key role in the improvement of education systems, then they need to become much better at ‘partnering’. The University of Fort Hare works very closely, and sometimes interchangeably, with the government of the Eastern Province of South Africa. For universities to work successfully with teachers they need well developed partnerships with the other stakeholder institutions. Seventh and finally, universities need to stand for ‘quality’ and standards. Raising the level of the intellectual discourse among those, especially teachers, who are crucial to the success of educational endeavours is, for me, a prime role for the University. All of these dimensions are reflected, I think, in a new initiative that seeks to provide international impetus to improving the role of the university in the education and training of teachers.

The Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) programme grew out of a range of smaller collaborative projects involving the UK’s Open University and a number of universities in Africa. It is an ambitious multi-million dollar project funded by a range of organisations, most notably the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

TESSA works from a number of assumptions, including:

- effective cross national, international co-operation can mobilise expertise and resources to address major educational problems (Appendix 1);
- that significantly extending teacher education involves acknowledging that most of the learning will be ‘school based’ rather than ‘campus based’;
- that new modes of university school based training will require high quality resources for use by university trainers with teachers;
- that resources in many contexts are limited and that the presence of free to user, adaptable, open educational resources (OERs) is both economically and pedagogically advantageous;
- that teachers will need to learn to embrace more active, learner centred, modes of teaching;
- that the infrastructure exists to link universities through new online means of communication but that the resources for use with teachers must be available in a variety of formats, including easily accessible hard copy text formats;
- that advice and support, as well as resources, should be available through the TESSA programme.

TESSA, initially focussing on primary teachers, but soon to expand into the secondary sector, has therefore developed (working initially with over one hundred African academics) over 750 study units that can be used to build and support new programmes of teacher education. All the resources have been developed to a common framework (Appendix 2) but then, through a new structured model of adaptation, have been fully versioned to the range of national and linguistic contexts. All the TESSA materials now exist in Arabic, English, French and KiSwahili, and other languages are planned. In 2008 it is estimated that up to half a million teachers will be using the TESSA materials in some way.

TESSA does not provide courses as such. Local institutions take the materials and the different modes of support available and adapt or create their own model appropriate to the context. The TESSA programme supports, therefore, a range of pre-service qualification upgrading and a wide variety of continuing professional development programme.

University staff and some teachers are participating in national and cross national forums and, as connectivity improves, it is anticipated that the numbers involved will continue to grow.

TESSA is multi-media and, working through the BBC World Service Trust, a variety of audio resources (also in OER format) have been created for incorporation into teaching programmes. The TESSA consortium believes that some of the creativity inspired by web sites such as YouTube and Facebook could be incorporated into teaching programmes. And TESSA, of course, aims to introduce other OER sites (such as the Open University’s OpenLearn <http://www.open.ac.uk/openlearn/home.php>) into an expanding range of materials and resources.

TESSA has created a regional framework based on clusters of institutions in West, East and Southern Africa. The Executive Chair of TESSA, Professor Jophus Anamuah-Mensah, formerly Vice-Chancellor of the University of Education, Winneba, has a base in Ghana. The Communications Director, Jayshree Thackrar, is based at the University of Fort Hare in South

Africa. Freda Wolfenden has taken over as Director of the TESSA programme at the OU (UK).

The TESSA consortium (see Appendix 1) is focussed on the needs of teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa but it is international in composition. The consortium model allows the sharing of advice and expertise which plays to the strengths of participating institutions and avoids some of the issues that can surround north-south or even south-south partnerships. There are also nearly one hundred associate institutions and the door is open to further institutional organisations.

TESSA seeks to enhance teacher education programme development by injecting a strong note of creativity into programmes. Too much of teacher education and training, to be frank, is extraordinarily boring. The focus is on improving practice and raising achievement. TESSA seeks to embed and exploit new technologies progressively and TESSA embraces the principles and practices of what could be termed 'the OER movement' (Atkins, 2007; OECD, 2007).

TESSA is a Research and Development (R & D) programme and a range of evaluative and other reports can be found on the TESSA website. TESSA partners are, for example, collaborating over a qualitative research study of female teachers working in remote rural communities. It is clear that the sort of model established through the TESSA programme could be used in other sectors and other parts of the world. Development work is already underway for a parallel initiative in the health sector in Africa and preliminary discussions have been held with a view to creating a TESSA type portal in India.

The TESSA programme, through its philosophy is open to all and any University is welcome to join the TESSA community. TESSA is about creating a new architecture, not just for teacher development, but also for the way in which universities and other organisations can come together to address important social and educational issues. TESSA represents a new perspective on the revitalisation of university education in the education and training of teachers. It is rooted in the need to not only provide education for all but also to do so with a quality that genuinely raises achievement and expands opportunity.

Appendix 1

The TESSA Core Consortium

TESSA is a consortium of eighteen organisations:

The African Virtual University

BBC World Service Trust

The Commonwealth of Learning

Egerton University, Kenya

Kigali Institute of Education, Rwanda

Kyambogo University, Uganda

Makerere University, Uganda

National Teachers' Institute, Nigeria

The Open University of Sudan,

The Open University of Tanzania

The Open University, UK

South African Institute for Distance Education

University of Cape Coast, Ghana

University of Fort Hare, South Africa

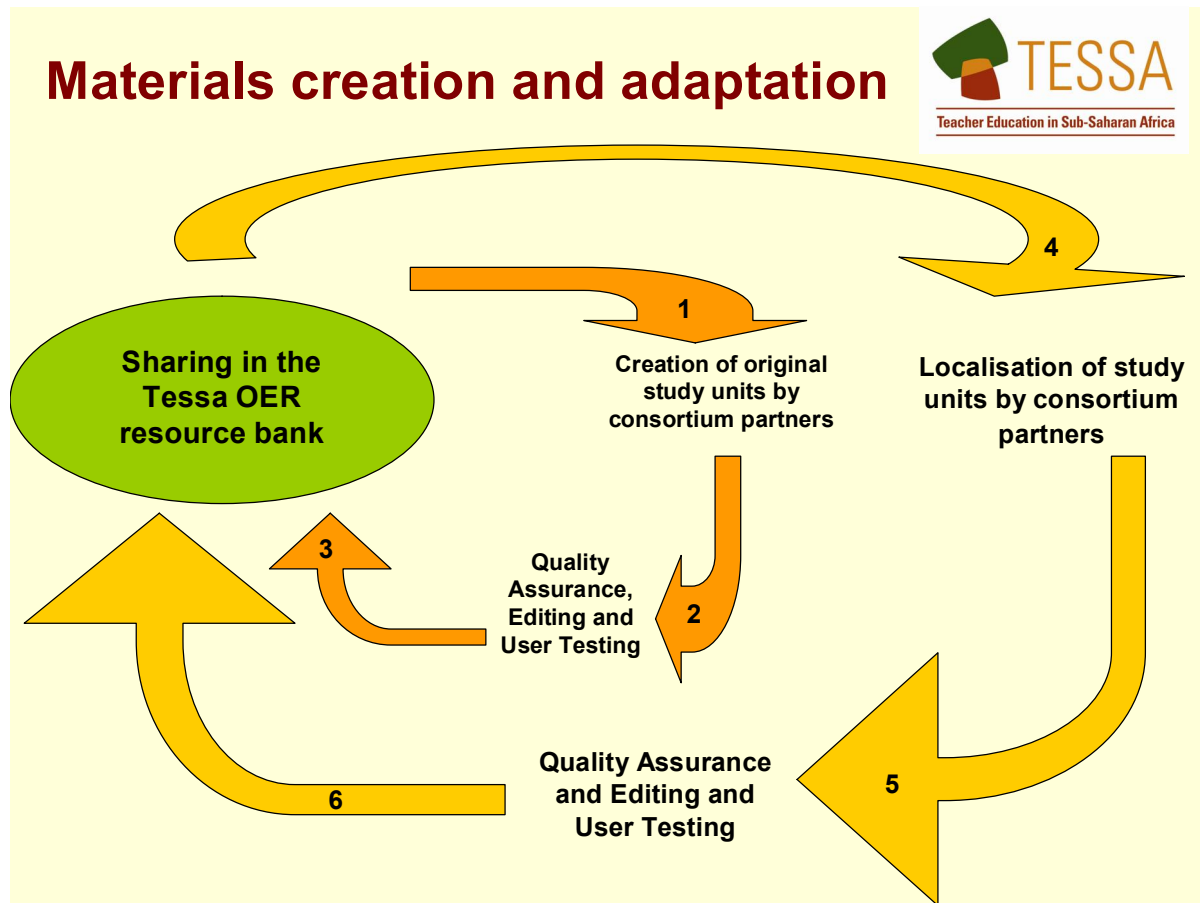
University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

University of Pretoria, South Africa

University of South Africa

University of Zambia

Appendix 2



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