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The Role of Teachers as Instructional Leaders and Their Contribution to Quality of Education in Africa: A Case of Kenya

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Abstract:
The dual issues of quality education and teachers as instructional leaders will continue attracting attention in Africa and the world over. This is because the demographic, political, social, technological and global factors will continue shaping the education sector in ways that will demand effective leadership from teachers as leaders of learning. It is against this backdrop, that the Kenya Government has initiated curriculum reforms as a way of ensuring that quality education is maintained. The reform plan represents an effort to move largely away from a theory and test-based system to a skills-based system. This paper therefore sets out to analyse the role of teachers as instructional leaders and their contribution to quality education in the context of the on-going curriculum reforms. The paper will utilize the systems approach in its analysis and use performance data of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations based on 2015 and 2016 years. The paper will then provide some suggestions on how to enhance the leadership capacities of the teachers as instructional leaders.

Keywords: Teacher, instructional leaders, quality education, curriculum reforms, pedagogy

1. Introduction

As instructional leader's teachers contribute to quality education through a product of strenuous practice and considerable experience, which starts right when the teaching practice commences during training. A teacher always attempts to alter student's understanding so that he or she begins to conceptualize phenomena and ideas in the way he/she, as a subject expert, conceptualizes them. In order for teaching to be successful, it has to satisfy a number of requirements, for example, it has to be methodical, planned a result of resourcefulness on the part of the teacher; be activity-based, be related to the learners experience and to life; and be able to follow a logical sequence. This calls for systematic induction into good teaching through persistent correct instructional practices and leadership (Killion J and C. Harrison, 2006).

Quality education is assessed in terms of facilities, financial inputs and outputs in examinations or test scores of students as well as employability and productivity. A useful analytical approach often used to look at educational quality is to apply a systems approach of input, process and outcome interacting to produce the quality outcome intended from the education programme.

In an educational system, the major inputs are students, teachers, curricula, learning materials, and physical facilities. These inputs brought together in the right manner and the right combination via appropriate processes makes teaching and learning effective. The outcome of this transaction is the learning achievements – knowledge, skills, behavior and attitudes intended to be acquired by learners (Republic of Kenya, 2015).

To ensure that curriculum is responsive to the needs of learners in any education, the curriculum is renewed continuously as and when the need arises. To this end, the curriculum reform process is in progress in Kenya. The new curriculum was piloted in 470 schools before the rollout later this year. The curriculum framework is premised on three pathways, that is; Arts and Sports Science, Talents and Academic pathways. Teachers as Leaders of Learning are required to take keen interest in determinants of quality education (Republic of Kenya, 2015).

2. Major Determinants of Quality Education and Instructional Leadership

Quality education is a function of many variables. Key among these variables include: Curriculum content; relevant instructional materials and equipment; conducive learning environments; quality of teaching force and

leadership; assessment and monitoring of learning achievements and; addressing internal inefficiencies of education at all levels, (UNICEF, 2000). Quality education should shift from merely passing exams to encompass the discovery of talents, development of analytical, cognitive and creative potentials. It is also determined by enhanced critical imagination: positive self-image, spiritual and ethical values. Finally, quality is enhanced by efficient and effective management and prudent utilization of resources in institutions. Maintaining quality standards at all stages of education should be one of the highest priorities teachers put into consideration. Effective steps should be taken to implement the measures recommended for this purpose including those for teacher's professional development and improvement of status, work on curriculum and learning materials, building model institutions in rural areas, use of information technology, strengthening learning assessment and examinations, and reducing student- teacher ratio (UNICEF, 2000).

The computer is a tool which is increasingly being used in teaching and instruction and learning at all levels in Kenyan schools. Computer assists learning through a variety of ways and has now gained popularity in educational institutional and many schools are now acquiring computers. There is value addition if they are used for teaching and learning effectively. The implication is that all teachers will have to be computer literate. It is against this backdrop, that teachers are supposed to be instructional leaders.

3. The Role of Teachers as Instructional Leaders

Teachers exhibit leadership in multiple, sometimes overlapping ways. Some leadership roles are formal with designated responsibilities. In Kenya, teachers today play rather formal roles. If one is appointed to head a school or college, he/she will assume the role of a principal or head teacher, depending with the institution one is in charge. They also play other roles like deputy principal/ head teacher, senior teacher, head of department, class teacher or subject head. All these responsibilities assist in shaping learners academic and non-academic outcomes. Other more informal roles emerge as teachers interact with their peers. The variety of roles ensures that teachers can find ways to lead that fit their talents and interests. Regardless of the roles they assume, teacher leadership shape the culture of their schools, improve student learning, and influence practice among their peers (Killion J and C. Harrison, 2006).

Teacher leaders assume a wide range of roles to support school and student success. Whether these roles are assigned formally or shared informally, they build the entire school's capacity to improve. Because teachers can lead in a variety of ways, many teachers can serve as leaders among their peers.

The next section of the paper briefly provides the Kenyan context of curriculum reforms to provide a basis in which the leadership roles of teachers as instructional leaders will be discussed.

4. The Kenyan Context of Education Reforms

The 2012 'Report of the Task Force on the Re-alignment of the Education Sector to the Kenya Vision 2030 and Constitution of Kenya 2010' saw the Government develop the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2015 on 'Reforming Education and Training in Kenya'. The Sessional Paper states that the education sector is guided by the national philosophy, which places education at the centre stage of the country's human and economic development. The Sessional Paper recommends reforming the Education and Training Sector to provide for the development of the individual learner's potential in a holistic and integrated manner, while producing intellectually, emotionally and physically balanced citizens. It further recommends a competency-based curriculum; establishment of a national learning assessment system; early identification and nurturing of talents; the introduction of national values and national cohesion and their integration into the curriculum; and the introduction of three learning pathways at senior secondary school level (Republic of Kenya, 2015).

Kenya's Vision 2030 and Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2015 put a strong emphasis on the importance of science, technology and innovation, but the current curriculum does not provide deliberate policies, appropriate pedagogical approaches and sufficient resources to lay a strong foundation for the development of these skills. In addition, innovative, vocational and technical skills considered important for meeting the demand for skilled labour and the country's goal of industrialization are not well catered for in the mainstream curriculum.

In order to do this, highly knowledgeable, reflective, professional teachers that have additional enhanced skills and confidence in a range of modern pedagogical tools such as coaching, facilitating, and mentoring shall be developed and supported.   This will enable teachers to act as role models for learners, caring for and inspiring every child to achieve his or her potential. It will also enable teachers to be flexible in adapting this new curriculum to meet the needs, talents and interests of every child, constantly diagnosing the learner's needs and collaborating with other stakeholders that influence the child such as parents, other professionals and the local and wider community (Republic of Kenya, 2015).
To provide bespoke, differentiated, innovative learning experiences that ensure each and every child can take their place in the world with confidence and pride as 21st Century Kenyans, the new curriculum shall ensure the following. That all learning can be made contextually relevant for every learner's holistic growth and development so that they can all become independent, confident, cooperative, and inspired learners who love learning and are keen, focused and able to apply their learning in order to make constructive contributions as productive responsible citizens who cooperate with peers around the world in their learning, through enhanced digital literacy and mastery.

In so doing, the reformed curriculum seeks to ensure that the next and future generations of Kenyan citizens shall be both patriotic and global, equipped with the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values to thrive in the modern world, confident about their proud and rich cultural heritage and contributing this heritage to make the world a better place for everyone.

4.1. Curriculum Reforms' Mission

The mission of the basic education curriculum reforms is 'nurturing every learner's potential'. The curriculum is designed to ensure that it provides opportunities to identify the potential that every learner brings to school and nurture this potential through the learning pathways that will be provided at Senior Secondary School. The mission will ensure that no child is labeled a failure at the end of basic education.

A competency-based approach enables meaningful connections within and between subject areas through a focus on competencies. Subjects and learning areas will continue to be taught and will be the vehicles through which the core competencies are developed over time. In view of the different interpretations of the meaning of a competency-based curriculum, and specifically for basic education, the Framework provides clarity on the concept itself and also how the curriculum will be designed, implemented and assessed. In the context of the Kenyan Competency Based Curriculum (KCBC), competency will be understood as *'the ability to apply appropriate knowledge and skills to successfully perform a function'*. Within this context, the curriculum will be designed to emphasize the importance of not only developing skills and knowledge but also applying these to real life situations.

The integration of pertinent and contemporary issues and service learning into the framework will provide the opportunity for learners to develop and apply their skills and knowledge, or in other words, their competencies. Based on the Needs Assessment Study carried out by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD 2016), and the vision and mission of the BECF, the seven core competencies to be achieved by every learner in basic education are: communication and collaboration; self-efficacy, critical thinking and problem solving; creativity and imagination; citizenship, digital literacy and learning to learn. This will be achieved through the new education system illustrated below.
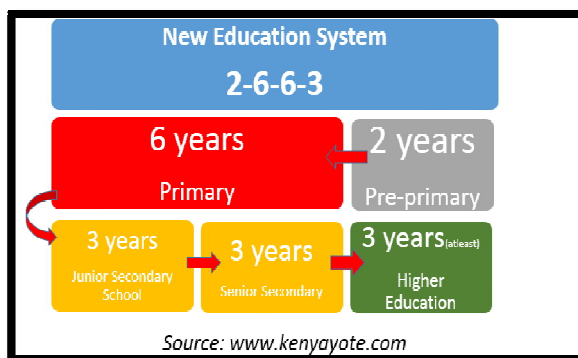
<u>4.1.1. Education System</u>

Figure 1: Structure Illustrating How the New Education System (2-6-6-3) Will Work

5. Current Education Status in Kenya

In–service programmes and reforms in education are documented in policy documents such as the National Development Policy, NESP Vol. 1. 2017/2018; the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2015 which addresses quality of education. Improvement of the quality of curriculum delivery, through INSET activities across the country and e-learning enhanced through the provision of ICT to schools has been well articulated. Currently, there are schools offering computer studies as a subject. The ministry also supplies schools with computers and funds them for installation of Local Area Networks (LANs) and also train teachers on computer skills. The government also provides learning materials and facilities; school fees guidelines have been put in place to cushion pupils from humble backgrounds; the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI), Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology in Africa (CEMASTEA), the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) and institutions which train teachers on special education are capacity building teachers and school principals. This is being done as an effort to ensure quality in education and that teachers have both the skills and capacity to deliver the curriculum well. There are ongoing reforms in curriculum, examination system and structure of schooling. Understaffing undermines quality of education. Most of the schools are understaffed resulting in recruitment of many Board of Management (BOM) teachers.

The Ministry has made an effort to address the challenge of laboratory equipment by providing funds for the purchase of science equipment to five schools in each sub county annually. Furthermore, National Government Constituency Development Fund (NG-CDF) is also providing funds to set up laboratories in some areas. From the foregoing context of reforms, it is clear that teachers must be re-oriented to take up the roles of instructional leadership.

6. Issues & Challenges in Provision of Education and Their Implications to Instructional Leadership

The issues and challenges include the fact the curriculum and teaching are geared to prepare students for higher education, which only a fraction of students manage. Secondly, the curriculum and teaching do not fully relate to prospects for gainful employment, entrepreneurship and practical skills, which need not be a disqualification for further education. Thirdly, secondary education is characterized by low student performance, especially for students from the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) regions, Special Needs Education (SNE) learners and sub county schools in national examinations. Core subjects such as mathematics, languages and sciences have recorded low grades over the years. Fourthly, recent expansion

in enrolment has not been matched by increase in physical capacity and human resource. Fifthly, many schools with computers are not connected to the internet. Sixthly, the pupil-textbook and pupil-teacher ratios are high; and lastly, many sub-county schools – particularly those recently opened – lack essential facilities like laboratories. This compromises the teaching of practical lessons, hence affecting performance in sciences. Seventh, most teachers in secondary schools rarely attend in-service courses/INSETS or courses for their professional development except in Mathematics and Science (SMASE), where they are regular and compulsory. Lastly is the issue of insufficient SNE teachers.

6.1. Public and Private Secondary Schools Enrolment

Class	2016	2017*	2018*	2019*	2020*	2021*	2022*
Form 1	835,609	939,156	1,022,000	1,077,061	1,128,312	1,179,118	1,236,306
Form 2	726,890	832,316	939,156	1,022,000	1,077,061	1,128,312	1,179,118
Form 3	685,962	724,026	832,316	939,156	1,022,000	1,077,061	1,128,312
Form 4	622,568	683,259	724,026	832,316	939,156	1,022,000	1,077,061
Total	2,871,028	3,178,757	3,517,498	3,870,534	4,166,530	4,406,492	4,620,798

Table 1: Enrolment of Students in Secondary Schools in Kenya
Source: Ministry of Education – EMIS; 2015 Projections*

The Government currently intends to provide 100% complete day secondary education effective January, 2019 that will require additional cost in the provision of grants for infrastructure improvements from Kshs.6 Billion already disbursed to schools in the 2017/2018 F/Y and increase in Free Day Secondary Education (FDSE) capitation. In addition, the Government is committed to recruit more teachers to improve on teacher shortage to improve on the learning and teaching outcomes.

The Government is also currently investing on the integration of ICT in secondary schools, which will require additional funding to realize the objectives of Vision 2030 in addition to the provision of complete free day secondary education. This will enable schools to leverage on ICT in making access to teaching and learning resources irrespective of geographic location. There still exists a shortage of teachers in many schools resulting in recruitment of temporary teachers by school Boards of Management (BOM) that also employ non-teaching staff using FDSE capitation funds. Consequently, considering that these funds are not adequate, it has resulted in schools charging extra levies above the gazetted fees structure by the Government. This has resulted to increased cost of providing secondary education, which is not affordable to many poor households.

7. The Roles of Teachers as Instructional Leaders in Kenya

From the foregoing analysis of education reforms in Kenya and the issues and challenges obtaining in the context of education reforms, it is imperative that teachers must be instructional leaders. So, what are some of the leadership options available to teachers in our curriculum? The following roles are a sample of the many ways; teachers can contribute to their schools' success as instructional leaders.

7.1. Resource Provider

According to the teacher training in Kenya, teachers help their colleagues by sharing instructional resources. These might include instructional materials, readings, websites or other resources to use with students. They might also share such professional resources as articles, books, lesson or lesson plans and assessment tools as they go about their team-teaching activities (Killion J and C. Harrison, 2006).

7.2. Instructional Specialist

In their leadership endeavours, they are instructional specialists as they help colleagues implement effective teaching strategies to ensure their contribution to quality of education in the school. This help might include ideas for differentiating instruction or planning lessons in partnership with fellow teachers. Instructional specialists might study action research-based classroom strategies. This is in concurrence with (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001) who implore that instructional methodologies are appropriate for the school when the findings are shared with colleagues.

7.3. Curriculum Specialist

Understanding content standards, how various components of the curriculum link together, and how to use the curriculum in planning instruction and assessment is essential to ensuring consistent curriculum implementation throughout a school. Curriculum specialists lead teachers to agree on standards, follow the adopted curriculum, use common pacing charts, and develop shared assessments (Killion J and C. Harrison, 2006).

7.4. Classroom Supporter

While enhancing instruction in class, classroom supporters work inside classrooms to help teachers implement new ideas, often by demonstrating a lesson, co-teaching, co-facilitation or observing and giving feedback. According to Blase and Blase (2006), they found that consultation with peers enhanced teachers' self-efficacy (teachers' belief in their

own abilities and capacity to successfully solve teaching and learning problems) as they are reflected on practice and grew together, and it also encouraged a bias for action (improvement through collaboration) on the part of teachers. (p.22)

7.5. Learning Facilitator

Facilitating professional learning opportunities among staff members is another role for teacher leaders. When teachers learn with and from one another, they can focus on what most directly improves student learning. Their professional learning becomes more relevant, focused on teachers' classroom work, and aligned to fill gaps in student learning. Such communities of learning can break the norms of isolation present in many schools (Blase and Blase (2006).

7.6. Mentor and Coach

Serving as a mentor or coach for novice teachers is a common role for teacher leaders or subject head. Mentors or coaches serve as role models; acclimate new teachers to a new school and advise new teachers about instruction, curriculum, procedure, practices, and policies. Being a mentor or coach takes a great deal of time and expertise and makes a significant contribution to the development of a new professional (Larner, M. 2004).

7.7. School Leader

Being a school leader means serving in a department or on a committee, such as a school improvement team; acting as a department chair; supporting school initiatives; or representing the school on community or county task forces or committees that focuses on school improvement. A school leader shares the vision of the school, aligns his or her professional goals with those of the school and county and shares responsibility for the success of the school as a whole (Larner, M. (2004).

7.8. Data Coach

In most cases, teachers have access to a great deal of data; more often than not, they don't use that data to drive classroom instruction. Teacher leaders can lead conversations that engage their peers in analyzing and using this information to strengthen instruction in school and class.

7.9. Catalyst for Change

Teacher leaders can also be catalysts for change, visionaries who are "never content with the *status quo* but rather always looking for a better way" (Larner, 2004, p. 32). Teachers who take on the catalyst role feel secure in their own work and have a strong commitment to continual improvement. They pose questions to generate analysis of student learning.

7.10. Learner

Among the most important roles teacher leaders assume is that of learner. Learners model continual improvement, demonstrate lifelong learning, and use what they learn to help all students achieve. Therefore, teacher professional development is critical for learners' success.

8. Conclusion

In the context of education reforms as the one witnessed in Kenya; teachers must take the lead as change agents. This means they must embrace the role of instructional leadership at various levels in the school. It is only through such commitment that their contribution can lead to the realization of quality education in Africa. Some of the roles will include curriculum support leadership; curriculum support material development, data management leadership, mentoring and coaching roles as well as technology instructors.

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