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Leadership's Commitment to Provision of Quality Education in Public Secondary in Sub-Saharan Africa

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to establish the leadership's commitment in providing quality education in Public Secondary Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa and propose concrete solutions that policy makers may adopt to address challenges in provision of quality education. A literature review method was employed to interrogate the perspective of other scholars in the subject matter. Educational leadership's commitment is core to all quality education practices pertaining to all staff in the school, right from the teachers, non-teaching staff performance and the students who are the recipients of the services offered. In the 21st Century globally there is much emphasis on provision of quality education, Africa as part of the glob is not exceptional. Quality education is perceived as the only way to development of any country in the world because it provides holistic, innovative and technical skills that are needed in development. A conceptual framework of quality education was used to argue that African educational leaders should benchmark on how other countries in the glob are coping with quality education provision. They should adopt the most appropriate skills to improve their own skills in provision of quality education in public secondary schools, for the fact that education is core to all human aspects. We have discussed some features that promote quality education in some African countries and those that hinder provision of quality education. Examples have been drawn mainly from South Sudan, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. The article provided some recommendations for education leadership and policy makers to improve on the delivery of quality education in public secondary schools in Africa.

Key words: Sub-Saharan Africa, Educational Leadership, Commitment to Provision, Quality Education

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Introduction

Educational leadership and quality of education are both crucial issues of concern in provision of secondary school education for the fact that, education is considered today the main element for development of nations (Gento, et al., 2015). Sub-Saharan Africa is behind the rest of the world in development of her knowledge capital, yet the capability of a nation to fully develop and utilize its skills and potentials depend on provision of quality education (World Bank report, 2018). In the 21st century globally there is emphasis on provision of quality education, Africa as a part of the globe is not exceptional. Quality education is perceived as the only way to development of any country because it provides holistic, innovative and technological skills that are required in development. Sifuna and Sawamura, (2009) argue that quality is the base of all educational systems, quality of teachers who impart the knowledge, the teaching and learning, learning mechanism and environment provides effective learning and quality outcome. Leadership in education is a fundamental feature that acts as catalyst for provision of quality secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa (Gento, et al., 2015). The attention of many African countries has been drawn to secondary education after the introduction of the universal primary education across the continent, the increase in access to primary led to demand of secondary education. However, today there is high demand for qualified, well educated graduates to meet the market requirement in all sectors (Baghdady and Zaki, 2019). Ndala, (2006) stated that, Sub-Saharan African governments are facing several challenges in endeavoring to achieve their objective for provision of quality secondary education, challenges ranging from lack of finances to run schools, lack of qualified, committed teachers and inadequate number of educational leaders, lack of trained and competent teachers in the secondary schools. Head teachers and teachers in some countries are not motivated and are also not committed to their duties, lack of infrastructures to accommodate the masses, lack of teaching resources to highlight but a few.

The purpose of this article is to establish the leadership's commitment in providing quality education in Public Secondary Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa and propose concrete solutions that policy makers may adopt to address challenges in provision of quality education. A literature review method was employed to interrogate the perspective of other scholars in the subject matter. Leadership's commitment is core to all quality educational practices pertaining to all staff in the school, right from the teachers, non-teaching staff performance and the students who are the recipients of the services offered.

Statement of the Problem

Leadership's commitment is central to all academic underpinnings. In order for the educational sector to function well, the leadership must be well informed and committed to

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undertake his/her duties. However, in Sub-Saharan African countries, many education leaders are not well prepared to undertake their duties. Many secondary school administrators are ill-prepared to face the modern changing world's challenges (Sifuna and Sawamura, 2010). Leaders tend to neglect their duties or rely on delegation of duties to their deputies without proper supervision of the quality of school activities such as teaching and learning, teaching staff competency and support staff quality of work.

In many African countries the most urgent concern for educational leadership is about the school enrolment rather than the quality of education standard. Around the 1970s and 1980s policy makers and education leaderships in Sub-Saharan Africa were concern about access to school, that was the prime requirement (Mulkeen, Chapman, Dejaeghere and Leu, 2007). However, in current Sub-Saharan Africa the requirements of education are much more than the enrolment. The demand for quality education is very high but most countries are behind schedule. They are not able to provide many requirements of education that would boost quality, for instance, issues to do with the qualification of academic staff, school infrastructure, funding to mention few. Some African Public secondary school still teach pupils under trees which may be risky and destructive, Learners may not concentrate in the class because they are taken up by the other activities that may be taking place in the surrounding.

In some African countries the priority of the leadership is financing violence or wars that are taking place non-stop in the country, so education comes last in the national annual budget. Activities such as construction of new schools, renovation of dilapidated ones, purchases of modern equipment for effective teaching such as computers, books, laboratory equipment comes last. In some instance, all these are not thought of and school administrators suffer silently because there is no one who pays attention to them. The education leadership in most cases is demoralized and in some instances, others run away from the education sector to other sectors that pay.

Method

The literature review method was employed to collect data for this study. The literature review is a method of research that involves the analysis of text books and other documents that contain relevant data to the study problem (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2018). According to Nyangau, (2014) literature reviews involves comprehensive analysis of document pertinent to the study and scrutinize the findings, the content and all parts that touch on the current study.

The data for this study were retrieved from the internet Google and Google scholar using the keywords in the study.

Educational Leadership

A leader is one who has ability to provoke the deliberation of the internal energy existing in other people so that they may voluntarily make effort to achieve the goals of the organization and in turn achieve personal dignity (Gento, 2002). The concept of educational leadership at times is perceived to mean school principal only, but the term encompasses a border area, it refers to all who have a responsibility of taking care of educational activities, the principals, deputies principal and other executive level staff members. Educational leadership is border it exists

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outside the classroom with all who are involved in guiding educational activities (UNESCO, 2016, Knerl, 2019). The exercise of leadership in education can be considered on a number of levels. However, the implementation varies from role of the principal of school to that of a teacher in charge of a group of students and that of a student acting as a leader of his class. Here we are concern of Educational leadership as catalyst that stimulates the educational activities to provide quality education.

Setiawati, (2016) contends that educational leadership contributes greatly to quality education, in that leaders ensure that educational institutions are delivering and maintaining quality education. However, quality assurance in educational institutions can only be achieved when both the leader and his staff are competent, united, hard working and committed to promote quality in education. The main concern of the leader here should be to foster the potentials of all members of the institution so as to achieve quality education.

Gento et al.(2015) enumerated the values that an educational leadership should have in order to provide quality in an educational institution as highlighted here:

Educational leader must be attractive (admirable/empowered) in order to unify the people with whom he/she works, and must be approachable so that the members can feel comfortable in dealing with him/her having close professional relationship. Should treat everybody in the educational institution with greatest kindness, consideration and acknowledgement and be mindful of each person's dignity.

Educational leadership must have ability to predict the most suitable strategies and activities that can solve future challenges. He/she is able to focus on the future for possible consequences and effects that may result from the decisions to be implemented. Educational leader must engage in intelligent and collaborative work that can motivate the group to use their cooperative effort to accomplish the school project. The leader must be committed to undertake crucial activities of the institution, emphasizing adherence to the institutional culture of quality and excellence.

According to the argument devised by Knerl, (2019) educational leader should have open mind and committed to lifelong learning since it is vital for success of the educational leadership. Committed leaders are able to educate themselves and their staff, keeping passé with the dynamic world changes, development and improvement of the quality of their work and institution. Educational leaders are people who can interact with the stakeholders comfortably and establish their real needs and requirements, which will enable him/her to satisfy their needs. Educational leader's position is very vital to many significant activities of education. He/she is the driver of the wheel so if he/she is not competent in the work, the schools end up delivering sub-standard work. They must be inclusive and having critical thinking mind, that can enable them make positive changes in the institutions and move with the world changes comfortably.

Quality Education

Quality is a difficult term to define in education because it means different thing to different stakeholders. Quality education is a world term today every nation is concerned about offering an education that is of quality that is effective and efficient. Quality education means suitability to the purpose, effective and efficient according to the taste of the society to whom education is

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offered (Oluwagbohunmi, 2013). He contends that quality of education to any society must take reference from what that society considers to be the purpose of education. Gento et al...(2015) defines quality education as that which has maximum suitable outcome as expected by the stakeholders. In the education context it means satisfying the expectations of Students, Parents, Teachers and the community at large. Quality education means having positive results from the education offered where the products fit the society's demands.

Harvey, (1999) argues that quality has five approaches pertaining to education, quality education could be defined as exceptional perfection, fitness of purpose and transformative. Quality education when defined as perfection implies the results of education are flawless and suitable to the required standard. Quality education as fitness of purpose refers to it in terms of the fulfillment of customers' needs and special requirements. Quality education as exceptional means something special, unique and distinctive. In educational terms it is linked to the notion of excellence. Quality education as value of money implies the return on investments, if the same outcome can be achieved at a lower cost, then the client has a quality product or service. Education reflects a value for money approaches. Increasingly students require value-for-money for the increasing cost to them of higher education. Quality education as transformative means enhancement and empowerment of students or the development of new knowledge.

Quality in education is subjective and its meaning is contested as per the different stakeholders' perception and demands. In the context of this study the most suitable definition is the fitness of purpose and quality education being transformative and empowers the recipients of the service. In a way a quality education must bring about a change in the learners, empowers them to practice the learnt knowledge and skills.

Commitment to Provision of Quality Secondary Education

Commitment is an intrinsic value that influences ones behavior to act. Commitment increases educational leaders' self-efficacy and enable him/her to work hard for the benefit of the people whom he/she leads. Commitment has several indicators, it provokes ones' disposition to trust the members with whom he/she works enabling delegation and sharing of responsibilities, building trust and reinforcing relationship among members of an organization (Day and Sammon, 2016). Education Leaders' commitment to his/her responsibility acts as a link chain that connects the entire educational institution, in that the action of the leader has impact on his/her staff, the students and entire school community. According to Boyce, (2015) the foundation of quality improvement in education is a clear conceptualization of the meaning of commitment, by all who are involve in provision of education.

Mart, (2013) argues that commitment is vital for a thriving educational leadership. Committed leaders are concerned with the development of their institutions and students; they work tirelessly to improve the status of the school standard as well as the students' well fare. Committed leaders have propensity to perform their role effectively and efficiently with diligence and professionalism. They manifest their commitment in identifying themselves with the institution that they work for.

Commitment in provision of quality secondary education in Sub Saharan Africa is manifested in the struggles of the governments to finance education and allocate budget to

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finance educational activities. Since the world summit in Dakar 2000, that was emphasizing the provision of education for all, African countries both those whose economies are relatively good and those who are in abject poverty have made a step to improve provision of secondary education (UNESCO, 2011). We have provided a few examples of some countries that are poor but have shown some effort to provide secondary education although the issue of quality is still daunting.

Malawi is one of the countries; according to Bernett, (2018) whose leaders endeavored to provide quality education through provision of teaching learning material, introduction of effective teaching methodologies that teachers can handle friendly. The government allocates a budget for education every year and also collaborate with international bodies that support education in the country for instance United State Agency for International Development (USAID), provide nine programs in Malawi to improve the educational standard. The Japanese International Corporation Agency (JICA) is also providing support to public secondary schools through provision of workshops for science teachers, and offering teaching learning materials to schools (Borgen Project, 2017).

South Sudan soon after its independence in 2011, embarked on restructuring all its programs in the various crucial sectors in the country and one of the crucial sector was education. The government of South Sudan in collaboration with donors like the UNICEF, USAID and JICA worked hard to improve the provision of secondary education in the country (South Sudan Ministry of General Education, 2012). In 2012 the government worked in collaboration with UNICEF to develop a new curriculum for the basic education in the country and all these were the indicators of commitment to improvement of the quality of education offered in the country.

The same scenario is seen in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), it has made very significant improvement in the education sector, constructed infrastructure to accommodate the masses, allocated budget every year for education activities in adherence to the Millennium Development Goals (World Bank, 2015).

The Republic of Central Africa (RCA) despite the low economy, the government also established the structures for secondary education and allocates a budget for the educational sector, in adherence to the notion of provision of Education for all (UNESCO, 2008). Although the situation of Central African Republic is a bit pathetic with ravages of war, very minute development but government is trying the little they could to improve the situation with the help of donors.

Challenges to Attainment of Quality Education

Taking Sub-Saharan Africa as the area of concern, attainment of quality education is faced with a lot of challenges most especially in those countries that have weak economy and those that are affected by the repercussion of war (DRC, RCA and South Sudan). In these countries attainment of quality secondary education is difficult because of poor conditions of service, teachers lack of instructional materials, and the physical structures for accommodating the masses that would like to access secondary education and lack of funds (UNESCO, 2011).

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The argument on improving quality of secondary education in Sub Saharan Africa, has always revolved around inappropriate curriculum, this has been an issue of great concern in Sub Saharan Africa. Some countries' curriculum is out dated, does not suit the current needs of secondary education, for instance today the world is talking of competent based curriculum yet some countries in Sub Saharan Africa are still using the teacher centered method in teaching while the world is emphasizing learner centered methods (World Bank, 2015).

Teachers are core to any educational activity, but in Sub Saharan Africa, some countries lack trained teachers to teach in the secondary schools and since the number of students may be overwhelming schools end up employing the unqualified teachers to teach in the secondary schools hence the quality of education is compromised because they lack the teaching skills and methodologies (Ndala, 2006).

Lack of funds to finance the secondary school activities, such as instructional materials, infrastructure and funds for financing teachers' salaries all this impact negatively on the quality of education offered in the secondary schools in low economy countries of Sub Saharan Africa. In some instance qualified secondary school teachers run way from the teaching profession because it pays poorly or at times salaries are delayed causing a lot of suffering to families (Baghdady and Zaki, 2019).

There are also technological challenges, the low economy countries of Sub Saharan Africa, lack modern technology of imparting knowledge in secondary school, for instance in some countries like South Sudan electricity supply is not available, and such that using electrical appliances like computers and projectors for teaching becomes impossible. Teachers are not also train to use such appliances which are very crucial in the modern education systems. In some countries the teacher is the only resource for teaching, no text books for learner to explore, no other teaching aids, as such the quality of what is imparted lacks back up and learners passed through the school but come out with nothing and are not able to express themselves or portray the knowledge of what was taught (Baghdady and Zaki, 2019).

Poor leadership, some principals of secondary school appointed to the position of a principal of school because they have served for many years as teachers. But they lack the training of leadership and skills of how to lead an educational institution effectively. This impact on the institution negatively in that such leader cannot plan for the institution constructively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Leadership and provision of quality education are very significant elements. Sub-Saharan Africa is still behind the rest of the world in development of her knowledge capital, the capability of a nation to fully develop and utilize its skills and potentials depend on provision of quality education. Although, some government in Sub Saharan Africa have demonstrated the commitment to provision of secondary schools in their countries and allocated budget for education, the substantial effect is still not felt or seen in the ground. The budgets allocated are very small to fit the needs in the educational sector. More commitment to provision of quality education is still needed, education is available in almost all countries of Sub Saharan Africa, but the quality of what is offered is daunting. Teachers as the drivers of education are not sufficient and even those who are already in the field are not motivated so they running away from the

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teaching profession. The training of teachers needs to be taken seriously in order to improve the quality of education in Sub Saharan countries that are still lagging behind development.

The Sub Saharan governments especially of those countries that are still lagging behind in development should benchmark widely in the region and adopt the working technique of how to offer quality education that will help the nation develop.

Ministry of Education should consider appointing or employing qualified educational leaders to the Secondary Schools. The Ministry of Education should employ leaders who are dynamic and flexible to modern educational changes in ways of imparting knowledge to learners effectively. They should also motivate secondary school principals and teachers so that they may be committed to their duties of offering quality teaching and learning.

The governments and the stakeholders should collaborate in provision of resources to facilitate the work of teachers in the secondary schools. Secondary school are significant centers that lay solid foundation for the university education so there is need to handled them with care and commitment so that the outcome of education may fit the job market comfortably.

Governments in Sub-Saharan Africa should consider the training of education leaders and workers in the education sector as a priority, since leaders and teachers cannot give what they do not have. The current society needs advance knowledge in technology which can only be acquired through training.

All leaders in charge of educational activities must ensure that all funds meant for development of the educational activities be utilized for it but not diverted to other projects in the country. Education can be advanced to match the developed world only if all finances meant for it are utilized constructively for the purpose.

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