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## Enhancing Quality Education for Sustainable Development in Kenya

**Julius Otieno Gogo**

Lecturer, Maseno University, Kenya

### **Abstract:**

*Quality is meeting, exceeding and delighting customers' needs and expectations with the recognition that these needs and desires will change over time. The primary customer in education is the student and the ultimate goal of education is to ensure that the student can function in society now and in the future. Quality education must, therefore, enable students to develop to the fullest potential, their personality, talents, mental and physical abilities. These would enable them participate in the socio-politico-economic development of the nation. This paper, therefore, examines the status of quality education in Kenya and its relevance to the world of work in relation to the national goals of education. It seeks to answer the questions: Are the children learning today able to compete in a world economy? Is education preparing world-class citizens not only for tomorrow but for today? Indeed, the paper discusses policy considerations for quality education with regard to reliance on national examinations to evaluate performance of students; the role of curriculum reviews in enhancing quality education; the development of practical skills, knowledge and attitudes required at the work place; competition among schools, colleges and universities and its influence on quality education; the burgeoning expenditure on education; the high rate of increase in enrolment that is not in tune with the available facilities and personnel; and the effect of unemployment and underemployment on the value of education.*

**Keywords:** *Quality education, sustainable development, goals of education, performance, student needs, policy considerations, unemployment and underemployment*

### **1. Introduction**

Quality is "meeting, exceeding and delighting customers' needs and expectations with the recognition that these needs and desires will change over time" (Downey, Frase & Peters, 1994:8). A customer is anyone who is being served and the primary customer in education is the student while the ultimate goal of education is to ensure that the student can function in society now and in the future. To this Downey et al (1994: xi) poses the questions: "Will the children we are educating today be able to compete in a world economy? Are we preparing world-class citizens not only for tomorrow but for today?" This paper, therefore, examines the status of quality education in Kenya and its relevance to the world of work in relation to the national goals of education.

### **2. Literature Review**

The criteria required for quality education are quality of learners (i.e. learner entry behavior), quality of content, quality of teaching/learning materials, quality learning environment and quality outcomes (e.g. performance). However, the report of the taskforce on the realignment of the education sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010, noted that there are issues that negate against quality education (Republic of Kenya, 2012). At the primary level we have low adequate quality assurance services, severe teacher shortage and an upsurge in enrolment due to free primary education (FPE). At the secondary level, there is variation in quality of management in schools and disparity in resource allocation especially teachers to different categories of schools. In tertiary education there is general shortage of trainers and obsolete equipment and technology leading to poor quality of education and training. In universities enforcement of standards depends on the strength of individual universities involved and therefore quality varies and cannot be guaranteed. Secondly, universities offer curriculum without involving employers hence relevance of education and training offered do not meet the needs of the labour force.

Indeed, educational institutions in Kenya are facing challenges of high enrolment, low teacher supply, poor infrastructure, inadequate financing, high competition that negates the provision of quality education, curricula that are not directly geared towards the needs of the labour market resulting in high levels of unemployment and underemployment and reliance on national and terminal examinations as measures of quality education. The taskforce (Republic of Kenya, 2012: 65), therefore, made recommendations that would enhance quality at all levels of education. These are training head teachers in skills of quality assurance, financial and human resource development; training, deploying and supporting quality assurance officers to do their work effectively; providing adequate learning materials; and carrying out continuous regular course assessments and use them to guide learners towards better performance.

Quality of education is affecting not only formal schools but also non-formal schools. In a study on access to and quality of basic education among non-formal schools in Kibera, Nairobi, Allavida Kenya (2012: ix) noted that the quality of education provided in Kibera schools was poor. This was indicated by a poor teacher/pupil ratio of 1:97, 12% of the teachers being untrained, and in some schools up to six pupils shared a textbook. These factors contribute to low levels of learning outcomes. Other factors included inadequate physical facilities (e.g. 76 pupils sharing one classroom, 17 teachers sharing a pit latrine).

### 2.1. Quality of Learners

Ndiritu (2012) found out that the key determinant input on education output is student prior performance. This is followed by teacher experience which accounts for 75.7% of the variability in student performance. Kisirkoi (2012) noted that the quality of teacher training is considered poor owing to low entry requirements into teacher training institutions, observed transmission approach in classroom teaching, and the general perception about the teaching career. She recommended that teachers at all levels of education should hold at least a first degree and should have chosen teaching as their first choice. This is because one of the factors determining the quality of graduates is the pedagogical competence of the lecturers and tutors (Njoka, 2012).

In a study on the proliferation of higher education in Nigeria, Akinwumi (2010) noted that the expansion of higher education resulted in low staff quality (instead of PhD holders many lecturers have master's degrees) and high staff/student ratio. This is compounded by lecturers being on strike most of the time due to low pay or delayed payments. The result is the production of half-backed graduates. The situation is not better in Kenya. Gogo (2014: 69) recommended that the cut-throat competition among universities should be controlled to ensure quality university education. Opening up of too many university campuses and centres are subjecting students and administrators to too much competition thereby eroding quality considerations.

The campuses and centres opened in almost all towns in Kenya do not have adequate library books and access to e-journals. This is unfortunate because university education should be research-oriented where students do not rely on notes from lecturers as is the case today. Secondly, the programmes are sometimes compressed such that little teaching time is given to complete the course content. The situation is even made worse with reliance on part-time lecturers who account for 70% of the academic staff in Kenyan universities leading to ineffective learning/teaching process in universities (Gogo, 2014).

Following the free primary education (FPE) and free day secondary education (FDSE) policies, many schools are overenrolled and this has had negative effects on quality education as teaching/learning materials are overstretched. The high enrolment has been a result of the need for further education as demanded by the students and parents. This is not in tune with the available facilities and personnel.

The transition rate from one level of education to another (primary to secondary or secondary to university) is far below expectations and many learners are forced to drop out of the way. For example, the transition rates from primary to secondary for the years 2005 to 2010 are shown in Figure 1 on page 5.

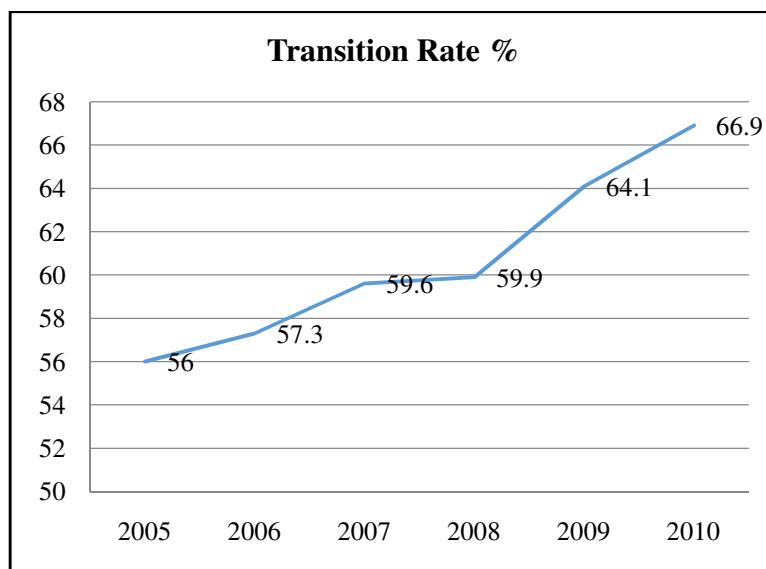


Figure 1: Transition Rate from Primary to Secondary in Kenya (2005-2010)

Source: Statistical Abstract, 2011

On the other hand, Jagero & Ayodo (2009) noted that the government subsidy under the FDSE accounts for 40.22% of the total cost for a day student and 28.23% for a student in a boarding school. This amount is not adequate to maintain students from poor backgrounds and as such students still face challenges of retention and dropout. In addition, the bursary funds do not reach students who fail to join schools as the system only deals with those enrolled in school. Njihia (2012) posits that the bursary scheme was inefficient with regard to timeliness in making bursary awards; the scheme had a limited reach as only 21.9% of the applicants in a study in Nairobi and Machakos counties received bursaries over a period of three years; many very needy students were locked out of the bursaries causing some students to drop out due to lack of fees.

## 2.2. *Quality of Content*

According to Ibode (2012) curriculum evaluation is the act of gauging the value and effectiveness of any aspect of educational activities. It helps solve problems such as instructional methods, instructional materials, class size, students' assessment, and evaluation. He noted that mass failures in public examinations in Nigeria could be drastically reduced if curriculum evaluation is allowed to thrive within the educational system in the country. On his part, Tapfumaneyi (2012) argues that the pursuit of Eurocentric curriculums has limited the impact that education has had in developing countries. However, Africanizing curriculums to make education more relevant to the development of Africa has had challenges.

Mtiti (2012) in a study in Tanzania argued that the quality of classroom instructional practices is determined by a curriculum that takes into account the involvement of key stakeholders including students learning diversity based on their socio-cultural and economic orientations. Participatory approach in curriculum development and implementation is significant in enhancing students' active participation in the classroom instructional practices. Unfortunately, Mayama & Nyongesa (2012) found out that despite 93.7% of the topics in science subjects under the 8-4-4 education system were practical oriented, they constituted a repeat of historical experiments with known results leaving little room for creativity among the students.

## 2.3. *Quality of Teaching/Learning Materials*

The provision of teaching/learning materials is in the hands of parents through the cost-sharing strategy of financing education. Gogo, Ayodo & Othuon (2010) in a study in Rachuonyo District reported that many schools lacked adequate physical facilities required to ensure the provision of quality education. These facilities included textbooks, classrooms, offices for staff, teaching/learning materials and equipment, and special rooms for workshops, laboratories, libraries, home science and computer rooms. Despite this Munda, Tanui & Kaberia (2010) noted that the availability and good use of libraries, laboratories and classrooms influence student performance positively. Hence increased number of students per library and laboratory space has a negative influence on student performance.

## 2.4. *Quality Learning Environment*

Nafula & Achoka (2012), in a study in Bungoma South District, noted that violence by teachers on girls negatively impacted on their performance. Such violence included corporal punishment, verbal abuse and sexual abuse. Girls on whom corporal punishment is administered become less interested in learning and this leads to truancy. Those who are verbally abused suffer mental instability and stress while those who are sexually abused suffer embarrassment and psychological torture.

Other environmental issues affecting learning are floods in flood prone areas such as Budalangi in Busia County and Kano plains in Kisumu County. ASAL regions are equally affected due to dry spells and the long distance of schools from students' homes. In other communities there are negative attitude towards learning in general and as such achieving quality education is a dream.

## 2.5. *Quality Outcomes*

Quality education is the degree of achievement in education as evidenced by performance in national examinations, transition from one level of education to the next and retention in the education system. Republic of Kenya (2012: 57) noted that assessing "quality is complicated as the tendency is to peg it on examinations performance". Quality is an indicator of the extent to which educational goals and objectives are achieved through implementation activities, as stated in the curriculum documents.

Mwangi (2011) noted that for quality education in higher education institutions to be ensured proper mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation should be used. This includes self-assessment of higher education, accreditation of training programmes and external monitoring inspection. Unfortunately, universities do not follow the internationally agreed best practices governing the appointment of external examiners and that external examiners' reports which are crucial feedback documents are largely ignored (Jawuor, 2012).

Kiptanui & Mbugua (2009) posits that psychological factors contributing to poor achievement in English Language are poor attitude towards education and cultural practices that impede educational goals. Cultural factors include discrimination of the girl child to access education, female genital mutilation, and failing to appreciate the value of education.

# 3 Theoretical Analysis

## 3.1. *Nurturing Students' Talents*

Quality must enable the students to develop their personality, talent, mental abilities and physical abilities to the fullest. However, these qualities cannot be developed to the full due to inappropriate curricula. Despite having clear national goals of education, the curricula at various levels of education have failed to bring out the required development of the student. The education system has remained purely elitist with the aim of graduates joining white-color jobs.

Babusa (2011) argues that the current education system in Kenya over relies on grades and passing of the final examinations at the expense of education especially at primary and secondary levels. Teachers are forced to drill their students to pass the final examination instead of educating them. Teachers with students scoring as are promoted and praised while those with Ds and Es are jeered at by parents. Sometimes parents lock out head teachers and teachers out of school when their children perform poorly.

Syallow, Njagi & Sang (2012) noted that sports, games and drama are given minimal attention in schools at the expense of academics yet these are the areas that exploit children's talents. Intelligence cannot be measured in the classroom alone but also through co-curricular activities. They add that academics and co-curricular activities should go hand in hand in developing a child. Co-curricular activities build confidence in children which enables them to face difficult situations without developing stress. In addition, some students would improve their academic performance through activities such as drama, music and sports because they involve a lot of

reasoning and thinking. Co-curricular activities also instill a sense of discipline in children. Indeed, they argue that admission to universities should be based on the strength of the students' talents and not academics alone.

### *3.2. Achievement of the National Goals of Education*

Ominde Commission of 1964 came up with the six national goals of education (Republic of Kenya, 1965). These are: fostering a sense of nationhood and promote national unity (to enable people remove conflicts and promote positive attitudes of mutual respect); meet the economic and social needs of national development, equipping the youth of the country to play an effective role in the life of the nation; provide opportunities for the fullest development of individual talents and personality; promote social equality and foster a sense of social responsibility within an educational opportunity for all; respect, foster and develop Kenya's rich and varied cultures; and foster positive attitudes to other countries and to the international community of which Kenya is part (Republic of Kenya, 1965). Indeed, the goal of education is "to prepare and equip the youth to be happy and useful members of Kenyan society. To be happy, the youth must learn and accept the national values while for them to be useful, they must actively work towards the maintenance and development of this society" (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 1984: 3). But are the youth happy and useful?

These six goals of education have not been achieved fifty years after independence. For example, fostering national unity has failed as we are divide along tribal, race and religious lines. The quota system of admission to secondary schools, for example, demands that 85% of students must come from the vicinity of the school while only 15% should come from outside. If the school is national then only 15% would come from other counties as opposed to 85% from the county in which the school is built. This system has led to individual schools enrolling students mainly from one tribe or clan and the idea of national unity and cohesion becomes a mirth. Due to lack of exposure to the traditions and values of other tribes, the students remain aloof and are not ready to mix easily. Standards of education, therefore, fall.

Similarly, the other objectives have not been met. The youth are not productive enough given the high rate of unemployment in the country, individual talents are not nurtured, and there is a serious social economic inequality among Kenyans mainly due to lack of economic resources and equitable distribution of these resources.

### *3.3. Education and Sustainable Development*

#### 3.3.1. The Role of Education in Development

Development is change and growth; it requires social and cultural change as well as economic growth. Development leads a society to sufficiency (absence of want), security (law and order and freedom from abuse), satisfaction (enjoyable life), and stimulus (individual has the opportunity to develop to one's full potential). According to Nyerere (1976) the purpose of development is to liberate man to have human freedom and dignity. Development is, therefore, growth and distribution of wealth. It is the reduction and elimination of poverty, unemployment and inequality (Todaro, 1977).

In Kenya the distribution of wealth is uneven; we have very few too rich and too many who are poor. Education has led to the inequality because the higher one gets educated the better jobs they join and the higher incomes they earn. Hence the poor who are disadvantaged in acquiring higher education remain poor. This has been aggravated by the cost-sharing strategy in financing education. Cost-sharing strategy in financing education affects quality of education. According to Gogo, Ayodo & Othuon (2010) the unit cost of secondary education accounted for 37.5% of the variability in Kenya Secondary Certificate of Education (KCSE) mean score. Hence schools that cannot raise high funds through cost-sharing are disadvantaged in terms of performance.

Secondly, the private costs of primary education are higher among the poor students than the rich ones. The expected benefits of primary education are lower for poor students than the rich. Fees at the secondary and post-secondary education levels are prohibitive to the poor. The bursary system does not favour the poor either. Bursaries are given to those who are already in school and not those that cannot attend school due to poverty. Hence it is the rich who gain from the bursaries. The rich go to good schools, perform well and after acquiring degrees get well-paying jobs. The poor attend low cost schools that are ill-equipped, perform dismally and are forced to join menial jobs or remain unemployed. Getting out of the poverty cycle is a real challenge to them.

#### 3.3.2. The Graduate/Labour Market Needs

Among the challenges facing university education in Kenya is the mismatch between skills acquired by university graduates and the demands from the industry (Republic of Kenya, 2005). An area of concern is the production of graduates vis-à-vis job opportunities and retraining of lecturers. The education system concentrates on imparting theoretical skills at the expense of practical skills which is important in building a vibrant economy. It is unfortunate that at the university level we are churning out too many graduates with dubious qualifications (Gogo, 2011). Indeed, employers are questioning the caliber of the graduates given their ineptitude at work. Employers are interested in workers that have the attitudes and capabilities to function effectively in the global economy and not persons who are seeking employment for money. They are questioning the value the workers will add to the organizations.

Secondly, education has led to the brain drain to developed countries of America, Europe and South Africa. The expertise of these people is not utilized in the country to help develop the economy. Migration to towns has also led to the low rate of rural development yet as a nation we rely on agriculture for the growth of the economy.

Thirdly, the earnings-quality relations lead to efficiency and equity. Quality improvements are an investment and graduates from better schools earn more and acquire jobs more easily than those from poor schools. According to Sirageldin (1968) the quality of education explains 7% of the earnings variance of people of the same age, sex, race and years of schooling. However, Downey et al (1994) quoting Celis (1993: A1) noted that we are not keeping pace with the kinds of skills required in today's economy.

To improve the quality of the graduates Nyambura, Kombo & Anzoyo (2011) proposed a competence-based model of teaching and learning at university level. In this system the learning products are defined explicitly, the delivery options are varied and the level of learning is what drives the assessment model rather than the evidence of credit points usually captured in the traditional teaching and learning model.

### 3.3.3. Expansion of the Economy vis-à-vis Expenditure on Education

Economists believe that education leads to economic growth. It is the human resources, neither its capital nor natural resources that determine the character and pace of a nation's economic and social development. Harbison (1973) argued that human resources constitute the ultimate basis for the wealth of nations. This shows the critical relevance of education to economic growth and development.

For the economy of a nation to grow, there must be heavy investment. This is lacking in Kenya. The income of the country is spent mainly on consumption of goods and services and not invested. For example, recurrent expenditure on education for 2004/2005 financial year was Kshs. 80.24 billion (94.4%) while the development expenditure was Kshs. 4.77 billion (5.6%). Again in 2008/2009 the figures were Kshs. 99.81 billion (90.1%) and Kshs. 10.02 billion (9.9%) for recurrent expenditure and development expenditure respectively (Republic of Kenya, 2009). Hence little growth can be envisaged.

A nation would develop faster if we invest more on education. The social rates of return to education include taxes the state receives from those employed. It is this income that the state uses to develop the economy and pay for services rendered. Other benefits include improvement and innovations by promoting research, spread of knowledge to the society, widespread educational opportunities, promotion of mobility of labour, benefits to the next generation, educated women having fewer children and a literate, knowledgeable and critical electorate and citizenry.

## **4. Applications**

It is important for the Kenya government to reassess its policies that would improve the quality of education. These policy considerations should touch on the reliance of examinations for evaluating the performance of students, teachers and educational institutions; curriculum reviews; the place of tuition in relation to syllabus coverage; and the inculcation of practical skills required by the industries.

### *4.1. Reliance on Examinations to Evaluate Performance*

Kenya has relied on national examination results for placement of graduates to subsequent levels of education and screening for the few jobs available in the job market. However, the examination system has been prone to cheating at all levels of education and as such they do not give the correct value of the graduates. Secondly, students and teachers have mainly focused on examinations without realizing that education is for the development of the whole person. The focus is on the cognitive domain while the psychomotor and aesthetics have been sidelined. Indeed, alternative methods of evaluating learning should be incorporated. For example, attachment of students to industries for a period not less than six months and their performance at the work place should be part of evaluation. This would develop the skills, attitudes and values of the student. The National Youth Service Programme was useful to university students in the 1980s and this could be an area to revisit with more openness and objectivity.

### *4.2. Curriculum Reviews*

Since independence our curriculum has been regularly reviewed. Emphasis has been varied from time to time and as such we have had curricula that are focused on general education, science and technology and information communication and technology (ICT). However, the thinking of the general public has failed to change. There is need for civic education to remove the idea of white-color jobs from the minds of Kenyans. Let the curricula be more technical and innovative with the aim of making graduates self-reliant. They should be job-creators and not job-seekers.

### *4.3. The place of Tuition/Normal Teaching Time vis-à-vis Syllabus Coverage*

There has been a lot of emphasis on tuition at primary and secondary levels and even pre-schools in urban schools. The rationale for tuition is that teachers need time to cover the syllabi. Unfortunately, many teachers do not attend to their normal class time on the teaching timetable and concentrate on teaching during tuition for the love of money that goes with it. Each syllabus is allocated adequate time by the curriculum developers and as such we do not need any tuition if it is for syllabus coverage. The government policy on this is clear, there is no tuition. Hence the government should be strict and enforce the rule without favour from any quarter. This is because students need time to relax to avoid burnout and have free time to do their own studies.

### *4.4. Development of Practical Skills Required by the Industries*

The education offered has little impact on the needs of the industry in terms of qualified manpower. With more focus on general education students leave education institutions with theory and little or no skills to use at the work place. The work place requires relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes for the graduates to be productive. This is lacking in our education system. Can industries be used to influence our education curriculum? It is equally necessary that Boards of Management of schools provide the required physical facilities and equipment to enable students acquire the needed skills and attitudes.

## 5. Conclusions

Is quality achievable and can it be enhanced? Quality is defined by the customer, is tied to customer needs and expectations, have several dimensions of customer satisfaction (meeting, exceeding and delighting) and customer needs and aspirations change over time. In Kenya today we have failed to meet the needs of the customer, the student, despite the high expenditure at all levels of education.

## 6. Recommendations

What educational planners should do to improve quality of education to enhance development in Kenya?

- Early specialization and link with industry with focus on nurturing the inner talents of the young people.
- Review the place of terminal examinations as a means of testing intelligence and performance.
- Come up with tangible options on financing economic development to help investment in the economy to grow.

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