

Theme: EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Topic: RETHINKING ACCESS TO LEARNING.

WHAT IS THIS FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP?

ELIZABETH PARADISO URASSA

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Rethinking Access to Learning.

What is this for Teachers and School Leaders?

Abstract

Increasingly, researchers are examining the role of teachers and school leaders¹ in implementing educational policies, student enrolment and school development. Even though professionals and scholars argue leadership and teachers are central role in school development , there is relative absence of researches that document the way in which teachers and school leaders from developing countries conceptualize learning² and leadership³. It is not known whether teachers' and school leaders' practices are based on their understanding of learning and leadership or not, and the effects of their practices to students learning has not been investigated and documented. This paper discusses general question guiding the discussion which is: how do teachers and school leaders conceptualize learning and leadership and how does their understanding affect their practices in relation to student learning? The discussion focuses on the secondary level of education in developing countries, however comparisons with developed countries will be made. The cases to on going study are Tanzania and Norway, countries like Uganda, United Kingdom and United States of America will be cited base on scholars research results

Introduction

This paper is designed to give an overview of my ongoing study. The paper attempts to explain in brief the purpose of the study and the methods to be used. Theoretical lens to which the study refers are those derived from interpretative and radical structuralism paradigms. This paper attempts to discuss the philosophical foundation of both learning and leadership. The main philosophies of learning discussed are based on learning theories. Natures of learning, including factors that motivate learners to learn are also discussed. Behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism learning theories show that learning occurs in context, is active and is social. School leadership foundations are rooted in student learning and in moral commitments and context shapes teachers and school leaders practices.

¹ School leaders include school manager, head of school, second head, department leaders, and academic leaders, in the secondary schools. However, this will depend on the structure of leadership in each school.

² Is it that they define learning as an act, process or experience of gaining knowledge/skill or they have other meanings?

³ Is it that leadership is a group of leaders whose task is to guide and direct, influence and empowering others or they have different definitions?

Tests and examinations give feedback to school actors, but are not good indicators for teachers' and school leaders' practices. Successful school reforms should focus on enhancing student learning rather than merely increasing access to the position in schools. Likewise, almost all reforms needed in schools depend on teachers' and schools leaders' understanding and their practices.

Purpose of the On-going Study

The previous study⁴ shows that there is unclear understanding and practices of teachers and school leaders on the issue of access to education in relation to school fee, that make me curious to investigate deep on how teachers and school leaders conceptualise leaning and leadership and their practices to facilitate students` learning. It seems that the consequences of teachers and school leaders understanding and practices and their effects to students` learning are too significant to be ignored. And yet, on the one hand there is a knowledge gap on their understanding and on the other their practices. The study is under the theme “Education Leadership and learning” the overall aim is to understand the meaning of learning and leadership of teachers and school leaders. The study attempts to answer the following main questions: how teachers and school leaders conceptualise and practice learning and leadership? This main question has the following sub questions. What are the understanding of learning and leadership of teachers and school leaders? How their understanding affects their practices to facilitate student learning? What facilitate and/or hinder teachers and school leaders to practices leadership that enhance student learning? Specifically the objectives are 1. To examine and describe learning and leadership understanding of teachers and school leaders. 2. To observe and document teachers' and school leaders' practices in class and in schools and the ground to their practices in relation to students` learning. 3. To discover, analyse and report factors that facilitate and/or hinder teachers and school leaders to practice leadership that enhance students learning. 4.To explore theory based on participants concepts that can be applicable to their context and to similar situations.

⁴ The Effects of Cost Sharing on Equity in Access to Secondary Education in Tanzania. The Case Study of the Kilimanjaro Region (Urassa 2004).

Theoretical Lens

Burrell & Morgan (1991, cited in Tjeldvoll 1995) assert that society development is either dominated with consensus or conflicts, which are respectively termed as a regulated or radical view of change.

The paradigms⁵ appear when the subjectivist and/or objectivist views of science coupled with regulated and/or radical view of societal change. This study will employ subjectivist views of thinking in which personal ways of conceptualizing ideas is highly respected. The interpretative paradigm, which assumes a relative ontology in multiple realities, is seen as vital in discussing learning and school leadership. Leadership oriented researches examine how leaders and other participants in learning institutions create shared understanding about their role and practices in schools. And in examining their practices in my study, I intend to look at each unique nature of school culture and context, which assumed to shape teachers' and leaders' practices. I also believe in radical structuralism paradigm, which exists in learning institutions that give constructed structure that influences teachers' and school leaders' practices. However, the radical structural paradigms primary function is to level social class differences and the main strategy would involve administrators' and other practitioners' understanding and practices. Theories related to the above mentioned paradigms are considered as a point of departure in my study.

Research Method

The study will employ a collective case study approach where qualitative method of data collection will be used. The study will employ qualitative approach, which focuses on participatory knowledge claims and open ended interviewing as recommended by Creswell, (2003). According to Zunabend (1992) case study is done by giving special attention to completeness in observation, reconstruction, and analysis of the cases under study. Case study is done in a way that incorporates the views of the "actors" in the case under study. The study will seek to establish the meaning of learning and leadership of teachers and school leaders. Observation and documentation of classroom activities, learning contents and interactions among school members and their facilitation to student learning will be done. The research will also employ focus group in which participants will be able to express in their own terms the meaning of learning and leadership. Consulting practitioners and actors in the respective

⁵ The word paradigm has referred to a thought pattern in any scientific discipline or other epistemological context. A paradigm is the intellectual/logical foundation used for designing theories (Tjeldvoll, 1995).

study areas including other organs dealing with education leadership and learning will be the central to add information related to the study. The intention of the study will be explained to all the participants before administering of the instrument. Some of the participants will also participate in focus group discussion. According to Yin, (2004) when case studies are conducted documents should be used to corroborate and argue the evidences from other sources; however, these documents will carefully scrutinized and be used. Reading of written documents and research findings at international, national and community levels related to the topic is being started.

Interviews and Focus Group

Face to face interviews will be used as to seek more details on the topic from respondents and the researcher can control over the information required in the study as recommended by Creswell, (2003) and Judd *et al*, (1991). Interview guides will be prepared which will comprise open-ended questions; unstructured interview will dominate the study. Interviews will be used due to its ability to correct misunderstandings, probe inadequate and vague responses, and enhance the attainment of highest quality of responses. An interview also allows for the establishment of rapport and motivates the respondents to answer questions (Judy *et al*, 1991; Skinner, 1954). Focus group discussions and interviews will be used to allow the researcher to discover ideas, concerns, attitudes and approaches of people in their own terms on leadership and students' learning. It is believed that focus group discussions often stimulate people to talk and to reveal facts and opinions that may not have been revealed otherwise. It may also allow the group to clarify attitudes or beliefs in words that are probably not easy to articulate. Separating each group of participants will be done. Also the procedures for confidentiality will clearly explained in advance and privacy maintained as recommended by (Judd *et al*, 1991). Data collected through interviews and focus groups will be recorded; transcription will be the method through which this data will be interpreted.

The Study Area

The field part of the study will take place in the northern zone of Tanzania, particularly in the Kilimanjaro region. In Norway the study will be conducted in Oslo. The specific institutions will be selected later. These areas have almost the same population size and have been selected based on my working experience to these areas and their geographical location, which make easy to be reached.

The study purpose is to make comparisons between developed and developing countries hence, scholarly research results on teachers and school leaders concepts and practices in Uganda, USA and UK will be scrutinized to fulfill the purpose. It is believed that teachers' and school leaders' concepts and practices in these areas are believed to be different. The understanding of their concepts and practices will benefit not only the study areas but also other areas of the same and different context.

Sample and Sample Size

The study will draw its sample from public secondary schools. Purposive sampling technique described by Judd *et al* (1991) will be used in which all heads of schools, second heads department heads, academic teachers and class teachers, (where applicable depending the structure of a school) will have equal chance to participate in the study. Others are students, teachers and non-teaching staff from sample institutions. The names of teachers and that of non-teaching staff will be written alphabetically and be selected afterward in the manner described by Borg & Gall (1989:224) as systematic sampling. Students will be selected randomly where both female and male students will have equal chances. This will happen by separating male and female students and select them randomly. The study will also accommodate emerging participants as will be seen. The actual number of participants is estimated to be one hundred from both countries (Norway and Tanzania).

Philosophical Foundations of Learning

Learning is a complex phenomenon in which a single theory, model, or set of principles, cannot suffice for its explanation. However, three dominant theoretical lenses will be referring to in this study. These theories provide different perspectives on the foundation of learning. The theories are behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism. Some of the founders of these theories are psychologists⁶ who focused on learning and human development. The theories are found useful when discussing learning in a school context. However, these theories are discussed as bases and strategies of understanding teachers' and school leaders' concepts and practices. Psychologists provide a foundation of analysing the meaning to learning of different people of different backgrounds.

⁶ Bruner, (1956) & (1996); Piaget, (1970); Thorndike (1928).

Behaviourism Theory

Behaviourism theory focuses on observable behaviour rather than non-observable mental events. It suggests that learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour due to experience (Ormrod, 1999 and Driscoll 2002). In the process of stimulus- Response (S-R) explained by Skinner (1954) and Thorndike (1932) propose that when a stimulus is given a response learning takes place, no matter whether the response is desirable or not. They suggest that a learner must be engaged in a certain activity in order to learn. Gagne & Driscoll (1988:2) contends that “learning is regarded as a change in human disposition or capability that persists over a period of time and is not simply depends on the processes of human growth”. Learning represents itself in a change in behaviour. Driscoll (2002) contends that learning is social: learners benefit from working collaboratively in groups so that they can hear different perspectives and accomplish the learning tasks with the help of their peers, teachers, school leaders and experts. Driscoll adds that learning is reflective, is facilitated when learners are given chances to express and evaluate contents on their own thinking. Teachers and school leaders are expected to standardize contents so that each student who chanced to get access to school should be exposed to the same kind of knowledge contents but in variation of teaching and learning methods. It is important to consider the individuality of the students and secure their learning needs through teachers’ and school leaders’ practices.

Cognitivism Theory

Cognitivism theory focuses on the internal mental events. Bruner (1978) develops discovery learning, where one should approach learning as a task of discovering something rather than learning about it. Learning is regarded as a reward for discovering. This theory suggests that learning occur when information is mentally processed and the structure of learner’s knowledge changes. Learning is a relatively permanent change in a person’s knowledge due to experience. Cognitivists consider how people perceive, interpret, remember and think about the environmental events they experience. According to Mayer, (1982:104) this theory has three components: the duration of the change is long-term rather than short-term, the locus of the change is the content and structure of knowledge in memory or the behaviour of the learner and the cause of the change is the learner’s experience in the environment, rather than fatigue, motivation, drugs, physical condition, or physiological intervention.

Cognitivists such as Gagne & Driscoll (1988) consider learning as a process that takes place inside a learner's "head." This process enables learners to modify their behaviour fairly rapidly in a more or less permanent way. Therefore, looking at this aspect of learning by examining the kind of classroom activities and its connection to the contents is important. Mayer (1982, cited in Driscoll 2002) argues that Learning is active:" Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand." This Chinese proverb as explained by Mayer (1982) suggests that learners have to be mentally active during learning process without ignoring physical activeness, and should be able to make connections between the new knowledge and previous existing knowledge, and construct meaning from their own experiences. Teachers are expected to use teaching methods centered to learners so as to give them opportunity to participate actively in the learning process. The active participation of students' gives feedback to teachers on how successful or unsuccessful the learning is. Learning activities carried in classroom including students' and teachers' interactions are vital to indicate the concept of learning of teachers and is a measurement of whether learning is taking place or not. The quality of materials and contents can be observed and analysed. Students responses to the learning contents and understanding can be monitored by looking at their responses both orally and written together with the kind of questions asked.

Constructivist Theory

Jonassen & Land (2000) are of the opinion that learning is constructive practice that includes reciprocal intention-action-reflection activities and is wilful, intentional, active, and conscious. Therefore, learning is a conscious activity guided by intentions and reflections. According to Owen (2000), learning is nothing less than the evolution of consciousness. And it is a central role of learning institutions to facilitate that growth in consciousness, both in the individuals involved and in its collective manifestation of learning organisation consciousness. Since a learner needs stimulus to learn then, teachers and institutions leaders are expected to plan for appropriate stimulus to stimulate learners learning consciousness inside and outside the classrooms.

In all three theories, learning is considered as a behavioural modification especially through experience or conditioning, which comes about as a result of the learner's interaction with the contents, and/or environment. These interactions can be enhanced and/or hindered by teachers and/or school leaders depending on their practices. Owen (2000) asserts that transformation is real learning, and real learning is transformation.

If we accept the notion that learning is transformation (and vice versa), and further that the primary role of learning institutions is to facilitate transformation and the evolution of consciousness, it would seem that we need to understand the foundation of learning. Teachers are expected to facilitate students' learning strategies such that, when some new knowledge is acquired previous knowledge is not lost. The previous knowledge can be for instance what learners have learned from their places and families. Seels & Richey (1994) contend that quality of teaching is crucial in making a school learning community. Some learning institutions are more effective than others due to among other things, their practices of facilitating learning. Effective learning needs effective teachers and leaders who are able to support learners to process, meet and balance learning contents. Since I am interested to investigate on how learning is being conceptualised by actors I will look at combinations of learning activities, materials, interactions, and learning contents. These will give an overview of how learning is defined, organised and taking place.

Motivation for Learning

Students learn because of a combination of interest, reinforcement and prior knowledge (Driscoll, 2002). Interest is important in order to learn because it will determine what a student wants to learn and hence sustain effort to learn. Every student can name subjects that they enjoy and are interested in and subjects that they dislike and have no interest in. There is undoubtedly a high positive correlation between the subjects that students have interest in and the grades and learning experience that they receive. Learners choose what they want to learn and interest acts as a catalyst to determine what and how much learners learn (Owen, 2000). Likewise, students can be reinforced positively to learn things, which are out of their interest and also be reinforced negatively to weaken or stop learning in those areas they are interested in. Even if teaching methods or teaching aids, earning of good grades, drive reinforcement, the biggest role is determined by the school leaders' and teachers' practices. The way teachers have been reinforced by school leaders for example, determines the amount of energy and time used by teachers to facilitate student learning (of course, learners' efforts is vital). The way school leaders organise resources including learning and teaching materials and make them available to both teachers and learners, influences the strategies used by teachers to facilitate student learning. It is difficult to learn without resources and it is equally difficulty to learn without any reinforcement. This depends on the skills, time devoted and creativity of teachers to organise the learning contents in relation to students' interest and context.

Gagne & Driscoll (1988) claims that once a student's prior knowledge is activated, the interest and motivation to learn might be enhanced through teaching methods.

Learning and Teaching Methods

There are many different teaching methods that are effective for students with different learning needs and abilities. Many of these methods should be formulated based on the nature of the students and the contents to be learned. Students prefer different methods determined by their learning styles. However, differentiating instruction which involve use of mental and physical domains will keep the class engaged and will keep the students alert and interested. Driscoll (2002) and Pintrich *et al* (1994) assert that due to the vast array of how learners learn, it is extremely beneficial for the teacher to be aware of how their individual students learn. Institution leaders have a task to support teachers to spend adequate time and skills in designing and planning how to facilitate learning. Teachers as well have a challenging task of evaluating, which methods promote students learning, and which methods inhibit the learning process. Once these methods are determined, the effective ones should be implemented to create a learning environment in which learners learn to the greatest extent. However, the question is: do the teachers and school leaders spend adequate time with students to the extent of understanding their learning needs and styles? According to Cuban (1988, cited in Bush & Middlewood 2005:4) one of the dimensions of leadership is to influence practices of other members of an organization such that all should focus on the organizations' vision and achieve the intended desirable ends. The main vision of real learning institutions is expected to focus on student learning. Teachers and school leaders are expected to make clear to the learners why it is important to learn certain content and when the information might be useful in the future. They can also discuss with students about the quality of teaching methods and materials used and to be used. This will give learners a sense of commitment to learning especially when the methods and contents meet their needs.

Leading Student Learning in Dilemmas

It has being observed by Dickinson (2000) that even with strong educational backgrounds, teachers still cannot cope with the overwhelming physical, emotional, and social needs of today's students. Teachers are expected to have time available for understanding their students' backgrounds and time for collaborative teaching and learning plans aiming at problem solving.

Dickinson asserts that many children are physically and emotionally abused, and a growing number come into the world addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. Likewise, there are those coming from poor families in which learning resources are limited and from HIV/AIDS pandemic areas where the majority are emotionally disturbed. Without strong support of their colleagues, school leaders, and community, it is nearly impossible for many teachers to facilitate student learning. They should organize and be organized to share ideas and build peer networking in lessons with each other in order to facilitate learning. It is assumed that teachers can practice this strategy if school leaders initiate and take part. Involving teachers in the formulation of institutions' visions and missions can be one of the strategies to be used by school leaders. Bush (2005:3 no.2) in his presentation contends that institution vision must be communicated in a way, which secures commitment among members of the organization. As elaborated by Bush & Middlewood (2005), schools and colleges have to find appropriate balances between meeting the needs of individual students and staff and have a clear sense of the wider purpose of the institutions, which is learning. There should also be adequate communication between and among all individuals in schools communities including practicing leadership that enhances student learning. Changes in school leaders' and teachers' practices that create good learning environment to students are important.

Complexity of Evaluation Practices

Student examination and test results have little to tell about true students' learning although these are the most used measures when it comes to students' learning performances. Carnoy (1999) contends that students in every country are evaluated annually or more often by their teachers (and other organs related to students evaluation). This evaluation measure is designed to check whether students have learned the prescribed curriculum contents, and in some countries the evaluations determine whether the students have to repeat the grade or move on the next one.

Eventually, all this information is in the hand of teachers who are directly interacting with students. The main purpose of this evaluation in Tanzania for example is mainly for sorting students and not as standard because the more places available the lower the percentage of failures and vice versa. Carnoy (1999) contends that there is little evidence that knowledge of test results alone has very much effect in improving teacher class managerial and school practices. Students' test and examination results should not be the basis of teachers and school leaders practices.

In Tanzania, some schools especially in private sectors, teachers were previously promoted based on students' results. Teachers and school leaders aimed at increasing student performances, which could attract many parents to send their children to their schools, and less effort were made in knowledge acquisition. I am not sure how these teachers and school leaders define learning however, this created a lot of disturbances to education system and examinations council. Some students were able to access examinations prior to the official examination dates. While others acquired results which were not corresponding to the amount of knowledge they acquired. All the same, test and examination cannot be put aside because it is the only way of making formative and summative evaluation in learning institutions. However, it is of utmost important how teachers and school leadership define learning and the influence of their understanding to their practices. Tests and examinations when are well organized give feedback to educational providers, recipients, and customers and can be used as a base to enhance reforms in students' learning. The conceptualization of teachers and school leaders on learning might give picture of their practices on students' examination and tests.

Educational Reforms and Learning.

Carnoy (1999) discusses three educational reforms thus; competitive driven reform where the major goal is to improve economic productivity by improving the quality of labors through decentralization, setting and meeting standard. Others are improving management of educational resources and improve teachers' recruitment and training. In a real sense the qualities of labors depend on the quality of education (formal or informal) acquired. In formal system we can relate to the quality of educational institutions existing and specifically quality of teachers and leaders and their practices in producing quality students who are assumed to be future labors. According to McLean (1995), teaching and learning in each country in formal education system need to be judged based on those who get access to it. The debate across countries is how to create fair access to education and how to make reforms in learning. The end products of learning are expected from teachers and school leaders, their practices determine the kind of product to be received in the labor markets.

Financial driven reform is another strategy proposed by Carnoy (1999), which aims at reduction of spending in education; improve the efficiency of resources use for educational quality at the same time increase the quality of labors.

Teachers and school leaders need resources in order to fulfill their obligations such as teaching and learning materials attractive salaries for their up-keep and the like. There are no effects in learning if teachers lack and/or have no knowledge of the materials required in learning. The question is how teachers can be made accountable to facilitate students learning if they are not empowered to make choice of, and use of the available resources in learning? Teachers can be made to propose teaching materials and other resources required for students' learning. This could enhance both efficiency use of resources and learning.

Another reform discussed by Carnoy (1999) is equity driven reform, which aim at equality of economic opportunity. The reform has an opinion of shifting fund from higher levels of education to lower levels of education where majority are found so as to promote equality in access to education. This reform aims at increasing resources to lower levels of education. However, in primary and secondary levels of education, resources should not be used for just increasing the number of students in schools rather for increasing access to student learning. Teachers and school leaders understanding of learning and leadership including their practices will increase access to learning to majority rather than just increasing access to position in school.

Fullan (2001a: 92) in his book *Leading in a Culture of Change* speculate that “schools are in the business of teaching and learning, yet they are terrible at learning from each other, if they ever discover how to do this, their future is assured”. The point is learning from each other depends on how one conceptualize learning, this understanding can influence learning from each other not only at teachers' and school leaders' levels but learning from students. Teachers in classrooms need to learn from students; as well school leaders have to learn from other members of school community so as to fulfill their goals. Fullan (2001a) asserts that successful change should focus on the improvement of relationships and group development. Teachers' practices in learning can be viewed as the way teachers involve in peer teaching or teaching a demonstration lessons inside and/or outside the school and/or district, in preparation for the development of a new set of instructional practices. The involvement of teachers in and out depends on how school leaderships support and formulate learning strategies that motivate teachers to do so. School leaders can take part in students learning by looking at classroom teaching, observation of demonstration lessons and use of some protocols to analyze classroom practices.

Fullan, (2001a) proposes the involvement of teachers in development of school based plans to improve students learning and in examining how well students are doing, what target they should set to improve learning and what strategies might get them where they want to go is among the strategies to be used by school leaders to promote student learning. Some of school leaders in Tanzania for example have being excepted from classroom teaching meaning that they do not have any subject to teach in the classroom, and yet they are the ones to attend seminars and workshops that focus on classroom teaching strategies and the like. The question is why can't they give such chances to classroom teachers whose benefits could affect student learning?

Fullan (2001b: 24) in the book *The New Meaning of Education Change* asserts that in promoting student learning the school should “create the small respectful communities for learning, teaching a core of academic knowledge, ensuring successes for all students and empowering teachers...” It seems that at the institution level still leaders have a lot to learn on how to share responsibilities to teachers. He adds that the implementation of educational change involves change in practices in three dimensions thus: teaching materials, approach and beliefs. Likewise, true changes depend on who develop the mentioned dimensions, and whether the implementers were involved in developing or not.

Philosophical Foundations of Leadership

The main foundation of school leadership should be base on the contextual and interpersonal theories. Sergiovanni (2001:20) in the book *Leadership* contends, “Books and journals are filled with theories that tell leaders what to do and how to do it. Most of these theories tell leaders to empower others members of school community by delegating, to be considerate of others, to be cheerful, to develop a pleasant climate in the school, to be consistent, persistent and insistent and to project demeanors of calm and support”. The advice given to leaders is helpful when its application considers the nature of colleagues, the work and the context. The new theory of school leadership as proposed by Sirgiovanni, (2001) is rooted in students' learning and in moral commitments. However the need to develop a new theory is important if teachers and school leaders are to be responsive in today's complex world of schooling. Leaders are different in preferences and personality, and leadership contexts are different in their scope and contours for leadership to be so neatly packaged (Sergiovanni, 2001).

However, if leaders could successfully understand their natural style of leadership, and explore how that style might be changed to fit different circumstances and different people, then, their leadership would be much more effective. Knowing their strengths and abilities, and leaving other parts of their leadership to others is one of the vital elements of being a good leader. According to Sergiovanni, (2004:2) “effective leaders have a better understanding of how the worlds of schooling and of school leadership work they have figured out alternatives to direct leadership that are able to get people connected to each other, to their work, and to their responsibilities”. School leaders have a responsibility to create a learning community in schools where teachers and students work together and bring learning to reality. In another way, leadership has been identified with solving problems and the purpose of leadership has been related to finding solutions and a question of doing the right thing at a right time. According to Bush & Middlewood (2005:9) “there is ample evidence that high quality leadership is vital in achieving successful schools and colleges”.

This is based on the idea that leadership has power to influence the rest of school members to focus on the institution’s vision and meet the intended learning objectives. For example the motivated teaching staff and non- teaching staff can maximally devote their energy and time in promoting student learning. Bolman (1995:107) in his book “leading with soul” contends, “Leadership is gift of power that can be given to those who want and who are ready to receive it”. He holds the opinion that leadership that holds power produces powerless organization and that which gives power liberates energy for more productive use. When people feel a sense of having their abilities recognized and when they can influence change, they seek to be productive. They direct their energy and intelligence towards making a contribution rather than obstructing progress. The gift of power, as explained by Bolman (1995), enrolls people in working towards common goals but when power is hoarded and centralized; it can causes conflicts and can emerges in coercive or explosive form. Effective institution leadership that manages to give the power without undermining the systems’ integrity makes it possible to confront conflicts in schools without distraction in students’ learning.

Leadership Role of Teachers

Teachers are the leaders in the implementation of the school vision (which is expected to focus on students’ learning). They are able to realize students’ abilities and disabilities, interests and needs. Given opportunity in decision-making, formulation of institution vision and mission, teachers can be a source of succeeding in learning institutions.

They can easily develop interest, creativity, and innovativeness of the students. But when teachers are frustrated, they can kill students' thinking ability and learning. Hammond & Sykes (2003:18) contends that "if teachers are to prepare diverse group of students, for much more challenging work, for framing problems, finding, integrating and synthesizing information and creating new solutions, learning on their own, and working cooperatively, they will need substantially more knowledge and radically different skills than most now have and most schools of education now develop". Likewise, there is no developed and existing teachers' college that has been able to fulfill all skills and knowledge required of teachers. However, given the opportunity to learn from each other and receiving motivation from the school leadership and other members of schools, teachers can make a difference in student learning. Bush and Middlewood (2005) assert that it is no longer possible for the principals or school heads to be sole leaders in the learning organizations. Deputy, assistant heads and middle-level leaders such as heads of department, subject leaders, and classroom teachers are equally important in promoting student learning. The leadership role of teachers should be recognized, prioritized and given by school leaders and other educational practitioners. Teachers' leadership practices give them motivation and a sense of being recognized and add commitment to teachers in facilitating student learning.

Leadership in Practice

Sergiovanni (2001) asserts that successful heads do not view themselves as a center of the universe. They acknowledge that leadership need to be everywhere in the organization and that the leadership managing complexity, leading with ideas and developing social capital. As was in the case of previous study, some heads of schools were able to empower parent to decide when they could pay their children's school fees. Parents who were given the opportunity to decide when to pay their children's fees and other school contributions, they worked hard to fulfill their promise. They regarded themselves as part of the school and school leadership was satisfied working together with such parents and learning was taking place. Other school leadership were merely implementing cost sharing policy without listening to educational customers neither considering the problems associated with their contexts. Students were not allowed to attend lessons without payments hence; students' learning was seriously affected.

Leadership according to Sergiovanni (2001) is about helping people to understand the problems they face, helping people to get a handle on how to manage these problems, and even learn how to live with unsolved problems. Sergiovanni (2001:101) has an opinion that “today’s leaders must learn to think through solutions themselves; this is the essence of the learning organization.

Management ideas and techniques are helpful but only in the service of a critical mindset where educators draw deeply on their own local knowledge and insights”. Likewise, Tjeldvoll (1995) asserts that politicians are persons who seem to think normatively and they produce visions and leading others on the bases of a certain foundation of values common for the group they represent. However, their opinions and activities sometimes are far from reality the place at which the goals ought to be implemented, and at clear distance from the practical problems of implementation. He contends more in pp: 77 that “the administrator and/or practitioner is the one who is expected to think practically about the manner of implementation, and who is expected to attain in practice as much as possible of the goals of politicians”. In school context, teachers in the classroom and school leaders might be seen as examples of such a practitioner. Tjeldvoll (1995) continues that, “even though the practitioner thinking ought to be governed by the politician’s visions and goals as much as possible, every day reality will require its own specific way of thinking.

Sometimes, that which is found to be necessary to be done in practice may be situated at quite a distance from the visions and goals. It may be even contrary to the goals”. This message shows how understanding and practices of teachers and school leaders need to focus on their context rather than policy mandatory given by superior organs. As has been discussed earlier the issue of leadership is complex and that require leaders to think by themselves and apply the leadership that suits their context. School leadership has to be knowledgeable in working with teachers, students and community in general so as to facilitate students’ learning.

Scholars such as Barth (2001) Sergiovanni (2001) Bolman (1995) Fullan (2005) and Bush & Middlewood (2005) have an opinion that there is no formula for leadership because same things applied to different contexts and same context in different situation typically produce different results, hence is a task and challenge for leaders to act the way that suits their context without undermining the policies. Fullan (2005:53) contends “leadership does not mean much unless it is cast in a context that matters” is a mixture of technical and adaptive work.

Technical work related to teaching and learning and problems related to technical are easier to solve than that related to adaptive. Technical solutions involve solving problems that can be addressed through current knowledge or know-how. Adaptive challenges concern problems whose solutions are not known. The way to identify whether problem is adaptive or technical is discussed by Heifetz (2003). Fullan (2005) outlines some of properties of adaptive challenges thus discussed by Heifetz (2003) as the challenge consist of a gap between aspiration and reality, demanding a response outside our current repertoire. Adaptive work to narrow the gap requires difficult learning, the people with the problem are the problem, and they are the solution. Likewise, adaptive challenges require the deep participation of the people with the problems, and sophisticated leaders with skills to mobilize people. School leaders need to manage technical problems that associated with students learning. Technical and adaptive problems that hinder teachers to put in to practice their expertise and leadership in learning should be known and tackled.

Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed the main research question of my on going study, which reads: how do teachers and school leaders conceptualize learning and leadership and how does their understanding affect their practices and how their practices affect student learning? The paradigms guiding the study are interpretative and radical structuralism paradigms. Theories of learning and leadership have been discussed as lens to this study.

Foundation of school leadership should be rooted in learning and in moral commitments, contextual theory and interpersonal theory. Students learn due to combination of different motives that, among others, include the interest in the contents and/or the way teachers involve them in learning. Successful changes in learning should focus on student learning and not only the increase of number of students in schools. Leaders have to lead schools based on the context, and create interpersonal relationships that enhance student learning. Teachers should be able to put into practice their expertise and leadership skills, while school leaders are expected to solve both technical and adaptive problems that hinder student learning. Students' examinations and tests results should not be looked at as a basis for teachers' and school leaders' practices but should be used as measures for learning and leadership reforms. School reforms are in turn dependent on teachers' and school leaders' understanding of learning and leadership and their practices.

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