

PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP IN KENYAN CLASSROOMS

Thomas Amukaya Andabwa

Department of Education Science and ECPE, Garissa University, Kenya

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Abstract: The major goals of education is to prepare learners to contribute to the economic development of the country and as an individual be self-reliant. In order to realize this goal, it is envisaged that teaching and learning process is of quality and focused on nurturing of 21st century skills. The curriculum offered is expected to impart skills of identifying and solving real world problems although this relies entirely much on how teaching and learning process is carried in the classroom. CEMASTE A TNA Report 2015 showed that teachers are still inclined towards traditional methods of teaching with students having less opportunities to construct, solve real life problem outside the classroom. The purpose of this paper is to highlight on pedagogical leadership both in the classroom and outside the classroom in order to improve on quality and help learners face and solve real life problems.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Problem-solving.

1.1 Introduction

Pedagogical leadership is a form of practice that shapes teaching and learning as an integral part of leadership and has its roots in western cultures, particularly those in the USA education systems. The Finnish government is among countries that practice pedagogical leadership in their education system. It takes two distinct dimensions of leadership, commonly known as instructional leadership or learner-centered leadership (Hallinger, 2014), which focuses on knowledge creation or construction and management.

In learner-centered leadership learning, learners engage in active participation, problem-solving techniques, and gaming-based learning and eventually create their own knowledge. To address 21st challenges, learning institutions have to make swift move towards problem-based learning to produce graduates who are creative; think critically, and analytically (Kelley & Knowles, 2016). Knowledge should no longer be conceived as an end but a means to create better problem solvers and lifelong learners. The organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) emphasizes the knowledge that results into good life skills as learning outcomes. Most necessary is physical, cognitive, and psycho- social maturation at the end of education programme. The society require mature members capable to cope with societal demands in a gamut of contexts (Curran, 2014). OECD encourage acquisition of competence rather than skills. Competence goes beyond skills attainment by nurturing in the learner the ability to cope with complex demands by use of one's psycho-social resources leading to new desired skills, attitudes and knowledge.

1.2 Early Psychologists and learner centered approach to learning

Constructionist approach to learning emanated in early psychologists William James and John Dewey's early philosophies about education. Together with educationists such as Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori, Jerome Brunner, and Lev Vygotsky advocated for inquiry or discovery learning and open education which is totally opposite to traditional mode of learning classrooms in Kenya. Vygotsky's constructionist theory put more emphasis on the role of culture in learning process. Cultural and social context are essential for cognitive development. Culture provides the child with cognitive developmental tools such as language, cultural history and social context (Gasteiger, Brunner, & Chen, 2021).

In view of Lev Vygotsky's theory of development, the learner requires assistance from a more knowledgeable person (teacher, parent or peer) to move to independent problem solving, the level of potential development or Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Successful scaffolding blended with the problem-solving technique of learning put the learner at the centre of learning (Polya, 1945). The learner needs guidance and assistance through the four-step approach of problem-solving of Goerge Polya. According to George Polya, mastery of the four steps are relevant in making the learner an independent problem solver.

Emphases of the interactions between teaching fraternity, the community's learning ecology, and the social set of circles in which the educational organization is set was espoused by Bronfenbrenner (1979), Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) in the bio-ecological theory of human development and Kelly (1966) in the field of Community psychology.

From ecological perspective, both Bronfenbrenner and and Kelly agree that, the prosperity or non-accomplishment of the learner in school is highly influenced by environmental situations surrounding the learner. The interaction of microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronsysteam of each learner is quite significant. Queer cultural practices, cultism, economic status and political structures of the day influence learning.

Changes in care giving in the family, social changes in the community, educational challenges of the country, political status, motivation by guardians, technological advances, poverty, social economic structures, legal system or peer groups and other environmental situations may affect the learner's development and functioning (Leonard, 2011). Similar with Bronfenbrenner and Kelly, Cole (1996) introduced the concept of context as that which surround the learner. Cole came up with concentric circle to illustrate the context as surroundings with the learner at the center. Next to the learner are; tasks, concepts, lessons, teachers, classroom organizations, principals, community organizations, parents and other social cultural institutions. In this context instructional leaders have three core common roles that encompass defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programmes, and promoting a positive school learning climate or culture for the learner to explore and manipulate the surrounding maximally (Hallinger, 2014). Epstein and Associates (2009) espoused on a three overlapping circles model on the interactions of family, school and community that describes their contributions to the healthy development of the learner.

Teachers play the role of classroom leaders or pedagogical leaders in the inquiry process as they interact directly with learners. Other scholars refer instructional leadership model as learner-centered leadership with common features of behavior modeling, monitoring, and dialogue (Hallinger, 2014). This approach to education involves interpretation, understanding, and application in making action as a teacher and how these actions are directed at the learner in the learning process. There is more evidence that effective classroom leadership leads to effective classroom learning which greatly impacts on transformation of learners' behaviour, especially were there is secure attachment between teachers and learners reflected in emotional understanding of the learner by teachers (Bowlby, 1988).

Students' positive perceptions of teachers' involvement directly promote their participation in class, their academic self-concepts and engagement in learning. In this capacity, school play the role of being a path to opportunity for students from stigmatized backgrounds to access to knowledge, and prepare learners for work in broader society (Weinstein, 2002).

According to Hanley (1994), the implementation of an instructional learner-centered approach comprises of seeking out and using students' questions, experiences and ideas, collaborating and encouraging the use of alternative sources for information, encouraging students to challenge each other's conceptualizations and ideas, encouraging self-analysis, involving students in seeking information that can be applied in comparison of learning theories. Further, the approach looks into solving real-life problems, emphasizing career awareness, especially those related to STEM (Reigeluth et al., 2017). Leadership in practice tends to become an exercise of staffing the teaching programme, providing teaching support, monitoring school activity, and buffering staff against distractions from their work and maximizing on available time (Crandell et al., 2019).

In order to succeed in teaching, understanding students' learning abilities, experiences, reasoning, and logical abilities are mandatory for all instructors at the micro-level of the learner.

Educationists and psychologists both strongly agreed that teaching and learning is an ongoing process through which students develop a solid understanding of appropriate concepts and procedures at each academic level. Teachers' ought to give students enough confidence to discover life problems and think critically on how to solve them (Cole, 1996). Educational institutions have to embed families, policies, reforms, and several other services such as health, social work, community psychologists, local, national and global issues that act as the ecology of the community of the learner (Male & Palaiologou, 2015).

1.3 Classroom Leadership

OECD countries educators engage students more directly in their learning as co-workers in the learning process rather than just recipients of knowledge (OECD, 2001). The curriculum is organised in manner that learners have roles in decision-making an approach empower them understand the need to take on responsibility for their own learning. This approach to educational curriculum stress on learners to learn, understand the process of learning, and question what is being learned (Knowles et al., 2015). Piaget observed concrete operational stage (7-11 years) as the onset of syllogistic reasoning when the learner considers two premises and draw a logical conclusion (Steege & De Neys, 2012). This allows students enter the adult world of reasoning and thinking opined by Jean Piaget as formal operationalization. Formal stage of cognitive development is well acknowledged for abstract reasoning, systematic problem solving, ability of meta-cognition and scientific reasoning (Piaget, 1972). Problem-based learning is combination of inquiry based learning, discovery or investigative learning, solving open-ended problems, self-directed learning, learning in groups, learner-centered learning, active or participatory learning.

While practising pedagogical leadership in classroom, teachers have three major options of teaching styles; permissive, authoritarian and democratic or authoritative (Baumrind, 1991). Teaching style that fits with personality of learners give higher outcomes in terms of classroom instruction, classroom performance, classroom management strategies and techniques (Costa et al., 2019).

According to Baumrind (1991), permissive teachers establish few rules and tend to be inconsistent in enforcing rules or applying consequences for misbehavior similarly authoritarian teachers establish the classroom rules, learning is purely teacher centered, the student's role is to comply with the rules and complete all work satisfactorily without considering learners' needs. Authoritative teachers establish a classroom environment that includes input on nearly all issues of management, making choice privileges for students, and generally quite positive to learners' needs. This type of teacher approach employ pedagogical leadership in the classroom (Baumrind, 1991).

Authoritative style promotes healthy personal development, provide learners with the necessary challenge, structure, and support. Authoritative teachers are loving and caring, hold high performance standards, explain why behaviors are acceptable or unacceptable, and enforce rules consistently. These approach to teaching produce learners who are confident, willing to take risks, happy, energetic, and likeable (Baumrind, 1991).

Hartley (2010) suggests that key in educational leadership learning and management are the involvement of learners, parents, community, government, and teaching and learning pedagogical communities. Effective education settings develop productive and synergistic relationships between learners, families, the school team, and the community, because the context, the locality, and the culture in which learners live are vitally important. In this case pedagogy involves creation of learning environments in which the centrality of interactions and relationships among learners, teachers, family and community interact with external elements jointly construct knowledge.

This require authoritative teachers and parents who are ready to share knowledge, experiences and practices, and provide unconditional access to continuously changing resources through collaboration and cooperation, in an atmosphere of openness and trust (Male & Palaiologou, 2015). The main elements in the pedagogical leadership are people, context, and knowledge. The approach pedagogical community empowers learners, and does not strive for mastery; rather, it aims to open dialogue and focus on functions rather than on outcomes and outputs (Male & Palaiologou, 2015). Leaders here aim to gain an in-depth understanding of the ecology of the community and seek change as to where, when, and how to intervene in the learning process in a manner natural to the learner's

locality. Finally, the focus on knowledge should not only be on what counts as knowledge but also on how knowledge is constructed.

Jerome Brunner clarified the key three factors essential for constructive learning. Brunner argued that the teacher must create a conducive environment where the desire to learn is stimulated and learners are free to make mistakes, make corrections as they manipulate objects and discover underlying principles behind concepts (Brunner, 1978). Brunner's second element is on how knowledge is structured. Brunner proposed that learning content be presented in a simplified form in terms of terminologies, symbols, vocabulary, and examples that are at the level of the learner. Brunner finally emphasized the aspect of sequencing material presented and observed that modes of representation determine how the knowledge acquired is stored and encoded.

Brunner came up with three levels of acquiring new information as; enactive, iconic and symbolic. At the enactive level of learning, the child manipulates concrete materials or objects directly and uses them to recall past action-based occurrences.

Adults, the enactive actions are modified into a variety of motor tasks that they would find difficult to describe in iconic (picture) or symbolic (word) form. The second level is called iconic in which the child thinks of objects and uses imagery when dealing with mental images of objects. Teaching and learning at this level call for instructors to use many diagrams or illustrations to accompany verbal information because what is observed is much better understood and permanently stored. The last level, symbolic that comes at the age of six years onwards involves manipulation using language/words and no longer uses mental images of objects (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). Brunner's ideas are of great use when structuring a curriculum, the concept of planning content from simple-to-complex, general-to-detailed, abstract-to-concrete manner are embedded in his theory. He redefined the role of the teacher as a facilitator in the classroom, who design lessons to help learners discover the relationships and piece bits of information together. The teacher has to give learning activities or information without organizing for them and scaffold them to the required level of mastery (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning activities given should fall within learner's zone of proximal development, this is motivating for continues learning keeping in mind that activities beyond the zone result in failure and frustration of learner.

Brunner argued that any content could be taught at any age in a spiral manner that aided discovery learning (Brunner, 1978). A spiral curriculum involves an iterative revisiting of topics, subjects or themes throughout the course without repetition (Brunner, 1960). It entails deepening of the content along the grades in summation manner with each successive step building on the previous one. Bruner opined for learners to construct their own knowledge by organizing and categorizing information through a coding system which is better if the learner discovers it rather than being told (Brunner, 1978). In spiral learning the competence of students increases until the overall objectives are achieved. This progressive gain in competence can be tested through the assessment procedures with main key values of reinforcement, move from simple to complex, integration both horizontal and vertical, logical sequencing of the content, higher level objectives and flexibility. Jerome Brunner encouraged stimulation of learning through brainstorming techniques, role-play, simulation, debate, discussion, teaching and learning resources, community resources, resource person/guest speaker resource room compared to external competitive goals such as grades or class ranking.

According to Erikson on instructional leadership settings, the curriculum fosters both lower and high level skills concurrently where the teacher remains a guide or facilitator while the learner constructs their own knowledge through exploration and experiential learning (Hallinger, 2011). Learners grow as active participants in the learning process through collaborating with others in group projects, hands-on exploration, and aiming at authentic tasks and product development. From this psychological perspective, education offered focus on transmission of knowledge coupled with social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development apart from professional development and employability. This amalgamates three key factors namely; learning needs, appropriate learning, and life skills.

Any education programme should base on the four pillars of learning; learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together (UNESCO, IBE, 2007). This approach involves allowing students to make choices of personal projects and encouraged to set their own goals, monitor their progress toward those goals, reflect on

their learning, and engage in self-assessments (Sockman, 2015). In traditional classrooms learners are rarely given opportunities of establishing their own goals and evaluate their own work.

1.4 Conclusion

Psychological theories guides on how classrooms should be managed for truthful learning to occur. Traditional mode of teaching for long time has been rebuked for encouraging rote learning and giving out half baked graduates who are good theoretically but unable to meet 21st challenges. Developmental scientists pioneered by Piaget opined that learners progress through developmental stages which allow children to construct novel representations and rules. Constructivists argue that learners learn to learn, as they learn and learning involves constructing meaning and systems of meaning. Teacher as an expert, has a role to create a collaborative environment where students are actively involved in their own learning. Teachers are more facilitators of learning than actual instructors as they gauge their teaching to match the learner's level of understanding. Constructivist classrooms rely on four key areas to be successful: shared knowledge between teachers and students, shared authority between teachers and students, teachers act as a guide or facilitator and finally effective learning occurs in small groups of students.

1.5 Recommendations

The implication of this investigation in education practice is that a pedagogical leadership approach should be infused into the teaching and learning in Kenyan classrooms. The government under the ministry of education to encourage all educational practitioners to practice pedagogical leadership that will see learner centred classroom. Teacher training institutions to modify curriculum used in preparation of teachers. The 21st century require teachers who can motivate learners towards the opportunities available in education. Furthermore, the Kenya government to responsibility of ensuring that earlier trained teachers are re-trained in modern classroom practices. In addition, government to increase funding and encourage the parents and stakeholders take full parenting roles in education of their children.

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