

The Role of Educational Institutions in Development and the Economy: A Human Resource Perspective

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Abstract: This paper interrogates the contribution of educational institutions to the development of an economy of a community. The paper is both conceptual and empirical in nature within the qualitative research paradigm. Narrative enquiry and interviewing techniques were applied to generate data. Out of a population of 13 public secondary schools in Vhembe District, in Limpopo Province, South Africa, three were conveniently sampled. In each of the three sampled secondary school, a principal and a deputy principal became research participants. Research findings revealed that firstly, there is a connection between schooling, the development of a community and its economy. Secondly, quality schooling has a potential of contributing to the eradication of poverty. Thirdly, loose educational structures struggle to enhance human resource development of a community through schooling. Lastly, inability to translate the Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure (MNSPSI) into tangibles is a problem. The researcher recommends for the prioritisation of rewarding excellence and the punishment of mediocre work for the benefit of developing communities and their economies. Furthermore, the researcher recommends for the declaration of schools as national key points to enable them to impact on an economy of a community.

Keywords: Development, Economy, Human, Poverty, Skill Development

1. Introduction

Sithole (2022) accentuates that schools need not be in a state of paralysis. This is when schools do not contribute to the development of their community and its economy. That renders that school less impactful on an area of vital need. There is a connection between a school, the development of its community and its economy. The quality schooling has a potential of developing its community and its economy (Leshoro, 2022). Quality schooling could contribute to the eradication of the treble challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty. Appropriate and relevant interventions are required where a school exists yet it struggles to contribute to the development of its community and its economy. Schools need to ascertain that they succeed in translating the MNSPSI into tangibles. This signifies that an era of schooling existing as an ivory tower of its own community and its economy has long elapsed. Maloka (2022) reminds that the logic of insanity that appears to have taken over in this world is exactly what a quality schooling intended to contribute to the development of its community and its economy has to resist and shun away. No quality schooling has to equivocate when coming to its fair share as regards the development of its community and its economy. Gold (2016) emphasises that

good governance remains a stress-buster for all the organisational incumbents. This suggests that with a sound governance in place in a quality schooling, not a single member would be heard of complaining of stress-related challenges. The governance under discussion in this paper, is being comprehended by Sebola (2015) as the creation of a structure and order which cannot be externally imposed, which result from interaction between a multiplicity of governing nodes which influence each other in the creation of a certain order or behaviour.

Clarke (2009) and Msila (2016) articulate that governance has a potential of steering the half-sinking ship into the bay of educational transformation and social change. A sound governance is known to be able to teach how to decimate organisational challenges other than magnifying or aggravating them (Fox, 2010; Theletsane, 2014; Moyo, 2015). Khoza, (2015) and Masina (2015) contend that where there is a healthy and responsive governance and administration, the delivery of quality schooling to all learners and the contribution of a school to the development of its community and its economy could be envisaged. Yukl (2006), Motsepe (2015) and Leshoro (2022) stress that no educational institution has to write itself off as regards having a share to the uplifting of its own community and its economy

banking on the quality graduates which a school produces (Shejavali, 2015; Siswana, 2007).

2. Literature Review

The review of literature highlights that schooling by its very nature is people-intensive. This signifies that all incumbents involved in the enterprise of schooling need to be treated with utmost honour to inspire them to continue to make schooling a success (Sithole, 2022; Zwane, 2022). As long as there is unbreakable connectivity between schooling and the development of communities and their economy, then all the human resources involved will need to be approached with circumspect to keep their morale up. The review of literature indicates that as long as institutional incumbents that are responsible for the success of schooling get an impression that they are being valued, they are not likely to disappoint. But, messing up with them could be a start of the deterioration of schooling especially in terms of continuing to contribute to the development of their communities and its economy (Dooms, 2022). With institutional incumbents always in high glee, schooling stands to stand out with whatever service it is rendering, inclusive of contributing to the development of its community and its economy. The prevalence of a school in a community has to be a marvel and a celebration for that community and its economy. This has to be a case bearing in mind how much a school could serve as an asset. Leshoro (2022) asserts that schooling could assist in getting labour to be more productive through improving training and education. Where schooling capacitates its graduates with the necessary skills and competencies, those graduates could excel in the labour market. Schooling is anticipated to contribute to the growing of an economy. That could happen in many ways one of which is helping in the resurrection of a country's industrialisation.

Schooling has to push for a philosophy of developmentalism for a country's people and its economy. This adds to the point that in a South African context where there was COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 KwaZulu-Natal Province and Gauteng Province's mass looting, any economic recovery plan thought of to restore economic order and stability requires the influence of schooling (Bell, 2022). Literature review advises that for schools to service their communities and their economies adequately, they need to prioritise planning, organising, monitoring and evaluation skills to benefit communities and economies.

The review of literature reveals that of the available theories, the one relevant in this paper is the Critical Theory (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). Its choice rests on the relevance the researcher finds in it in terms of sufficiently illuminating the contribution of schooling to the development of a community and its economy.

The Critical Theory helped the researcher to make meaning from the whole notion of community and economic development from the point of view of schooling. Briefly, one of the principles of the critical theory is that very often truth serves the status quo. The other principle relates to the question of "why is it that certain groups of people are so privileged in life than others"? These fundamental principles of this theory were helpful in clarifying how lack of sound governance and administration machinery perpetuate inequality between communities through allowing the development of some communities and prevent the development of others through schooling (Motsepe, 2015). Lack of strong governance in an educational institution may make it difficult for a school to contribute sufficiently to the development of its community and its economy. The selection of the Critical Theory in this paper, is informed by its encouragement of reflective and analytical thoughts as regards inequality in communities and their economy where a school exists and it is expected to serve as a leveller or equality provider. The Critical Theory is better placed to respond to issues of development and community economy (Moyo, 2015). In this paper, the Critical Theory reveals that inequality in schooling in the form of having a sound governance and failure to have it, could be entrenched if community members are not standing up for their own trampled upon rights such as the absence of a healthy governance and administration that are known to be facilitating the involvement of schooling to the development of communities and their economies. On that note, the Critical Theory serves as a basis for approaching, understanding and interpreting the whole issue of community development and its economy being traceable to the contribution of its schooling. Higgs and Smith (2010) advise that knowledge and how we understand truth, including scientific truth, moral truth and historical truth should not be separated from everyday life. This implies that comprehending the trend on how decent schooling contributes to the development of communities and their economies, is very imperative. The Critical Theory assists in arriving at the root cause of inefficacious governance

and administration which disable myriad schools from developing their communities and their economies as required (Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 2009). The other relevance of the Critical Theory for this paper is its emphasis of public administration ethics.

The Critical Theory has a potential of uncovering whether the challenge of inability to create structures, systems and processes by some educational institutions to enable the success of governance there, is a deliberate or unintentional exercise. The credibility of Critical Theory as regards the worrying effects of inefficacious governance and administration machinery which prevent some schools from servicing their communities as required, is not in doubt. Critical Theory stands out in advising against separating "real life testing" from scientific theories. The researcher contends that not every theory other than the Critical Theory could productively illuminate a problem of this paper like the chosen theory (Allen, 2014). The problem of this paper centres around explaining diverse hurdles which educational institutions have to overcome to be in a position of contributing to the development of their communities and their economies. Critical Theory advocates for critical reflection on society which includes schooling, in order to discover the hidden assumptions that maintain the existing power relationships that keep some societal members perpetually under-developed though in a different form and guise (Higgs & Smith, 2010). Critical Theory teaches that schooling requires to be emancipated from inefficacious governance and administration machinery experienced daily (Arden, 2013; Tisdall, 2015).

Hofstee (2010) stresses that there is a need for educational institutions to be aware of their mandates. This relates to schooling being firmly grounded to be able to contribute to the development of the economy of their communities. The problem statement of this paper relates to diverse hurdles which schooling lives to overcome to be in a position of contributing to the development of the economy of their community. The research questions addressed in this paper are anchored on the Critical Theory as the theoretical perspective that underscores this paper (Higgs & Smith, 2010). The research questions are as follows: What are the roles and significance of governance structures and systems that are carefully crafted which are likely to enable schooling to contribute to the development of its community and its economy? What are the ideas, concerns and

aspirations of institutional incumbents regarding making their school contribute to the development of its community and economy?

3. Research Design and Methodology

This is a qualitative paper and the design of an article is a case study. The problem which the paper pursued, centred around explaining diverse hurdles which schooling has to overcome to contribute to the development of its community and its economy (Dawson, 2006; Levin, 2005). The choice of the qualitative research methodology was triggered by the paper being underscored by the Critical Theory. The researcher found a need to create a synergy between the Critical Theory as the theoretical perspective undergirding the paper, as well as the qualitative approach as the overarching research methodology (Hofstee, 2010). The combination of the two helped immensely in terms of illuminating issues of educational institutions having to develop their communities and their economies (Masina, 2015). With the Critical Theory underpinning the paper, the researcher utilised it, to interrogate how stakeholders in schooling comprehend the role of their secondary schools to the development of a community and its economy. The theory was also applied to determine the common reaction by secondary schools as regards utilising sound governance structures to better position their schools to be responsive to community and economic needs and aspirations of their stakeholders. Partnering the qualitative research approach and the Critical Theory enabled the researcher to make an in-depth understanding of how despite many years since colonialism and apartheid schooling have formally ceased to exist, their effects remain firmly in place. Such effects are still so severe such that many public secondary schools find it difficult to directly contribute to the development of their communities and their economies. Narrative enquiry and interviewing techniques were utilised to construct data relevant for this paper. To be precise, the six research participants with two from each of the three sampled educational institutions, were offered an opportunity of narrating their views on the role of educational institutions to the development of their communities and economy. To corroborate and triangulate the gleaned data, interviewing was conducted with those six members, sourced from three educational institutions. Responses were audio-taped for transcription later-on (Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005).

4. Results and Discussion

The findings arrived at in this paper are in relation to the research topic whose focus is: the role of educational institutions in development and the economy: a human resource perspective. The basis of the findings is the analysed data which were generated through the narrative enquiry and the interviewing technique. The six research participants, sourced from three educational institutions were interrogated as regards their views pertaining to how schools could contribute to the development of their communities and their economies. The research participants, were being referred to as School Principal 1A and 1B referring to the principal and deputy principal, School Principal 2A and 2B referring to the principal of School B, and his deputy and School Principal 3A and 3B referring to the school principal 3 and his deputy principal. That was done to protect the actual identities of schools and their principals. Paying attention only to those sampled schools ought not to create an impression that they are worse off as regards servicing their communities (Hofstee, 2010). Suffice to disclose that the choice of those three educational institutions was on the basis of the researcher having familiarised himself with issues of the development of communities and their economies by those educational institutions. The Critical Theory has been sufficiently instrumental in assisting in the analysis of data to ultimately emerge with these findings. Findings and discussion for this paper are the following: connection of schooling to community development and economy. Quality schooling eradicates poverty and loose educational structures betray human resources and skills development. A detailed discussion of each finding follows.

4.1 Connection of Schooling to Community Development and Economy

Schools and their communities belong together and enjoy unbreakable partnership (Brunton, 2003; Zwane, 2022). It comes as no astonishment when the development of a community and its economy is being traced to the contribution of a school in its proximity (Leshoro, 2022). On the above issue, School Principal 1A from School A recounts that:

"in the 21st century, it is as important as breathing that the working relationship between schools and their communities have to be kept as harmoniously as possible to enable the reciprocity of the two entities to live longer".

Deputy Principal 3B of School C suggests that:

"it can be beneficial for all the schooling sectors, in case it could be made mandatory by the Department of Basic Education policies that it is a transgression for any school to be found to have severed its relations with its closest community."

Sentiments expressed by research participants are pointing out to the single fact of schools and their communities as being mutually inclusive. It is this inclusivity which by and large, could enable the two to continue to co-exist and depend on their mutual co-existence for their individual prosperity (Tsheola, 2002; Mbeki, 2003; Madue, 2013; Zwane, 2015). It is advisable for every educational institution to put to good use the existing co-existence with its community to come up with development initiatives for the benefit of a community and its economy. That is likely to strengthen the ties between the two entities (Dooms, 2022).

4.2 Quality Schooling Eradicates Poverty

Macha (2016) and Leshoro (2022) reason that where poverty and other social ills in a community are aggravating, a question as regards the role of schooling in that regard has to be asked. Quality schooling has a potential of pushing back the frontiers of poverty in a community. School Principal 2A of School B utters that:

"getting our education systems to be responsive to the bread and butter issues plaguing a society such as inequality, unemployment and poverty could contribute in no small scale to their lessening".

This point is being shared by a Deputy Principal 3B of School C in reminding that:

"28 years into the new dispensation, the rate of poverty within the African population appears to have doubled, something traceable to the kind of the education system being fed to graduates which is devoid of the necessary skills demanded by the knowledge economy of the 21st century".

Evidently, current schooling in comparison to that of prior 1994 is a little bit irrelevant judging by its failing capability to fight down rife poverty, inequality and unemployment plaguing communities. Despite

this, the power and capacity of quality schooling to eradicate poverty in a community is not in doubt (Gobillot, 2008; Cunha, Filho & Goncalvers, 2010; Sithole, 2022).

4.3 Loose Educational Structures Betray Human Resources and Skills Development

Allen (2014) and Maloka (2022) emphasise that as long as the creation of efficacious governance and a sound administration machinery are not prioritised by many educational institutions, then dispensing skills required by an economy to enable graduates from a school to be employable, could remain a pipe dream. School Principal 2A of School B narrates that:

"it takes an educational institution an awareness of keeping tight and functional educational structures to know that it is those structures that shall enable an institution to capacitate its graduates to go out in a community to reduce the prevailing inequality and poverty plaguing a society".

Deputy Principal 1B of School A reminds that:

"the failure by authorities in the Department of Basic Education, to train all School Management Team members about the importance of ascertaining that schools they are leading and managing are run with appropriate governance structures in place that enable the delivery of rare skills to learner population, is a huge disservice to the human capital and economic development awaited by communities".

This point suggests that schooling can only capacitate their graduates or human resource to make a difference in terms of developing their communities and their economies when they are first characterised by enabling tight educational structures (Omano, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Thornhill & Van Dijk, 2010; Sebola, 2012; Qwabe, 2013; Tisdall, 2005).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Evidently, it is an educational institution like no other that could contribute to the development of a community and its economy. Educational institutions with loose educational structures are likely to struggle to dispense skills and competencies developing community economies. Educational institutions need to deal with their challenges of inefficacious governance

and poor administration machinery to enable them to dispense expertise, skills and competencies to graduates so that they develop their communities and the economy. As per the findings shared in the preceding paragraphs, the era of educational institutions being detached from their communities and their economies has long past. The 21st century educational institutions need to contribute to the alleviation of social ills of a community such as poverty, inequality and unemployment. Findings in this paper have shown that a prerequisite for an educational institution being able to contribute to the capacitation of the human resources for the development of a community and an economy is that it creates a relevant governance structures with a sound administration machinery. The study therefore recommends the following:

- There is a need for educational institutions to establish for themselves why is it that myriad schools appear not to be contributing as required to the development of their communities and their economies, 28 years into the new dispensation.
- There is a need for educational institutions to embrace an awareness that translating the Minimum Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure into tangibles is what every school has to do to service its human resource, which will make the difference in the development of a community and its economy.
- Lastly, there is a need for educational institutions to stop operating with loose educational structures that suffocate schooling when it has to contribute to the development of the economy of its community.

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