

The Rough Path Encountered by Teachers in Imparting Knowledge to Students in Kawangware Informal Private Schools in Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Since the attainment of her independence in 1963, Kenya embarked on fighting three challenges that is; poverty, diseases and ignorance. Education is an important pillar in spurring positive strides towards development of all countries across the globe. This has seen most countries, Kenya not being an exception strive to achieve it for its populace benefit. The paper discusses on the challenges faced by informal private schools raging from poor management and leadership; poor remuneration and demoralization of teachers; lack of financial resources; and lack of collaboration among key stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students and the community. The paper thus concludes that these challenges are directly congruent to the existing poor conditions of the schools; and if corrected will create a serene environment for learning and better academic results.

Keywords: Knowledge; Stakeholder; Management, Informal private schools

Introduction

Since the attainment of her independence in 1963, Kenya identified three challenges which it was determined to fight on the outset; that included poverty, diseases and ignorance [1]. This has been exhibited through Kenya's ratification of international protocols that ensures equal access to education and protection of children rights; and the enactment of the same laws in her constitution and education act [1]. Education is an important pillar in spurring meaningful strides towards development in all countries across the globe. This has seen most governments across the continents strive to achieve it for its populace benefit [2-6]. Giving his insights on the importance of adequate provision of social services such as education; and the role of the government, JM Kariuki a Kenyan politician argued that: *Every Kenyan man, woman and child is entitled to a decent and just living. That is a birth right. It is not a privilege. He is entitled as is humanly possible to equal educational, job and health opportunities irrespective of his parentage, race or creed or his area of origin in this land. If that is so, deliberate efforts should be made to eliminate all obstacles that today stand in the way of this just goal. That is the primary task of the machinery called Government: Our Government* [7].

These efforts of providing education to all children in the country suffered a set back in the early 1980s when there was the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF); that brought the aspect of collaboration between the public and government in cost sharing of social services such as education [1,8]. This status quo led to inequality in terms of access to education as children from the informal settlements dropped out of school as compared to their counterparts who lived in suburbs and posh estates due to lack of school fees [1,3]. This menace has not only been exceptional in Kenya, as other countries in Sub Saharan Africa have suffered a similar fate [9].

In its acceptance of limited ability to provide education to all children across the republic, the government gave in to privatization of the sector to supplement what it was providing [1]. These informal private schools were a blessing to the children from the slum that were highly susceptible to missing education due to their poor socio-economic background [1,3]. This move was subsequently followed by increased mushrooming of informal private schools that to date

accommodates close to 50 percent of children in slums [10-13]. This foregoing from a positive perspective implied that quantitative increase of these schools translated into improved accessibility and increased competition which will have resulted into positive results [10].

In implementing educational initiatives to students across the country, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is guided by the following objectives:

1. To open up the mind of students to appreciate fellow humanity, environmental resources; and enhance good interpersonal relationships and togetherness.
2. To tap diverse potentials of students either through academic or talent gifting. In this case, it helps in eliminating "intelligence disability" which refers to unschooled persons who are unable to access employment or other opportunities that come with the education credentials.
3. To promote cultural diversity as students from different tribes, religion, creed and race interact in schools, go through the same curriculum and sit for a common national examination [14].

In the government quest of being in tandem with the millennium development goal number two of universal access to primary education; the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government introduced Free Primary Education (FPE) in the year 2003 in public primary schools [3,15]. This stimulated increased school enrolments; though the program faced numerous shortfalls in terms of its accessibility by the vulnerable section in the society such as children in the slums; and limited physical facilities and teaching aides [3,15]. This foregoing thus poses a critical question: does the country have adequate capacity to address primary transition rates to secondary level? In the same vein,

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in the process of education delivery to students in informal settlements, they tend to be characterized by traumatic side effects such as having deviant behaviors as a result of emotional instabilities caused by their family; environment and challenge of role confusion [16]. It is on this premise that this paper tries to provide an insight of the challenges faced by informal private schools by answering the following questions:

1. Do informal private schools have any impact in Kenya?
2. What are the challenges facing informal private schools in Kenya?
3. Does the present management in informal private schools have an impact in their overall success or failure?
4. What are the probable remedies to grievances faced by informal private schools in Kenya?

Conceptualization of Informal Private Schools

Informal private schools are learning institutions that are found in informal settlements which are also referred to as slums. Informal settlements refers to places that are illegally occupied and unplanned which are characterized by poor housing, increased congestion and proximity, inadequate access to water and sanitation facilities [9,17]. According to the Improvement and Clearance Act of 1956 of India, it defines a slum as a region unfavorable of being termed human habitat, overcrowded and lack proper planning posing a threat to the safety, health and morals of its residents [18]. Generally, an informal private school thus refers to an institution that is established in a slum by an individual, a group or community that serve the locals at a low cost for profit making [19].

Theoretical Framework

This research review is guided by the goal setting theory that was propounded by Dr. Edwin Locke in the 1960s [20]. This theory is commonly applicable in organizations where it motivates employees to perform much better. According to Locke's argument, there is a significant correlation between having clearly laid out goals and improved production performance [20]. A goal refers to the roadmap of accomplishing a mission or objective by an individual or organization. He further asserts that the journey of attaining this goal has to be pegged on purpose. Human beings are driven by purpose which is outlined by certain targets and timeframe of completion.

In outlining organization or institutional goals, it is imperative to put proper structures in place to ensure it is successful. It includes employing competent and qualified human labor, provision of adequate funding and requisite supplies. In hiring employees, it is also imperative to give a chance to people who share the same goals as those of the organization; as he/she will be able to cope with the job requirements; contrary to which will hamper overall output. In trying to meet these organizational goals, frustrations are likely to be exhibited such as psychological stress, quantitative and qualitative work overload. It is thus imperative for organizational managers to also utilize Abraham Maslow's theory of Human Needs which stipulates that people get motivated to achieve certain goals if the needs they consider pivotal are met.

This goal setting theory is thus applicable to this research review as in most of these informal private schools; they lack proper goals to guide the institutions and its workforce, most of the school managers or principals are given mandate to carry out administration without being supervised; there are no proper appraisal procedures of employees to

check on their progress of work; and there are cases of corruption that have derailed development of these schools leaving them in pathetic conditions. It thus generally offers the platform of sharing these goals as a team to ensure collective ownership and sustainability in their implementation.

A Brief History of Privatization of Education in Kenya

Rapid increase of urbanization in the 21st century has seen most towns across the world experience rapid increase of population in urban areas due to pull factors such as availability of social services such as schools, health facilities and employment opportunities [17]. This increased population surpassed the carrying capacity of these towns that led to the establishment of notable slums such as the Rocinha that is classified as a favela in Brazil; Dharavi and Maharashtra in Mumbai, India; Neza-Chalcoitza in Mexico, Orangi town in Pakistan, Manshiet in Cairo, Egypt, Soweto in South Africa; and Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya [17]. This unplanned residence has been a thorn in the flesh of most governments in trying to provide important social services such as education due to limited resources [21].

At independence in 1963, the first government under President Jomo Kenyatta acknowledged the pivotal role that education plays as a recipe for development of the country [2,4]. His administration thus pushed the agenda with vigor through the establishment of the first commission that was referred to as Ominde Commission of 1964 that recommended education to all citizens regardless of their race, creed, or socio economic background; and further expanded opportunities for the Africans to learn [4]. The benefits of provision of education to the masses by the government never lasted for long as in the year 1988, the government established the Kamunge Commission whose major recommendation was proposing the cost sharing of the provision of social services such as education between the public and government as a control mechanism to cut down on country's debt [1,4].

The repercussions of this cost sharing spilled over to the poor masses that saw a large portion of children particularly in the disadvantaged and marginalized areas such as the slums; arid and semi arid areas stay away from school [9]. This was triggered by the inability of their parents to paying school fees among other levies [1]. This was followed by the government allowing privatization of education to supplement what it was providing [8-11]. In doing so, the government through the Ministry of Education (MoE) ensured that all registrations of these informal private schools were in line with the following conditions:

1. The registration of these schools is provisionally or permanently done by the minister of education
2. The schools have adequate physical facilities to cater for proper learning of the students; and free from posing any harm to them or teachers
3. The person at the helm of the institution is one who is qualified and competent; and most importantly registered by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) [22].

These informal private schools have helped in providing additional spaces particularly in the slums that have inadequate government schools [8,10,11]. This increased mushrooming of informal private schools has been so rampant to the extent that most of them are barely 10 years since establishment [23]. The introduction of free primary and subsidized secondary education in the country was not enough to address the challenges of high attrition rates of students due to lack of resources to finance other educational requirements such as

tuition, school trips and stationeries; sickness and disciplinary issues [15]. Generally, it is evident that the establishment of informal private schools has helped in addressing the existing gap of educational access particularly by children from the slums.

Contributions of Informal Private Schools in Kenya

Informal private schools have been pivotal in providing education to the marginalized population such as those in the slums that could not have its access [3]. This has risen by the fact that informal settlements lack adequate government schools; and those present are not situated in the slums but rather around its surrounding environs [1]. To date, these schools accommodate approximately 50 percent of children from the locality [10-13]. Immediately after the release of Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination results, the question posed is whether there is adequate space for secondary placement. For instance, in the year 2005, the minister of education after the release of KCPE examination results acknowledged that close to 290,000 children were to miss a place in secondary schools [24]. In Kawangware slums, there only exists one sub county government secondary school that is called Dagoretti Mixed Secondary School which cannot accommodate all the children from Dagoretti North Constituency. The growth of these schools has thus tried to close these existing gaps.

Informal settlements have been encompassed by salient features such as congestion, close proximity, poor ventilation and promiscuity that have led to rampant spread of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, sexual harassment and prostitution. This has been facilitated by increased poverty levels and declining societal morals due to lawlessness. These schools act as conveying vessels of information to students with the hope of impacting positively to the community. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) has thus introduced sexual, constitution and bill of rights education; concepts which intend to empower students to know their rights, be free from sexual harassment and discrimination.

The retention of students in these schools that could have been in the streets or lying idle in the community equips them with good interpersonal and communication skills. The word education is etymologically derived from the word EDUCERE which means lead out. This implies that a person who is educated transfers his/her knowledge to the society in order to steer change [25]. Informal settlements have also minor cases of tribal and cultural conflicts; thus education helps in allowing learners appreciate cultural diversity in their community; and thus enhance peace and tranquility.

These areas are also rocked with increased cases of deviant acts, drug and substance abuse among the adolescents. According to NACADA [26], that was assessing alcohol and drug abuse to individuals between 15 to 65 years between the year 2007-2012 in Kenya; it found that cigarettes, alcohol and miraa/khat were commonly abused. These findings need to be addressed with gusto by relevant stakeholders since the ages of students in these informal private schools range between 15 to 22 years. The continued access of students in these schools has been instrumental in reducing these menace and state of lawlessness; and reduces criminal activities such as thuggery, robbery and rape that may be caused by drugs and substance abuse.

Most of the informal private schools are established for business or profit making [27]. Academic credentials are hardly followed during enrolment of students; but rather talents are also considered. As Mandi writes in the Daily Nation Newspaper, life is not all about academics; as some prominent sports personalities in the country such as MacDonald Mariga, Victor Wanyama and Dennis Oliech have been earning well

abroad due to their talents [28]. In a nutshell, such schools work under the mercy of their customers who are these students; failure to which they will incur losses. This is what Friedman as cited in UNESCO calls working under a market discipline that offers alternatives to the customers. These schools have thus helped in tapping such talents from the community [21,29].

These schools have also offered a platform for providing employment to thousands of persons who are both trained and untrained in the teaching profession and subordinate staffs. In totality, most of the teaching personnel in these schools are untrained. This is due to low wages that they offer teachers which have low affinity to trained teachers [27]. These employment opportunities have been critical in enabling the government get tax revenues and enabling employees meet their basic needs.

Challenges Facing Informal Private Schools

The weak financial position of these schools has been their major undoing [10,30]. Financial backbone of these schools solely lies in the school fee that is collected from the students [10,15]. This explains the existing status quo of stunted development of these institutions due to poor payment mode from the parents [10]. This has been catalyzed by high rates of unemployment of parents who are mostly casual laborers. For instance, in a study that was conducted by Sava and Orodho on families source of income in Kibera informal settlements; it found over 70 percent of parents were casual or unemployed laborers with an average monthly income of Kshs. 6,000 [15]. This has limited the abilities of these schools achievement to the desired goals thus led to the following impacts:

1. These schools have ended up being unattractive to trained teachers due to their low salary scheme; a point that has made them to embark on hiring untrained teachers or professionals from other disciplines who are yet to secure employment [27]. This temporary plan has an overall effect on the quality of delivery as the so called "teachers" work for the sake of earning salaries as opposed to having job satisfaction; and thus a loss to students [31].
2. The teaching staff of these schools has been trimmed due to their financial situations. Most of the staff ranges between 5 to 10. In certain instances, one teacher ends up teaching three subjects across the board that is, from form one to four which professionally, it is not allowed as the maximum combination is two subjects. This has posed the challenge of qualitative and quantitative work overload that has led to psychological stress among most teachers. This demotivates them and generally thwarts their efforts of rendering good service to the schools and make them epitome of excellence [31].
3. It has also led to the sprout of a culture where teachers indulge in other jobs to boost their income thus affecting their curriculum delivery. This has been caused by lack of motivation and demoralization of teachers [32]. Some teachers have ended up being security guards at night, conduct small micro businesses, while others conduct private or household tuitions. These endeavors have generally seen most of the syllabus to be poorly covered or incomplete at the end of subsequent academic terms [30].
4. These schools have also been witnessing high rates of absenteeism among students due to lack of transportation. Students in these schools come from homes that are far

away from Kawangware such as in Kibera, Kangemi, Uthiru, Waithaka and Ngong Racecourse. This has been attributed to lack of daily fare to use public service vehicles (PSV) such as buses, nissans commonly referred to as “matatus” and motorcycles.

5. Continuous presence of students outside the school compound due to fees or going for lunch has led to students losing a lot of academic time; and being indulged in early sexual relations especially among girls, child labor, drug and substance abuse [3].

Home environment has an influence to the personality development of these children. The same challenge has been passed to these schools where children socialize while seeking knowledge; and thus have been detrimental in maintaining discipline standards. This has been attributed to rampant circulation of pornographic videos through easy access to phones by students that are sold through “black market” or robbed phones; increased number of bars and prostitution cases. This has lured some of the secondary girls to drop out of school in order to engage in such acts to raise income. This position is supported by a study that was conducted by Nadenge on the parental socio economic status and student academic achievement in informal settlements which established that these environments or neighborhoods are not conducive for carrying out proper learning [9]. These schools are also established in the middle of these slums; and due to their poor infrastructure; there are massive destructions through noise pollution that is caused by Juakali artisans and playing of loud music; which has affected proper delivery of the curriculum through lack of proper concentration in classes [33]. Therefore, a remedy has to be sought for these schools in order to be at par with their government schools counterparts who have good serene environment that is conducive for learning and attainment of positive academic results [3].

Poor infrastructure and limited learning requirements have posed a threat to the teachers and students respectively [30]. Most of these schools are built of corrugated iron sheets while some are semi permanent structures with poor drainage system. The status of the classes particularly those of iron sheets have not been favorable for learning to students especially during harsh and hostile climatic conditions such as high temperatures and extreme cold seasons [9]. The status of the infrastructure has also been catalyzed by the limited income that is collected from the fees which is supposed to fund part of the institutions development [15]. The presence of limited classrooms have also seen students learn in open air; or in the kitchen especially during subjects that run simultaneously such as Geography/History, Biology/Physics and Business Studies/Agriculture [15]. These schools also suffer from lack of adequate requisite supplies to teach such as textbooks, stationeries for preparing their lesson plans and schemes, charts and chalks. This has made teachers to rely more on theoretical teaching which does not fascinate learning particularly in concepts that require practicals such as in Biology, Chemistry and Physics [31]. There are also poor reading habits among the students due to the lack of properly equipped libraries that could help them conduct more research on their languages, sciences and humanity disciplines [23].

In any learning institution, a concrete triad partnership of teachers, parents and students is critical for positive outputs. Unfortunately, most parents have abdicated their duty and passed it on to teachers. This has been contributed by weak educational background of parents who only conceptualize education as a passage of life [9]. There is also inconsistent flow of information to parents thus a worry; as critical information is disseminated to students; who distort and exaggerate it before reaching their parents. This miscommunication has impacted

negatively to these schools as it has resulted to high indiscipline cases, poor academic performance; and non payment of school fees, tuition or academic trips [10,34,35].

Management of Informal Private Schools

From the outset, the general responsibility of individuals tasked with managing schools is to ensure that there is a cordial relationship between important stakeholders such as teachers, parents, students, government, donors, community and the governing board of respective schools. This therefore implies that an employee of principal stature should understand the environment and parents of these schools. Unfortunately, the downfall of these schools lies squarely on the hiring process of these candidates; as it is not based on merit but rather on friendship or other subjective considerations. This has thus been exhibited by increased teachers and students turnover due to the pathetic conditions of these schools [10].

Principals in these schools are considered as “small gods” who completely run the show autocratically. They hold many dockets that entail administration, collection of school fees, head disciplinary department, singly initiate and participate in procurement process, employ and fire staffs; and make payments to employees. This pinpoints some flashes of corruption in these institutions leading to the question: why have an individual solely hold these dockets if there is no evil motive? It is thus imperative to invest in a competent and seasoned leadership that will allow team work and consultation to thrive for the betterment of these institutions [36]. The authority that has been bestowed to individuals should be spread horizontally rather than vertically to other offices or departments; something which has led to poor outcome of results and increased frustration of employees [37].

In a nutshell, this problem has been instigated by the lack of clearly laid out cadres that spell out the institutional offices and departments and their respective responsibilities [38]. In relation to the absence of an appropriate cadre within an organization or institution, Harding posits that:

Ultimate source of authority will be nuclear thus poor leadership; (2) people do not know their responsibilities, thus people will not do what they need to do to make the project successful; (3) confusion over who can decide what thus decision making is slow; (4) lack of accountability hence there is little incentive to do things properly; and (5) resources are not committed hence nobody is held to account for breaking resource commitments [39].

Remedies to Informal Private Schools Grievances

It is imperative and wise for these schools to have effective board of governance (BOG) that will help the directors implement various goals and visions; and further provide supervision to the principals’ performance for the development of these institutions [40]. This cannot be achieved in empty air but rather through formulating a framework that will guide the institutions [41]. These schools can formulate a strict strength, weakness, opportunity and threat (SWOT) framework to guide them during staff appraisal; to help analyze their performance and suitability. If this process is administered to all staffs including principals, it will eliminate the static thoughts of most principals of owning the schools (Figure 1). In addition, the process should be carried out on a regular basis such as on a quarterly, semi annually or annually to track on employee performance and only retain competent staffs. Writing on the value of staff performance evaluation in their book entitled, ‘Principles of Management’, Carpenter, Bauer and Erdogan opines that:

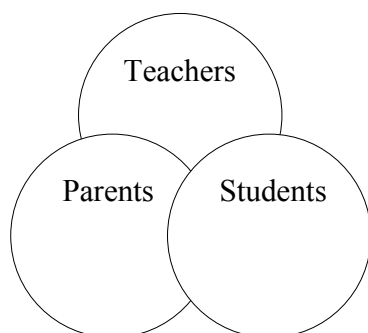


Figure 1: Remedies to informal private schools grievances. Source: Adopted by author.

Performance reviews help managers feel more honest in their relationships with the subordinates and feel better about themselves in their supervisory roles. Subordinates are assured clear understanding of what goals and objectives are expected from them, their own personal strengths and areas for development, and a solid sense of their relationship with the supervisor. Avoiding performance issues ultimately decreases the morale, decreases credibility of management, decreases the organizations overall effectiveness, and wastes more of management's time to do what isn't being done properly [40].

This position has been demonstrated by best performing schools that concentrated more on hiring effective principals and competent staff [38]. In addition, this move will help in preventing deregistration of these schools due to non compliance to the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) regulations [22].

In order to achieve purposeful and objective learning outcomes, it is also important to ensure all stakeholders such as parents, teachers and students work in unison [9]. The lack of cooperation of these stakeholders has over the years made these schools to have stunted development and pathetic status. The cooperation is conceptualized below:

In support of this close cooperation among stakeholders, Epstein et al. posits that:

The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families. If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave the education of children to the schools. If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students [42].

This therefore implies that, for the betterment of these schools, this partnership will help in ensuring that parents honor their responsibility of paying school fees and raising their children. This has overtly been observed in families where parents are learned as it has led to better academic results of their children [15]. The involvement of local administration will also be instrumental in providing security to these institutions and curb vices such as student sexual harassment, prostitution, drug and substance abuse.

The challenge of lack of teachers' motivation and demoralization has to be addressed if any positive development is to be realized in these schools. This can be through formulating a pro-winning mindset

in teachers; that will encompass hard work, team work, utilization of competence and skills; and proper remuneration [43]. Teachers are not paid during the school holidays; which in other words mean that per annum, they are only paid for eight months. Most of these teachers earn a monthly salary of Kshs.10,000. Therefore, if this is spread across the year minus the four unpaid months, it simply means that the average salary that a teacher gets per month is equivalent to Kshs.6,667. Teachers play a vital role in the education sector and hence as a noble profession; its remuneration should be reviewed for the teachers to be satisfied and for better outcomes. According to Ner Le'Elef, he postulates that:

At bottom management of people amounts to giving people a sense that you believe in them and the tools they need to fulfill their potential. Studies of the business-world have shown conclusively that staff produce in proportion to the amount management believes in them. For example, if a sales-team is regarded by their manager as a super team, they will be a super team. And if they are regarded as a mediocre team or less, they will produce accordingly, irrespective of their real talents [44].

Taking time and hiring a competent school manager or principal has no harm; as this has been the major weak point of these schools. Their lack of focus has seen corruption thrive to the magnitude that has left these institutions to almost being bankrupt. It is thus imperative for a competitive process to be involved in hiring a person who not only administrates the institution but markets it, initiates development, source for donors to fund the institution and a person that is respected by his fellow employees [36]. The school leadership should foster relations with potential donors and organizations that offer scholarships to needy students such as Plan International, Liverpool Voluntary Counseling and Testing (LVCT), government scholarships such as constituency development fund bursaries, and religious foundations. This will help in strengthening the financial state of these institutions. This has been demonstrated by commercial companies that are engaged in social corporate responsibility to market their brands through impacting the community and its consumers [45,46].

To raise the level of education in these schools; it is also imperative to eliminate the cases of hiring unqualified teachers. Every year, a lot of graduates from the school of education are churned out from over 40 universities in Kenya and hence a big portion of them remain unemployed. The ministry of education should thus move with speed and hire their services on cheaper contracts by securing their placement in these informal private schools in order to enable them put their skills into practice as they await opportunities in government schools [34]. In addition, these schools should not work in isolation and marginalize themselves due to their financial challenges; but rather send their teachers to seminars and trainings such as Strengthening of Mathematics and Science Education (SMASE) and link with their government counterparts; to learn more on new methodologies of teaching certain concepts in order to work under the same standard operating procedures [31].

Conclusion

Thus far, it is apparently clear that education is one of the most important sectors that can steer the country into positive development plan such as vision 2030. The education sector should be offered by government; though its inability led to the mushrooming of informal private schools. It has also been highlighted that there are teething problems such as poor management and leadership; poor remuneration and demoralization of teachers; lack of financial resources; lack of

collaboration with important stakeholders such as parents, students and teachers that have had a direct correlation with the poor and pathetic conditions of these informal private schools. The paper concludes that if (1) there will be strict observance of hiring qualified and competent principals and teaching staffs; (2) close collaborations with important stakeholders; (3) proper remuneration and care of teachers' social welfare, this will help in addressing the plight faced by teachers; and further will translate into high standards of education delivery in these informal private schools.

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