

Effective School Indicators for Quality Curriculum Implementation Process

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Abstract

This is a concept paper on effective school indicators for quality curriculum implementation process. Curriculum implementation is a rather complex process whose success requires various pre-requisites and conditions. The school is the setting where curriculum implementation takes place with the teachers as the agents, learners as the consumers of the curriculum and the educational managers as the supervisors and leaders. This paper is a discussion of some effective school indicators for quality curriculum implementation. Seven key indicators are discussed in this paper: A clear mission, vision and goals; effective learning environment; availability of physical resources and facilities; adequacy of teachers; continued professional development opportunities; teacher and student motivation and effective supervision and leadership. The paper borrows from various discussions on correlates of effective schools advanced by Lezotte (1991), (1992) and (2001); and Association of Effective Schools (1996) as well as other scholars on quality curriculum implementation process. The paper draws examples from schools in Kenya. The paper informs teachers and other education stakeholders on quality curriculum implementation process.

Key Words: Curriculum implementation, effective school indicators, quality in education

INTRODUCTION

Fullan (1982) defines curriculum implementation as the process of putting into practice an idea, program or set of activities and structures new to the people attempted or expected to change. It is a process that involves putting into use the developed curriculum through teaching and learning process (Syomwene, 2017). Curriculum implementation is a rather complex process whose success requires various conditions and pre-requisites. The school is the setting where curriculum implementation takes place with the teachers as the agents, learners as the consumers of the curriculum and the educational managers as the supervisors and leaders. This paper is a discussion of some effective school indicators for quality curriculum implementation. This paper shall adopt a definition of quality by UNICEF (2000, p. 4) that states that quality education includes:

- (i) Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn and supported in learning by their families and communities;
- (ii) Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities;
- (iii) Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace;
- (iv) Processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities;

- (v) Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals of education and positive participation in society.

Lezotte (1992) emphasizes on quality in the curriculum implementation process and says it must be installed in every step along the way regardless of the price tag. Lezotte (1992) observes that all children can learn and each child enters a world and the school motivated to do so. An effective school must develop indicators of quality learning outcomes therefore. Seyfarth (2005) observes that performance is influenced by three factors: employee knowledge and ability, employee motivation and the environment of the work place.

The unique characteristics of effective schools are called correlates by most researchers (Lezotte, 1991). In favor of this, The Association of Effective Schools (1996) outlines the following correlates: (i) Shared vision and goals; (ii) High expectations of all learners; (iii) Accountability; (iv) Learning communities; (v) Stimulating and secure learning environment; (vi) Professional leadership; (vii) Focus on teaching and learning; and (viii) Purposeful teaching. Similarly, Lezotte (1991) highlights 7 key correlates of effective schools: (i) Clear and focused school vision; (ii) High expectations for success; (iii) Instructional leadership; (iv) Opportunity to learn and student time on task; (v) Safe and orderly environment; (vi) Positive home- school relations; and (vii) Frequent monitoring of student progress

The school indicators for quality curriculum implementation discussed in this paper borrow from the correlates of effective schools highlighted by Lezotte (1991), (1992) and (2001); and Association of Effective Schools (1996) as well as other scholars on quality curriculum implementation. Seven key indicators are discussed in this paper: A clear mission, vision and goals; effective learning environment; availability of physical resources and facilities; availability of teachers; continued professional development opportunities; teacher and student motivation and effective supervision and leadership. This paper draws examples from schools in Kenya.

The 7 key indicators for quality curriculum implementation

What follows is a discussion of the 7 key indicators of effective schools for quality curriculum implementation.

Clear mission, vision and goals

A mission in an organization or institution describes purpose (McShane, 2009). Daresh and Playko (1995, p. 135) define a vision as “a focus in an organization or a statement for outcomes, products and results”. The Association of Effective Schools (1996) opines that a vision encompasses a unity of purpose involving a consensus of values, collaboration, collegiality and consistency of practice. A total quality effective school must develop a clear vision (Lezotte, 1992). A school vision articulates the desired future state of the school. It describes what the school would like to achieve. Goals on the other hand specify what exactly must be done so that the school mission and vision can be attained. Goals are statements that describe the expected outcomes. They explain the results aimed at. Effective goals should be precise, measurable, and realistic and time bound (Syomwene, 2017). Well stated goals provide a means of assessing the effectiveness and performance of the school.

Effective leaders provide a sense of vision to their schools. They understand and communicate what a school is supposed to do. Daresh and Playko (1995, p. 134) observe that effective leaders should “demonstrate the ability to articulate what a school is supposed

to do particularly in terms of what it should do to benefit children. Effective instructional leaders have little doubt that the purpose of the school is to find ways in which children may learn successfully”.

Similarly, Lezotte (1991) observes that in effective schools there’s a clearly articulated school mission through whom the staff share an understanding of and commitment to instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures and accountability. The principal should be a leader. He should create a common vision, and build effective terms to implement that vision. Kirk and Jones (2004) concur with the rest of the authors and point out that schools need effective leaders to communicate the schools mission and vision.

UNICEF (2000) proposes quality education based on outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals of education and positive participation in society. These outcomes are reflected in the school mission, vision and goals. A healthy educational institution should have clearly stated mission, vision and goals which are achievable within the available resources. The mission, vision and goals of schools in Kenya are based on education and development plans; national goals of education; the needs of the society and the needs of the learners

The vision, mission and goals of schools are significant in that they provide direction, they are used a basis for evaluation and they provide the drive to move on. In Kenya for instance schools are guided by a clear mission and vision.

Effective learning environment

The school environment in this case refers to the conditions and circumstances in the instructional process. The school environment contributes greatly to quality curriculum implementation. The environment has a strong influence on how people feel and act.

The school environment can have an effect to both students and teachers. The environment should meet the needs of both the students and the teachers. Catron and Allen, (2008) commented that in the school environment, children’s needs cannot be met if the adults’ needs haven’t been met. Essa (2011, p. 193) says this on the influence of the environment to teachers:

Teachers jobs are made more pleasant if they work in aesthetically pleasing surroundings,if they have a designated space where they can relax and plan and if their needs are generally taken into consideration...Environmental factors such as pleasant temperature, light, color, sound absorption, ventilation and spatial arrangement can facilitate or hinder staff in carrying out their jobs.

A carefully arranged environment can help prevent teacher burnout by supporting teacher goals for children and making the work site a pleasant place to be. This is because as stated by UNICEF (2000) teachers working conditions affect their abilities to provide quality education. The condition of infrastructure, availability of text books and learning materials and class sizes all influence teacher performance.

Commenting about an environment for early childhood education, Catron and Allen (2008) say that children needs for nurturing is enhanced by a safe and secure environment that includes opportunities for rest and relaxation and that offers opportunities for exploration and enjoyment.

Seyfarth (2005) contends that the environment in which people work may either increase or decrease the likelihood that they will experience psychological success. When conditions in the work environment prevent them from meeting their expectations, disappointment and frustration follow.

Productive work environments are those that enable employees to perform their jobs effectively and to experience psychological success while doing it. These environments have seven characteristics according to Seyfarth (2005, p. 197): (i) continuous learning culture; (ii) supportive administrative leadership; (iii) opportunity to work collaboratively with others; (iv) mutual respect among employees and managers; (v) opportunity to use ones knowledge and skills to receive feedback on one's performance; (vi) comfortable, attractive and well equipped physical space; and (vii) adequate and equitable compensation

Lezotte (2001) contends that effective schools have an orderly, purposeful, business-like atmosphere which is free from threat of physical harm. The Association of Effective Schools (1996) commend on an orderly, stimulating and secure environment in educational institutions. Such an environment can raise students' self- esteem, there's a clear, consistent and fair discipline, immediate, direct, positive student feedback, and the students love and trust the setting. Quality curriculum implementation requires an attractive, stimulating and challenging working environment that is safe and comfortable.

Catron and Allen (2008) contend that a supportive and accepting working environment is necessary to help teacher be successful, refresh their perspectives and facilitate continuous growth. Seyfarth (2005) concurs with this and adds that teachers are more productive when the school building and its surroundings are clean and attractive and are made promptly to malfunctioning physical systems. Maintenance measures such as regular painting, improving run down classrooms sends a message to teachers that their work is valued.

UNICEF (2010) recommends quality learning environments based on quality of school buildings, instructional materials and text books, working conditions for students and teachers and the ability of the teachers to undertake certain instructional approaches. In addition, the environment should be gender sensitive, with adequate lavatories and clean water supply. This paper proposes an environment for quality curriculum implementation that is orderly, stimulating, safe, purposeful, business-like, clean, attractive, gender sensitive, with mutual respect for all and with adequate materials and resources. In a bid to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals on Education For All, our schools also need an inclusive environment that accommodates children with special needs in regular classrooms. Musikhe (2014) in a study on school factors influencing integration of pupils with special needs in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality in Kenya found out that most schools lacked important resources to support learners with special needs.

Availability of adequate physical resources and facilities

Quality curriculum implementation requires adequate and relevant resources and facilities. Bishop (1985) calls resources and facilities as the tools for the job of curriculum implementation. Daresh and Playko (1995) contends that effective leaders do not allow lack of resources interfere with their school goals. They expend energy to assure that resources are available to enable the instructional program of the school to proceed unabated. While lack of resources and facilities frustrates teachers and diminishes their motivation the availability of resources empowers teachers and other employees (McShane, 2009).

Lezotte (1992) says that schools must allocate the required resources to make children's school experiences successful. Regular maintenance of resources and facilities is essential as well, Olembo, Wanga & Karagu (1992) emphasizes that there should be funds available for instructional materials, both for acquisition and maintenance. The duty of acquisition and maintenance of resources and facilities rests on the shoulders of the principal or head teacher. Parents can be involved in the acquisition stage but will be more appreciative when there are effective maintenance mechanisms in the schools.

The principal has the responsibility of resource acquisition and maintenance. Otunga (2015) notes that principals are concerned with infrastructural and resource provisions that are necessary for realization of the planned and implemented curriculum.

Adequacy of trained teachers

A central resource in quality curriculum implementation is the availability of adequate trained teachers. UNICEF (2000) advocated for quality in education based on the competence or training of teachers. Teachers must possess a deep mastery of subject matter and pedagogy. The number of teachers in every school should be adequate too depending on the student population. Seyfarth (2005) comments on teacher shortages in educational institutions and says that teacher shortages are a recurring reality that most human resources administrators must face. Seyfarth (2005) advises that recruitment programs in organizations should operate year after year, during periods of both shortages and abundance, as the best to avoid extreme staff shortage. On the same issue, Catron & Allen (2008) postulate that there should be sufficient number of qualified staff members to provide the educational experiences to the learners.

Teacher shortages are common in developing countries such as Kenya. It's true that the government of Kenya undertakes recruitment of teachers from time to time but the problem is that the numbers of those employed year after year do not match to the requirements in our schools. In most cases, the challenge has been due to the limited budget in the education sector. It is however time that the Government of Kenya considers an increase in the budgetary allocations to education if the issue of teacher shortages is to be addressed effectively.

Some developing countries sometimes face the problem of employment discrimination and the teaching profession is not spared on this. McShane (2009, p. 297) defines employment discrimination as "any situation in which some people have lower probability of being hired, promoted, financially rewarded or receiving valuable training and development opportunities due to non-job related demographic characteristics".

Continuous professional development opportunities

Teacher training is an important indicator of quality education. Professional development of teachers is a major priority in quality curriculum implementation. Fullan (1990) defines professional development as any activity or process intended to improve skills, attitudes, understandings or performance in present or future roles. Seyfarth (2005, p. 131) concurs with Fullan (1990) and defines professional development as “any activity or process intended to maintain or improve skills, attitudes, understandings or performance of professional and support personnel in present and future roles”. Teacher professional development can help overcome shortcomings that may have been part of teachers’ pre-service education and keep teachers abreast of new knowledge and practices in the field (UNICEF, 2000). Mondy and Noe (2005) concur with UNICEF (2000) and add that staff development is a continuous effort designed to improve employee competency and organizational performance. Lezotte (1992) defines teacher competence as the extent to which the teacher has the relevant subject matter and pedagogical experience needed to teach the intended curriculum effectively.

Lezotte (1992) observes that if we want to change the outcomes of education, we must change what people know and the context in which they find themselves. Similarly, Glatthorn, Boschee, and Whitehead (2006) note that staff development for teachers facilitates individual development by helping teachers change their perceptions of a subject, develop materials to be used in curriculum implementation and acquire new skills. Training provides employees with knowledge and skills for their present jobs. Syomwene (2017) argue that all employees regardless of their previous training, education and experience must be given further training and development. Competence of workers will never last forever due to factors as curriculum and technological changes, transfers and promotions. Training increases employee productivity; enhances job motivation and satisfaction and improves the stability of an organization.

The quality of teaching and learning depends on the quality of teachers (Fullan, 1992). Without teacher training, there can be a mismatch between the official curriculum and the curriculum of the classroom (Bishop, 1985). Staff development can be undertaken through in-service education. This is the training that teachers receive during their professional life through seminars, workshops and short courses. In-service education familiarizes teachers with the latest innovations in the subject area, refreshes their understanding of the curriculum in their subjects as well as the current and appropriate methods of teaching and evaluation in the subjects.

Glatthorn et al (2006) contends that staff development can be both formal and informal. Formal programs have a specific agenda, a set schedule and a structured set of experiences. They are skill focused. Informal programs can take the form of coaching, informal observations, discussions and activities within the schools. Mondy and Noe (2005) concur with Glatthorn et al (2006) and support staff development opportunities through coaching and mentoring. These are informal activities in which experienced teachers’ advice and nurture the newly recruited teachers. Teachers can also gain new insights and expand their knowledge through discussion with colleagues and wide reading (Glatthorn et al, 2006).

Peer observation and peer coaching can be effective especially for newly recruited teachers. It helps teachers learn effective teaching behavior. Teachers can use the available time to work with small groups of teachers during preparation periods, over lunch, in departmental

and subject meetings in a less systematic and structured fashion, sharing ideas, discussing current educational issues and engaging in some informal problem solving. In Kenya, this can be done amongst teachers who handle same subjects in same classes. Coaching and mentoring can create collegiality relationships, team building and a sense of belonging amongst the teachers. These values are effective in boosting teacher morale and school performance. These arguments are shared by Lezotte (1992) when he says that effective schools require use of collaborative processes. Similarly, Kagema (2014) propose that collegial relationships between teachers and principals can be strengthened by promoting a culture of team work in the schools.

Effective leaders make informal observations of teacher's work (Glatthorn et al, 2006). Informal observations are brief, unannounced class room visits. Some books call this 'walk through' or 'management by walking around'. In Kenya, the Heads of Departments can carry out the informal observations as they are in a better position to assess the subjects in question. The informal observations however should not be used as an avenue of fault finding. They should be part of the mentoring and coaching roles. Glatthorn et al, (2006) argues that informal observations make the supervisors more visible but less official bound thus reducing the isolation that most teachers feel. They promote the opportunities for the supervisors to praise good teaching and to find out those doing what is right or wrong. It can alert supervisors of instructional problems before they become critical.

Teacher and student motivation

Motivation can be defined as the forces within a person that affect his/her direction, intensity and persistence of voluntary behavior (McShane, 2009). It is the level of effort that some individual wishes to extend towards the achievement of a goal (Daresh & Playko, 1995). Unlike unmotivated people who can lose impetus and inspiration to act, motivated people are energized and activated to the end of a task. Some conditions that affect teachers are low salaries, limited opportunities for advancement, heavy workloads, shortages of materials, limited input to school decisions, lack of administrative support, and unavailability of professional development opportunities.

Teacher and student motivation can best be understood considering Maslow's needs theory. In this theory, Maslow categorizes human needs into five and arranges them in a hierarchy in the form of a pyramid from the most important (at the bottom) to the least important (at the top). From the bottom are physiological needs followed by safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs and lastly self- actualization needs in that order (Syomwene, 2017). Teacher motivation in Kenya should begin by the satisfaction of physiological needs such as food and shelter. Teacher remuneration falls under physiological needs which according to Maslow are the most important in a person's life (Syomwene, 2017). Adequacy of teacher's pay refers to sufficient pay and benefits to permit teachers to maintain a decent standard of living (Seyfarth, (2005). Teacher remuneration determines teacher abilities to acquire enough and quality food for their households, ability to acquire or pay for decent housing as well as the ability to pay for and maintain their children in school. Teacher remunerations in Kenya have been an issue of heated debate with the government. In a doctoral study by Kagema (2014) on determinants of public secondary school teacher motivation in curriculum implementation in Kenya he found out that teacher remuneration greatly influenced teacher morale. Consequently, he recommended the need by the government to improve teachers' income for success in the curriculum implementation process. Teacher

salary issues in Kenya sometimes result to teacher strikes that adversely affect the teaching and learning process.

Teacher motivation is a key ingredient in quality teaching. Motivated teachers require less supervision and are willing to accomplish teaching and learning goals, they have a sense of confidence, enjoy teaching, are loyal and are more committed to education as a whole (Glatthorn, et al, 2006). Unmotivated teachers are less apt to achieve their curricular goals, have more student discipline problems and are less interested in change. To obtain desired results in our educational institutions, teacher motivation is paramount.

Supportive leadership is an impetus of teacher motivation (Seyfarth, (2005). Supportive leadership helps build trust between administrators and employees. This is done by exhibiting consistent and predictable behavior and by demonstrating a commitment to helping individuals do a better job e.g doing things with them, being positive, cheerful, encouraging, being available and accessible, honest, direct and sincere. Principals should provide: Opportunities for the teachers to attend in-service training; resources for teaching and learning process; guidance and advisory services. In Kenya supportive leadership emanates from both external and internal sources. External sources include the government, government bodies such as the Ministry of Education, Science & Technology and the Quality Assurance and Standards officers. Internal management includes the Principals and Heads of Departments.

Lack of motivation can result to negative attitudes by the teachers about educational innovations and the school programs in general. McShane (2009) defines attitudes as a cluster of beliefs, assessed feelings and behavior intentions towards a person, object or event. Negative attitudes by teachers can greatly affect the implementation educational innovations in Kenya.

As mentioned earlier, teacher work load can affect their motivation. Seyfarth (2005) says that teachers with large classes and many disruptive students are likely to experience more stress than those with smaller classes and better behaved students. Demotivated teachers can exhibit job dissatisfaction. This is the person's evaluation of his/her job and work context (McShane, 2009). Job dissatisfaction can result to employee turnover where employees leave for better paying jobs.

Apart from teachers, learners require motivation as well. It's not possible to achieve school success if the students, who are the clients of the curriculum, are ignored. Based on Maslow's theory, the physiological needs of the students must first be catered for in the schools. These include the needs for quality and sufficient meals, clean water, comfortable classrooms and hostel facilities. From the second level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, students require a safe and secure environment free from physical harm and danger and with adequate resources. Such an environment motivates students to learn. Students can equally be motivated by listening and attending to their grievances, class attendance by as well as by awarding certificates and other awards to those who excel in various areas. Teachers also need to adopt child centered methods of teaching to make learning interesting and meaningful.

Effective supervision and leadership

Quality curriculum implementation process calls for support, guidance and blessings from the management. According to Olembo, et al (1992, p. 187) “leadership is the provision of professional and instructional guidance in order to achieve the educational objectives of the school”. According to Lezotte (2001), the principal should be an instructional leader. Instructional leadership denotes direct and indirect behaviors that monitor students’ learning. Daresh and Playko (1995) concur with this and say that the principal has the core responsibility to monitor instruction in the school. The principal has to know what goes on in the classrooms of his/her school. This monitoring can take several forms from direct, in-class, intensive observation to merely walking around the building and talking with students. This responsibility requires principals to possess the knowledge on effective teaching and the use of instructional materials and teaching methods. In so doing the principal becomes a leading professional (Association of Effective Schools, 1996). Otunga (2015, p. 11) propose that:

...At the school and college levels, principals should provide leadership by ensuring that planned and agreed curricula are enacted in the schools and colleges as envisaged. This involves decision making in terms of actualizing curriculum goals, learning experiences and the evaluation procedures.

UNICEF (2000) recognizes that the quality of administrative support and leadership influences quality in education. The support can be from the government and at school levels. The government should support education systems through school staffing, teacher payments, provision of resources and regular assessments of the schools. As the leader of the school, the principal has to help teachers develop competence in teaching and assist beginning teachers to translate theory into practice through induction and orientation programmes. This is part of staff development opportunities that principals should facilitate for the teachers as discussed in another section of this paper. Principals need to establish lines of authority and communication and clarify responsibilities within a school (Seyfarth, 2005). Effective leadership should be inclined to quality outcomes (Lezotte, 1992). Principals should produce the expected student learning results.

School leadership can be internal or external. Internal leadership in Kenya is carried out by the principals, their deputies and the Heads of Departments. External leadership is carried out by the personnel and the organs of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. These include the Directors of Education, The County and Sub County Education Officers and the Quality Assurance and Standards Officers.

Syomwene (2017) emphasizes on the significance of instructional leadership in educational institutions in which she summarizes the role of instructional leader into six distinct roles: provision of a sense of vision and mission for the school; participatory leadership; resource acquisition and maintenance; staff and learner motivation; staff development; and instructional supervision.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has discussed some key indicators on quality in curriculum implementation process. Seven key indicators have been put forward in this paper: A clear mission, vision and goals; effective learning environments; availability of physical resources and facilities; availability of teachers; continued professional development opportunities; teacher and student motivation and effective supervision and leadership. This paper holds that if indeed

Kenya has to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the goals of Education For All as well as the goals of Kenya Vision 2030, our schools must address any negative influences emanating from the 7 key indicators for quality in curriculum implementation process.

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