

TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES IN BENIN: FROM COLONIAL LEGACY TO TEACHER TRAINING CHALLENGES

ABSTRACT:

This paper offers an analysis of the history and evolution of teacher training colleges (Teachers' Training School) in Benin, from their inception to their integration into the LMD (Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) system. It also explores the legacy of the National Conference of Vital Forces and the National Education Forums in shaping the structure and functioning of these institutions. Do these teacher training colleges, as established and organized, contribute to Benin's development through the quality of their training? Furthermore, the sovereign nature of public teacher training colleges calls for a closer look at their role in disseminating republican values and building model citizenship capable of meeting the existential challenges faced by Beninese people on a daily basis.

Keywords: Citizenship, teacher training colleges, teacher education, development.

INTRODUCTION

Human resource development is a major challenge linked to the broader issue of national development in any country, and Benin cannot afford to ignore this imperative. In this context, the establishment and operation of teacher training colleges—considered the quintessential crucible for teacher training—prompt a rigorous examination of whether expected outcomes are being achieved in alignment with Benin's development goals. Tracing the path from the colonial legacy to the current challenges of teacher training in Benin, how can we analyze the history and evolution of these colleges, from their inception to their integration into the LMD (Bachelor-Master-Doctorate) system? Clearly, examining the training conditions within these colleges and the disparity in qualification levels sheds light on their historical trajectory and the challenges they face. The analysis focuses on four key themes: the evolution of Benin's teacher training colleges and their adaptation to the realities of the country's social fabric; the effectiveness and relevance of the training provided; the tensions and successive transformations observed; and the identified weaknesses and shortcomings. Ultimately, this analysis aims to provide a perspective on necessary adjustments and new strategic directions. The fundamental question is thus: Are the current organizational structures and training practices in Benin's teacher training colleges sufficiently adapted to effectively meet the need for high-quality teachers at both the primary and secondary levels? Furthermore—viewed in proper perspective—do these colleges, established and shaped within an educational system still bearing the imprint of the colonial legacy, truly contribute to Benin's development? The state-mandated nature of public teacher training colleges (Teachers' Training School) necessitates highlighting their role in disseminating the values of the Republic and in fostering a model of citizenship capable of addressing the existential challenges Beninese people face daily.

1- Research objectives

- General Objective

To evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of current organizational models for teacher training colleges in Benin, in light of the national education system's needs and challenges.

- Specific Objectives

- Describe the historical evolution of teacher training colleges in Benin since the colonial era, identifying pedagogical models, organizational structures, and initial objectives.
- Analyze current operational models of teacher training colleges in Benin (structures and organizational methods).
- Identify the innovations and adaptations required to meet the evolving training needs of Beninese teachers.

2- Theoretical and conceptual framework

What is a teacher training college, and what vision should underpin its creation? Reflecting on the establishment and operation of these colleges requires a theoretical and conceptual grounding. Indeed, it is appropriate to draw upon the functionalist theories advocated by Durkheim (1910), Parsons (1970), and Merton (2002). These theories view the teacher training college as a key institution for meeting the needs of the education system and society by training competent teaching staff who meet established expectations. From this perspective, the organization is seen as a means to ensure the effectiveness of this function. Functionalists therefore regard teacher training colleges as a functional hub directly linked to the existential needs of all stakeholders. The vision presented here offers a better understanding of the role and function of these colleges in the implementation of educational policies. Functionalist theories focus less on the specific characteristics of the colleges and more on their functional roles.

To better define the characteristics of teacher training colleges, school effectiveness theories—such as those developed by Edmonds (1980), Coleman (1994), and Hattie (2009)—seek to identify the specific attributes of these institutions that produce the most effective teachers. The organization is examined in terms of its impact on the skills, practices, and outcomes of prospective teachers. The focus is on the specific arrangements that render the work of teacher training colleges effective regarding the teachers they train; effective teachers are, of course, those best able to adapt to the various changes required during the teaching-learning-assessment process within an educational context.

No educational system can function without considering innovation and change; it is therefore fitting that authors such as Senge (1990), Kotter (1996), and Fullan (2001) have focused their thinking on theories of innovation and change relevant to the educational context. These theories seek to understand how new ideas, practices, or technologies are adopted and implemented within organizations and systems, including in the fields of education and teacher training.

Several authors have made significant contributions to this field of study. Notable examples include the theory of Deci & Ryan (2017) and the recent constructivist theory of Galichet (2007), which complements earlier work by socio-constructivist theorists of learning and teacher training—namely Vygotsky (1980), Piaget (1990), and Bruner (1992). According to the constructivist approach, learning is an active process in which the learner constructs knowledge and meaning through social interaction and collaboration. In the context of teacher training, this theory highlights the importance of reflective practical internships, problem-based learning, case studies, and peer collaboration. During the 2000s, researchers also emphasized the need to focus on the professionalization of the teaching role. The theories developed at the time—Shulman's (2000) concept of a "knowledge base for teaching" and Schön's (2002) concept of the "reflective practitioner"—align with what is termed the

professionalization of teaching and continuous professional development. The core idea is to view teaching as a complex profession requiring the ongoing development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In this context, teacher training institutions are seen as entities that must not only provide solid initial training but also prepare future teachers for lifelong learning and reflection on their practice.

During this same period, research highlighted the importance of professional competencies and standards within the pedagogical relationship (UNESCO, 2000). The aim was for future teachers to acquire specific competencies—deemed essential for effective classroom practice—during their training at teacher training institutions. Consequently, teacher training is structured around standards that align with the required competencies needed to ensure an effective pedagogical relationship. Within this same framework, and taking into account the changes driven by rapid advancements in science and technology, the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into teacher training has become a key priority. Indeed, the global rise of digital technology has profoundly transformed pedagogical practices and teacher training. Teacher training institutions are therefore called upon not only to train teachers in the efficient use of ICT in their instruction but also to incorporate these technologies into their own training methods. New theories, such as connectivism (developed by Siemens [2004] and Downes [2005]), emphasize the conceptualization of learning in the digital age.

The vision of a teacher training college therefore depends on the conditions surrounding its establishment and implementation. Indeed, other theories complement those previously cited—notably theories of dependency and cultural imperialism (Dioffo, 1960; Diop, 1980; Amin, 2010). These theories help explain how and why the colonial legacy continues to influence the structures, curricula, and practices of teacher training colleges across Africa. This legacy perpetuates models ill-suited to local realities and national needs. Such theories allow for an examination of how inherited educational systems can reproduce inequalities and intellectual dependency.

Reflecting on teacher training colleges in Benin therefore requires examining how these various theories manifest—or fail to manifest—in the practices and discourses surrounding teacher training within this specific context, all viewed through the lens of contemporary perspectives.

3- Research Hypotheses

- General Hypothesis

Current organization and training practices in Benin's teacher training colleges exhibit significant weaknesses that limit their ability to effectively meet the need for high-quality teacher training in the face of challenges confronting the national education system. -

Specific hypotheses

- HS1: Historical trajectory

The historical evolution of the organizational structures of teacher training colleges in Benin offers limited opportunities for developing practical skills, critical thinking, and the ability to adapt to the country's actual contexts.

- HS2: Alignment with the national education system

The alignment between the initial training provided in teacher training colleges and the needs and realities of the national education system (primary and secondary curricula, education policies,

socio-cultural contexts) exhibits limitations and shortcomings, resulting in a gap between the training received and the demands of the field.

- HS3: Training monitoring and evaluation

Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training provided in Benin's teacher training colleges—as well as the professional integration of graduates—are limited, making it difficult to identify strengths and areas for improvement to ensure continuous adaptation to the education system's needs.

4- Methodological considerations

- For the purposes of the analysis, a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) guided the bulk of the fieldwork. This approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, was deemed appropriate for gaining an in-depth understanding of the research question. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of perceptions, experiences, and contexts related to the organization and training practices within Benin's teacher training colleges, as well as the challenges facing the education system. The quantitative approach guided the collection of measurable data on specific aspects—namely, how education system stakeholders perceive the alignment of skills possessed by graduates of Benin's teacher training colleges with the realities of the field.
- Study scope: The scope of our research encompasses *Teachers' Training School* (higher teacher training colleges) that train secondary school teachers and teacher training colleges for primary school teachers. This includes both public and private teacher training colleges in Benin.

Table 1 Secondary education / Public sector institutions			
N°	Schools	Training pathways	Degrees
1	Teachers' Training School / ENS-UAC Public institution Porto-Novo / Bénin	Modern Literature, Philosophy, English, German, Spanish, History and Geography	Licence / BAPES, Master / CAPES
2	National Institute of Youth, Physical Education and Sport / INJEPS-UAC Public institution Porto-Novo / Bénin	Physical Education and Sport	Licence / CAPAEPS, Master / CAPAS
3	Teachers' Training School / ENS-UNSTIM Public institution Natitingou / Bénin	Mathematics, Physics-Chemistry-Technology, Life and Earth Sciences, Computer Science	Licence / BAPET, Master / CAPET
4	Higher Teacher Training College for Technical Education ENSET-UNSTIM Public institution Lokossa / Bénin	Science and Technology	Licence / BAPET, Master / CAPET, Engineer
5	Training School for Education Management Personnel Nationale EFPEEN Public institution Porto-Novo / Bénin	All disciplines of ENS	Inspector, Pedagogical Advisor (Primary and Secondary)

Source: Bah Clément / 2025

Table 2 Secondary education / Private institutions			
N°		Filières de formation	Diplômes
1	Secondary School Teacher Training Institution (EFES SAPIENZA) Institution Privée Porto-Novo / Bénin	Modern Literature, Philosophy, English, German, Spanish, History and Geography, Physical Education, Mathematics, Physics-Chemistry, Life and Earth Sciences	Licence / BAPES, Master / CAPES
2	Secondary School Teacher Training Institution (EFES SAPIENZA) Private institution Parakou / Bénin	Modern Literature, Philosophy, English, German, Spanish, History and Geography, Physical Education, Mathematics, Physics-Chemistry, Life and Earth Sciences	Licence / BAPES, Master / CAPES
3	Secondary School Teacher Training Institute (The Citizen) Private institution Cotonou / Bénin	Modern Literature, Philosophy, English, German, Spanish, History and Geography, Physical Education, Mathematics, Physics-Chemistry, Life and Earth Sciences	Licence / BAPES, Master / CAPES
4	Secondary School Teacher Training Institute (The Citizen) Private institution Lokossa / Bénin	Lettres modernes, Philosophie, Anglais, Allemand, Espagnol, Histoire et Géographie, Éducation sportive, Mathématiques, PCT, SVT	Licence / BAPES, Master / CAPES
5	Secondary School Teacher Training Institute (The Citizen) Private institution Abomey / Bénin	Modern Literature, Philosophy, English, German, Spanish, History and Geography, Physical Education, Mathematics, Physics-Chemistry, Life and Earth Sciences	Licence / BAPES, Master / CAPES
6	Secondary School Teacher Training Institution (IFATOSI) Private institution Abomey / Bénin	Modern Literature, Philosophy, English, German, Spanish, History and Geography, Physical Education, Mathematics, Physics-Chemistry, Life and Earth Sciences	Licence / BAPES, Master / CAPES

Source : Bah Clément / 2025

Table 3 Primary Education / Public Sector			
N°	Schools	Training pathways	Degrees
1	Normal School for Teachers ENI Public institution Porto-Novo / Bénin	Multidisciplinary	Teacher / CAP, CEAP
2	Normal School for Teachers ENI Public institution Allada / Bénin	Multidisciplinary	CAP, CEAP

3	Normal School for Teachers ENI Public institution Dogbo / Bénin	Multidisciplinary	CAP, CEAP
4	Normal School for Teachers ENI Public institution Abomey / Bénin	Multidisciplinary	CAP, CEAP
5	Normal School for Teachers ENI Public institution Djougou / Bénin	Multidisciplinary	CAP, CEAP
6	Normal School for Teachers ENI Public institution Kandi / Bénin	Multidisciplinary	CAP, CEAP

152

Source : Bah Clément / 2025

153

Table 4 : Primary education			
Private Entities (30)			
UPAO Private Primary Teacher Training Institute / Porto-Novo	Primary Education Staff Training Centre (CEFOPEM) / Cotonou	Primary School Teacher Training Centre (CEFOPI) / Cotonou	"The Graces" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute /Avogbana
Bakhita Private Primary Teacher Training School / Agori	"La Refondation" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute / Ouidah	"Saint Richard" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute Ahouannonzoun	"Le Salut" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute/Avogbana
Isidore de Souza Private Primary Teacher Training Institute Allada	Private Primary Teacher Training Institute: "The Role of Today's Teacher" » / Azowlisse	"La Compétence" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute /Abomey	"La Prospective" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute /Abomey
"La Relève de qualité" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute Pobe	"Le Défi de Tanzoun" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute, Avrankou	"BAHAMAS" Private Primary School Teacher Training Institute /Abomey	Pan-African Institute for Training and Education for Sustainable Development (IPAFED); Aplahoue
Abomey-Calavi Private Primary Teacher Training College (ENPI-AC) Abomey-Calavi	"Le Modèle Centre Anna et Pierre" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute / Bohicon	"Les Sources du Savoir" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute Klouekanme	"AMAVEDA" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute/Glazoue
"EBEN-EZER" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute Parakou	"IFFA" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute/ Lokossa	"Bénita" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute Come	Private Institution for Initial and Continuing Teacher Training (Primary Education) (EPFICEP) Natitingou
	Catholic Teacher Training College (ENCFI) Natitingou	"La Référence" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute/ Cove	"Les Chevronnés" Private Primary Teacher Training

			Institute/ Parakou
	"Joseph Leif" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute/ Parakou	"Anne Marie HOUILLON" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute/ Parakou	"Le Vivier" Private Primary Teacher Training Institute/ Parakou

Source : Dr Clément BAH / ENS -UAC,2025

• Sample

- 4 public higher teacher training colleges (*Écoles Normales Supérieures*)
- 1 public school for training educational leadership personnel
- 6 public teacher training colleges for primary school teachers
- 30 private teacher training colleges for primary school teachers
- 3 private higher teacher training colleges
- 60 education system stakeholders

• Semi-structured interviews: interviews with various key stakeholders:

- Directors and trainers at teacher training colleges: To understand internal organization, pedagogical practices, challenges encountered, and their perceptions regarding the adequacy of the training.
- Primary and secondary education inspectors: To gather their views on how well teachers graduating from these colleges are prepared for the realities of the field.
- Teachers recently graduated from teacher training colleges: To understand their training experience and their perception of their preparedness for classroom challenges.
- Ministry of Education officials: To gain a perspective on teacher training policies and the needs of the national education system.

• Data collection tools

- Documentary research
- Questionnaire
- Observation grid

• Analysis methods

- Cross-tabulation of data collected via the questionnaire
- Content analysis

5- Results

- R1: The historical evolution of the organizational structures of teacher training colleges in Benin offers few opportunities for developing practical skills, critical thinking, and the ability to adapt to the country's actual contexts.
- R2: The organizational model of the teacher training colleges is ill-suited to the Beninese context. The entry requirement (qualification) for primary teacher training colleges is the Baccalaureate, yet these schools are simultaneously attached to the primary education sector.
- R3: In Benin, there is a process of periodically closing public teacher training colleges.
- R4: The proliferation of private primary teacher training colleges poses a problem due to training conditions and contexts (unqualified supervisory staff, infrastructure that does not always meet required standards).

- R5: The alignment between initial training provided in teacher training colleges and the needs and realities of the national education system (primary and secondary curricula, education policies, socio-cultural contexts) is inadequate, resulting in a gap between the training received and the demands of the field.
- R6: Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training provided in Benin's teacher training colleges and the professional integration of graduates are limited, making it difficult to identify strengths and areas for improvement to ensure continuous adaptation to the education system's needs.

6- Discussion

Analysis reveals that Benin's education system—spanning preschool, primary, and secondary levels—faces numerous challenges that negatively impact its quality and effectiveness, notwithstanding the significant efforts made by stakeholders at various levels. Regarding the quality of teaching and learning, a significant proportion of practicing teachers lack adequate pedagogical training, which affects instructional quality. The lack of continuous professional development and the wide disparity in qualification levels are also causes for concern. Furthermore, many schools lack textbooks, basic teaching materials, and adequate infrastructure (e.g., classrooms in poor condition, and inadequate hygiene and sanitation facilities). Access to digital tools also remains very limited.

High student-teacher ratios, particularly at the primary level, hinder individualized instruction and effective student monitoring. In this context, to meet their established objectives, Benin's teacher training colleges must examine current practices to better guide necessary adjustments. Pertinent questions arise regarding how well the curricula in these colleges align with the country's socio-economic realities and labor market needs.

Since the 1990s, theories regarding intercultural and inclusive training approaches have emphasized the impact of a growing awareness of learner diversity and the necessity of inclusive education on teacher training. It is therefore essential to ensure that Benin's teacher training colleges are equipped to train teachers who possess the skills needed to work effectively with students from diverse cultural backgrounds and those with specific educational needs. This entails developing competencies in intercultural pedagogy and instructional adaptation. Given the observed shortcomings, special attention must be paid to the governance and management of Benin's education system. The education policies implemented in Benin since independence have not always aligned with actual needs. Structurally, the entire administrative layout of Benin's teacher training colleges must be overhauled to lay the groundwork for a major reform. Fundamental issues—such as the funding of these colleges, the recruitment of sufficient teaching and administrative staff, and the provision of adequate infrastructure—require urgent, radical solutions. Ultimately, better coordination among the relevant ministries, civil society organizations, and technical and financial partners is essential for the coherent implementation of education policies as a whole, and specifically for the effective functioning of Benin's teacher training colleges.

7- Putting things into perspective

To ensure the effectiveness of educational policies regarding Benin's teacher training colleges, rationalizing synergies requires a complete overhaul of their structure. A radical—yet necessary—solution is to create a "Teacher Training University / Pedagogical Institute" that consolidates all of Benin's teacher training colleges into a single training hub. The core idea is to build upon existing assets, thereby paving the way for the integration of both human resources and infrastructure into a comprehensive pedagogical training entity.

Establishing a "Teacher Training University / Pedagogical Institute"—one that trains preschool teachers (Duel level), primary school teachers (Bachelor's level), secondary school teachers (Bachelor's/BAPES or Master's/CAPES levels), and supervisory staff—is by far the best solution Benin could adopt.

In this same vein, this Teacher Training University could train higher education instructors for the Certificate of Aptitude in University Pedagogy (CAPU) through a one-year training program.

CONCLUSION

Bold reforms are essential to address the challenges facing Benin's teacher training colleges, particularly regarding their respective structures, management, and operational methods. Although Benin allocates a significant portion of its budget to education, challenges remain concerning the efficient allocation of resources to these colleges, as well as the rational management of their staff and infrastructure. Benin's rapid population growth and youthful demographic—which place constant pressure on the education system through rising demand for schooling—necessitate the adoption of radical reforms in the short and medium term. Meeting these challenges requires concerted, sustained effort from the government, education stakeholders, civil society, and international partners to build a Beninese education system that is equitable, inclusive, and of high quality for all learners.

REFERENCES

1. Bruner, J.S. (1992). *Acts of meaning*. Harvard University Press.
2. Coleman, J. S. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity* (The Coleman Report). Government Printing Office.
3. Coleman, J. S. (1994). *Foundations of social theory*. Harvard University Press.
4. Downes, S. (2005). *An introduction to connective knowledge*, Harvard University Press.
5. Dioffo, A.M. (1960). *General evolution of education in the French colonies*. Nathan.
6. Diop, C.A. (1980). *Negro nations and culture*, African Presence.
7. Durkheim, E. (1922). *Education and sociology*, Felix Alcan.
8. Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor, *Educational Leadership*, 37(1), 15-24.
9. Edmonds, R. (1982). Programs of school improvement: an overview, *Educational Leadership*, 40(3), 4-11.
10. Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change* (3rd ed.), Teachers College Press.
11. Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

12. Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: maximizing impact on learning*, Routledge.
13. Kotter, J.P. (1996). *Leading change*. Harvard Business School Press.
14. Merton, R.K. (2002). *Social theory and social structure*, Free Press.
15. Piaget, J. (1990). *The psychology of intelligence*, Routledge.
16. Parsons, T. (1959). The school class as a social system: some of its functions in American society, *Harvard Educational Review*, 29(4), 297-318.
17. Parsons, T. (1970). *Social structure and personality*, Free Press.
18. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*, Guilford Press.
19. Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization*, Doubleday.
20. Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: foundations of the new reform, *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1-22.
21. Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*, Basic Books.
22. Siemens, G. (2004). *Connectivism: a learning theory for the digital age*.
23. UNESCO. (2000). *World education report 2000: the right to education*, UNESCO.
24. Education International & UNESCO. (2015). *EI/UNESCO global framework of professional teaching standards*.
25. Vygotsky, L. S. (1980). *Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner & E. Souberman, Eds. & Trans.). Harvard University Press.