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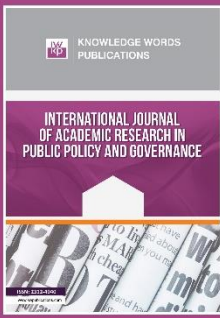
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Stakeholder Participation in Improving Access to and Success in Education: The Kenyan Experience

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Abstract

Empirical research evidence has revealed that all nations generally endeavor to provide the best quality basic education for its youth so as to achieve sustainable development. This has been demonstrated through heavy investment in education sector, establishment of the Education Commissions, sessional papers, frequent policy changes, reviews of regulations including other edicts from the ministries in charge of education. In Kenya, in effort to provide quality education and achieve one hundred percent (100%) transition rate and success in basic education, major reforms have been undertaken to ensure that education goals are attained and produce graduates with relevant skills who are competitive in the world of work after completing basic education. Among the strategies employed to realize these has been increased stakeholder involvement in the provision of basic education. The key stakeholders include the Government of Kenya, foreign and local donors, parents, sponsors as defined by the Basic Education Act of 2013, teachers, school management, students and community leadership among others. This paper therefore, examines the stakeholder involvement in improving access to and success in education with specific examples drawn from the Kenyan basic education. The paper, therefore, provides a brief global perspective to corroborate the Kenyan experiences. The paper further examines key principles for success in education and provides a critique with examples of major impediments to the realization of one hundred percent (100%) access to and success in education in the context of stakeholder participation. This is discussed under the framework of achievement versus Trust dilemma model that characterize stakeholder role in schools in Kenya. The design is specifically aimed at stimulating further debate on national education goals that ultimately define the national ethos. The paper concludes by making observations that the hallmark to achieving transition lies in the ability to provide quality education in Kenya. Stakeholders operating under systems approach framework have the key to the realization of improved access to and success in basic education.

Key words: Stakeholder Participation, Quality Education, Access to Success in Education.

Introduction

Education is viewed as a basic human right since it provides the foundation upon which peace and other forms of sustainable development can be laid (UNESCO, 2017). Further, education determines the quality of life by imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes to be self-reliant, acts as agent of transmitting culture from one generation to another, and reconstructing the society for the better by

developing the child academically. It also provides the child with vocational practical life-long skills, acquisition of social skills such as cooking of staple food, First Aid etc; and mastery of intellectual skills.

Social inequalities tend to decline whenever the level of educational participation increases. According to World Bank (2005) demand for secondary education is soaring worldwide and this is because many countries achieve universal primary schooling. Secondary education has the greatest ability to enhance an individual's potential to participate effectively in national building, improved health care and also lower fertility. More importantly, it tends to produce the greatest payoff in causing upward social mobility. Secondary education provides a bridge between primary, labour market and tertiary education. Kenya in particular, access to quality education is enshrined in the constitution and considered as a basic human rights and has made basic education free and compulsory.

In the USA, significant efforts to provide access to quality basic education have been made. The Coleman Report on equal Educational opportunities (Coleman, 1966) said that although the United States had made significant efforts to provide wide access to quality basic education, disparities still existed. In Canada on the other hand, research findings show that heavy funding in education has contributed to improved student achievement at international stage, comparatively. Reforms in Education centred around improving the infrastructure and retaining experienced teachers in the system as the main catalyst for improvement of students' academic achievement. In Nigeria, Secondary education plays a fundamental role for labour markets but skills are still a challenge to graduates of secondary education who seek formal employment. South Africa's general education policy is to address access through increase in educational resources. There still exist disparities in academic achievement despite heavy funding. In the case of Uganda, with success of UPE government introduced Universal Secondary Education in 2007. More than half a million secondary school children in 1471 schools are under Universal Secondary Education. A big improvement in terms of access. However, quality of education produced is still questionable in spite of heavy funding.

The Kenyan scenario is that subsidized and Free Day Secondary education focused on addressing low transition and completion rates respectively. But unfortunately, due to perceptions created, parents refused to support FSE because it was viewed as government support program. High levels of corruption in government departments as well as school administration have been accused of misappropriation of funds meant for free education. Lack of confidence by donor agencies in financial management of government departments have had serious budgetary implications leading to delays and shortfalls for education programs. Despite global and local efforts, there is emerging evidence indicating that although there is massive investment in education sector, there is still a mismatch with the learning outcomes in most countries. Hence the dilemma of access to and success in education. According to the Ministry of Education (MOEST, 2014) quality of education tends to be evaluated in terms of the number students passing and the expectations of parents is that their children perform well in National examinations. This is obviously not enough. What constitutes quality is more than mere passing of examinations. Achieving quality is through a deliberate and definite process.

Factors to consider for Success in Education

Customer Focus

Meet customers' requirements and strive to exceed the expectations. Attract and retain the confidence of students, parents, local community, sponsor etc. This contributes to the overall success and involves ensuring that aspects of the Institution put its learners satisfaction first.

Leadership

Unity of purpose and direction and create conditions that are enabling for effective output. A school Principal must demonstrate leadership by leading from the front in the entire curriculum implementation. Good leadership also recognizes the contribution of other stakeholders in the school. When this is abused, entropy in the system is possible.

Engagement of People It is essential for the school that all people are competent and empowered. Involve staff at all levels and respect them as individuals. No person can operate exactly like the other. However, education being a science, there are systems, rules and regulations to guide the operations.

Improvement

Successful schools have an ongoing focus on improvement. This will ensure current levels of performance are maintained and create new opportunities. School culture helps the school to keep on improving even in times of succession and transition. Culture should direct all the school members to avoid shocks when principals are transferred or retired.

Evidence - Based Decision Making

Decision based on the analysis of information is more likely to produce desired results. It is important to understand cause and affect relationships. Facts, evidence and data analysis lead to greater objectivity and confidence in decisions made. Good schools have collapsed due to incivility. Innocent people end up getting hurt and demoralized in the process and hence work output decline. When people in the school refer to the school as "their school" and not "our school" already there is a problem.

Relationship in Management

For continued success, schools manage their relationships with interested parties such as suppliers. Sustained success is more likely to be achieved when a school manages its relationships. Established legislation and code of conduct should guide the interactions. This leads to increased productivity and honesty in dealing with one another.

Stakeholders in the Provision of Education in Kenya

The role of stakeholders is presented in the framework of systems approach. Where they operate as systems, subsystems with direct and indirect interactions and inter dependence. Failure in one subsystem leads to unintended malfunctioning in the system.

Stakeholders need to be engaged in the process to education in order to make it successful. Integrating stakeholders, drivers of sustainability in higher education can contribute to the development of sustainable initiatives and partnerships (Filho, 2016). Quality education is one of the society's most important resources for facing its daily challenges and sustainable development is one of the determining factors for posterity. Education for sustainable development should therefore aim

at providing opportunities for stakeholder interactions involving reflective listening, responding to stakeholder's needs and aspirations.

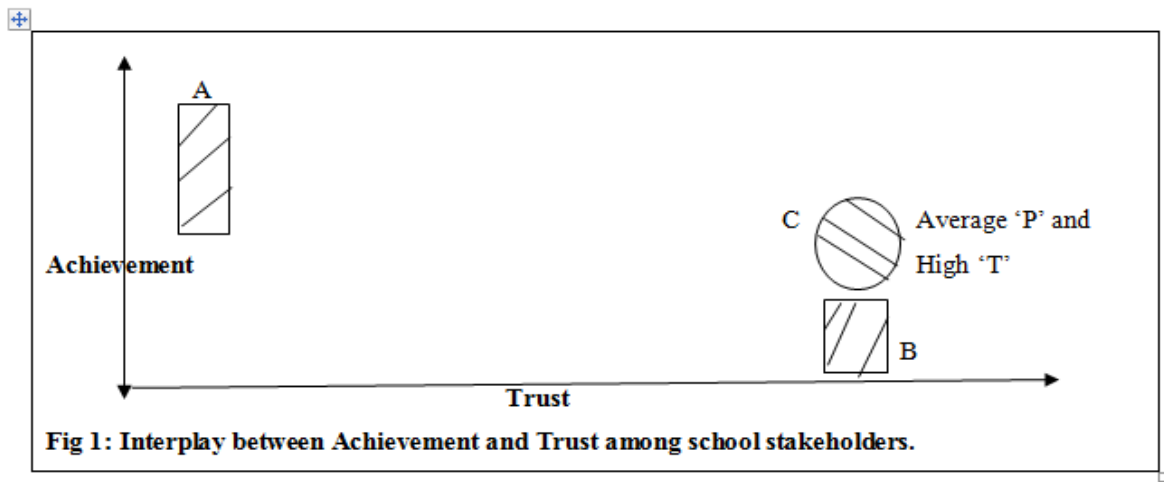
In Kenya, the role of stakeholders varies from provision of physical facilities, financing and curriculum implementation. Financing of education in particular is a partnership of the government of Kenya and donor agencies. According to MOEST (2015) education financing is highly decentralized and 87% of the total education budget is sent directly to schools. Sometimes due to bureaucracies in the processing of the funds, delays are experienced causing panic and outcry among the school stakeholders (Wafula, 2012). This magnitude of delays has inevitably affected transition and increased wastage in basic education (Mbayah, 2018).

The competence based curriculum in Kenya lays great emphasis to the role of Parents and guardians on the learning of the children. Parents role is significantly enhanced to ensure learners do homework under their supervision and support instill and nurture morals and values. Parents are also expected to provide protection from physical and emotional harm. This is a good idea as it's a motivator for the learners. The parents have the obligation to provide curricular and co-curricular support for their school children, (MOEST, 2014). Parents create conditions in which children learn more effectively and progressively.

Ongoing research shows that family engagement in schools improves student achievement, reduces absenteeism and restores parent's confidence in their children's education. Children with involved parents and other caregivers earn higher grades and test scores and have better social skills and show improved behaviour (KICD, 2016).

However, experts warn of obvious discrimination among learners. There are many students in schools who lack parents and therefore a curriculum that prescribes this framework is blind to current realities. Religious organizations on the other hand have had a strong interaction with schooling in Kenya. Missionaries had great control over Kenya's education system before independence. After Independence, the mutual adaptation between church and state has gradually grown and lasts to this day. In this cooperation, religious organizations have been providing facilities, establishing schools and spiritual nourishment as enshrined in the Kenyan Constitution of 2010 and the Basic Education Act, 2013.

The synergy provided by stakeholders is significant for provision of quality education and achievement of one hundred percent (100%) transition in basic education. This however remains a mirage because some actors in education are dishonest and are delighted when the school appears to perform well despite the hue and cry concerning the faulty process of achieving success. Excellent performance without good character taints not only the process involved in education but more importantly greater resentment is directed to the graduates of the cheating education system. Education experts therefore must address this moral dilemma: Should there be high success in education with low trust level among the players and the process or should there be high trust in the process and low performance. This is diagrammatically presented below to ignite further debate.



Key

- A – High Performance and low Trust
- B – High Trust and low Performance
- C – Average Performance and High Trust

Table 1: Summary of stakeholders in Education in Kenya

S/NO	Stakeholders	Role in Education Access and Transition
1.	Government of Kenya (MOE)	Funding of education Policy formulation Quality assurance and standards Provision of instructional resources Security Employ and transfer teachers
2.	Parents	Pay boarding and lunch fees Discipline of students Participate in funding of approved programmes Guidance and counseling Suppliers
3.	Sponsor	Sponsor needy students Spiritual nourishment
4.	School Management (BOM, PA, Principal)	Budgeting and Finance Management Identification of projects Sourcing of funds Discipline of staff Employment of workers
5.	Teachers	Monitoring the curriculum Implement / Supervision of the curriculum Guidance and counseling Administrators – subject level, departmental level and Deputy and Principal – Discipline Role models identification, Nurturing and development of talents Guiding on future careers.
4	Students	Main customer Maintain discipline to promote national cohesion Interaction Provide ready market for locally sourced products assist in administration of the school
5.	Community leadership	Resource mobilization Security for the schools Suppliers to the school Infrastructure development Sponsor students through Bursary, CDF, etc

Impediments to Improving Access and Success in Education

- i. Parents withdraw from paying any additional levies to supplement the free Primary and secondary Education due to misconceptions (Mbaya, 2018).
- ii. High levels of corruption in government departments as well as some school administration.
- iii. Lack of confidence by donor agencies in the financial management of government departments has had great budgetary implications and shortfalls in disbursement of funds to school leading to increased dropouts and seriously compromising quality of learning.
- iv. Bureaucracies in processing of funds. The magnitude of this delay is always at its climax in second term each year in Kenya's Education system. There was some attempt to align the school Calendar to the fiscal year but that remains a mere proposal.
- v. Poverty levels in counties in Kenya continue to rise. This is a significant factor working against equity and access to education.
- vi. Frequent policy shifts that create the unintended instability in the schools. The current reforms in the ministry of education and the Teachers Service Commission are a case in point. Empirical research findings show that teachers feel isolated and punished for working at home. Death rate among primary head teachers has gone up. Many are also suddenly on medication mainly due to work related stress.
- vii. Community leadership that is biased in recommending promotions to management positions where tribalism and ethnicity is the criteria used for discrimination and selection.
- viii. Level of teacher motivation Education providers must understand their roles, play by the rules and ensure professionalism at all times in the school system. It has worked in other countries, therefore it can work! A demoralized teacher is bound to affect the overall implementation of the curriculum. The ministry ought to be firm but fair to teachers in the reform processes. No education system is greater than its teacher!

Conclusion

The hallmark of improved access to and success in education and achievement of one hundred percent (100%) transition lies in the provision of quality education. The role of stakeholders as defined through the systems approach and in Kenyan laws is significant and if adhered to will ensure all those who join Secondary schools transit with relevant competencies, skills and right values. As nations endeavour to provide quality education, decisions have to be made regarding achievement levels and trust in the education processes and the ultimate product of the system.

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