Pertinent Pitfalls Associated with Provision of Education in South Africa with Examples from Eastern Cape Province: A Literature Review

Robert M. Kajiita[1] and Simon Kang'ethe[2]

University of Fort Hare, Private Bag X 1314, King William's Town Rd, Alice 5700, RSA
E-mail: [1]<201402236@ufh.ac.za>, [2]<skangethe@ufh.ac.za>

ABSTRACT Irrefutably, the role of formal education in any society is paramount in steering the socio-economic development and breaking the cycle of poverty. It is an inalienable right that all should enjoy and embrace. Through a documentary analyses methodology, the paper explored the pitfalls to education provision in Eastern Cape Province. The analysis has emphasized the indispensability of education and elucidated the following pitfalls; inherited historical inequalities; violence in schools and homes; increase in drugs and substance abuse in schools; the use of second language as a medium of learning; poor learning and teaching infrastructure; and poor administrative and management prowess. The paper recommends ushering in tutoring NGOs in schools; fostering collaboration between the government and the private sector in supporting education services; establishing schools with child-friendly environment; motivating the youth to develop positive attitudes towards learning; and instituting quality assurance mechanism to monitor school progress and development.

INTRODUCTION

Largely, the term *Education* connotes the process of acquiring mental, social, economic, political and technological capabilities that shape and facilitate competitive living standards in the society. It is the socialization of individuals to become integral part of the society in which they live (Okojie 2007). However, this definition is broad and generic in nature, usually embracing the two major forms of education that is, informal and formal education. In this paper, the researchers' arguments will focus on formal education, which is a structured curricular form of education (Jonathan and Nick 2003). Formal education is one of the most important factors that ostensibly contribute to the improvement of the quality of lives in societies, whether economically or socially (Okojie 2007; Abubakar 2011). It is this realization and reality that has largely necessitated many governments and non-states organizations to immensely promote the course of formal education in and at all levels.

Despite the fact that South Africa has succeeded in enrolling many children in primary school system and considerably investing a hefty budget on education, academic achievements remains demanding especially in the poor rural areas such as Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces (UNICEF 2010). Apparently, a constella-tion of reasons abound, that includes but not restricted to paucity of adequately trained teachers, higher discrepancy ratio of teacher to students, poor school infrastructure, violence, poverty, the effects of HIV/AIDs (many children are orphans), learners attitudes, and historical imbalances among others (Jonathan and Nick 2003; Malcoln 2005; Michael 2008a). However, these forces runs contrary to the reality that education is indispensable in modern society, in that it provides the knowledge, skills and values that form the foundation for long-life learning and profession success (Okojie 2007; Abubakar 2011). Perhaps this is why the late former President of South Africa in his book, long walk to freedom presents education as a panacea that undoubtedly can be applied to change the world, people's attitudes towards life and towards one another and generally as an asset of development, modernization and civilization (Mandela 1995). Importantly, education ends the generational cycles of poverty and diseases and provides a foundation for a sustainable development (UNICEF 2010). Furthermore, Duncan (2008) argues that education equips individuals to lead full lives, understand the world they live in and ultimately gain the self-confidence to make them heard. He additionally argues that, quality education is emancipatory, a path to greater freedom and choice, and opens

the door to improved health, earning opportunities and material well-being (Duncan 2008). Inarguably therefore, education has been marked as the 'master key' for development and is undoubtedly an effective tool to fight poverty. With many countries of Africa still reeling under poverty and its concomitant ramifications such as HIV/AIDS, then the need for quality education is both critical and urgent. It is also not in doubt that there is an inextricable relationship between quality education and the social, economic and political development of the society. Therefore, education is and remains one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality and lays a foundation for sustained economic and social growth (Abubakar 2011). In other words, the importance of education is a common denominator to achieve various important parameters for peoples' lives. It is a formidable tool of effectuating all kinds of development (UNESCO 2009). It is therefore critical that various players whether the government or private sector unleash their strength and resources to provide quality education especially in the South Africa.

Despite this public good packaged in education, there still exist major gaps in providing this service in many African countries (Yolande et al. 2003; UNICEF 2010). The realization of this gap has therefore prompted various bodies to raise concerns and also devote themselves in providing the service to ameliorate the situation. In South Africa, for instance, apart from the government, NGOs too are involved in provision of education especially in the most neglected rural areas (Michael 2008b). But unfortunately the outcomes of these efforts still remain meager and insignificant especially in Eastern Cape Province.

Perhaps this is because the area has not attracted much attention in the near past making the educational needs in the area wide and dipper. Among many other pitfalls that have continued to weigh down efforts to improve education in most of the areas of the Eastern Cape Province in exhaustively include inadequate supply of requisite educational resources, lack of adequately trained teachers, weaker leadership, management and governance in schools, and generally poor forms of school infrastructure. Most schools face inadequate provision of training services for the teachers such as pre-services and in-services programs (Yolande et al. 2003). The purpose of this paper, therefore, is

to explore these pitfalls with the hope of advocating and lobbying for timeous and critical interventions in response, to enhancing a better provision of education services for the entire country.

Problem Statement

Interestingly, education has been embraced and regarded as the 'master key' for development in any society of the globe. In South Africa, the government has been doing the best to ensure and guarantee education for all especially the basic levels of education. Unfortunately, South Africa apparently has been noted for poor education outputs. This phenomenon leaves many with questions especially now that the country is ranked as one of the most developed countries in the African continent. The phenomenon is seemingly grave in the poorly ranked provinces such as the Eastern Cape. This state calls for a systematic enquiry to unearth and ascertain the pitfalls surrounding the discharge of education in South Africa and with emphasis to Eastern Cape. Therefore, the researchers in this paper anticipates that, this paper will create a platform for raising concerns and also of addressing issues that impedes the provision as well as obscures the quality output of education in the province.

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this paper is to explore the pitfalls surrounding the discharge of education services in Eastern Cape Province with an objective to advocate and lobby for more allocation of resources on education in the province. The need for qualitative education is also of a huge concern.

METHODOLOGY

This is a discourse research paper. Primary methods of empirical research such as in-depth interviews and surveys were not used in this context. Therefore, the paper has utilized a desktop literature review methodology to solicit data. Ostensibly, eclectic journal papers, newspapers, organizational reports and organizations' websites have been used as source of data in this paper. The review was done between the month of August and December 2015. The key ques-

tions that guided the review were; what are the challenges associated with education in South Africa and what are the factors behind poor performances in South African schools. With these broad questions, we were able to narrow down to the materials that indicated the challenges in Eastern Cape and subjected the data from selected materials to our analyses. The results and discussion are fitted together to provide succinct understanding of the pitfalls besetting education in the country.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Indispensability of Education in Modern Society

Irrefutably, history has witnessed and proved that only those nations that placed education as an important priority in their national agenda adequately survived in the world (Abubakar 2011). Today, education is considered to be crucial in the process of poverty eradication, social, political and economic development (Okojie 2007; Abubakar 2011). One of the reasons for this renewed interest in education is that it straddles both equity and productivity concepts of development (Baker 2007). All these arguments are strengthened by the many constitutions and world conventions and more importantly the Millennium Development Goal number two that envisaged the achievement of universal primary education globally by 2015 (UNICEF 2010). It must be noted that, education remains a key consideration in one's acquisition of a job. In connection to that, the Eastern Cape Newspaper (2014) reported complain from youth that, job opportunities in the province were availed based on level and quality of education obtained (Eastern Cape Newspaper 2014). Perhaps this is because stereotypically, some universities especially those that suffer paucity of resources are deemed to produce low quality graduates than those that 'swim in a sea of adequate resources'.

In attempt to strength the tenets of education, the role of NGO's in the provision of education cannot be overemphasized. Particularly, their role in changing the community attitudes and expectations towards education especially for the girl child in Africa generally and South Africa has been appreciated. They (NGOs) do build institutional strengths and support networks for advocacy on education. A research conducted by Sub-Sahara Africa Research Association (SARA) 2003 noted that the most important success of NGOs working in education has been increased access to schooling and active local community involvement in the quality of education (Yolande et al. 2003). Observably, provision of education along with other social security schemes continues to address historical inequalities and imbalances in many parts of the world; South Africa and Brazil leading the pack. This vividly validates the argument that education is single most powerful way to break the transmission of deprivation from one generation to the next (Duncan 2008). Therefore, education packed with such benefits need to be keenly monitored and supported.

Some Pertinent Pitfalls Associated with Poor Education in Eastern Cape Province

Inherited Historical Inequalities

Despite the fact that South Africa has been pointed to be on good tract towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goal on universal access to primary education and gender equality in education, the country still displays some glaring gaps that if not addressed may continue to lag the country's gross socio-economic development (UNICEF 2010; Dana and Juana 2014). Apparently, the architecture of apartheid carried with it disguised inequalities that continue to rear its ugly head in virtually all aspects of the country's socio-economic development, with education suffering a grave blow. To echo this perception, Engelbreich (2006) in Dana (2014) stated that; *"the central feature which distinguishes South Africa from other countries in terms of education provision is the extent to which racially entrenched attitudes and the institutionalization of the discriminatory practices in the delivery of education, a reflection of the fragmentation and inequality that characterized the society as whole"* (Dana 2014: 2). Therefore, the current state of the education in South Africa can in partly be attributed to the legacy of education policies instituted under apartheid regime. Importantly, quality education calls for both historical and progressive foundations to improve and maintain the required standards of output to suit the job markets.

For instance, there was unequal provision for schools in terms of funds, physical facilities,

teacher training, distribution/posting and employment and curricula (Asmal and James 2001; Michael 2008). This was conspicuously manifested where the black students were denied quality background in natural sciences while languages, arts and biblical studies were most encouraged (Asmal and James 2001; Michael 2008). This particular background disfavored the black South Africans from being enrolled in science based courses such as engineering, medicine among other top rated sciences carriers, hence making them less competitive and productive against their white counterparts. These elements are perhaps traceable in the modern schools that continue to mirror that trend and hence affecting the provisioning of education. It is a pity that twenty years after independence, education has continued to embrace this architecture.

Furthermore, the university setting was also structured in unequal parameters with the black based universities made to embrace a shallow curriculum than the whites based universities. The teaching staff too was poorly allocated with the white universities getting the lion's share (Eric et al. 2012). Having such inequalities at the foundation in education in South Africa, there are so many loopholes that were inherited and carried forward by newer generation, either by design or by default. With Eastern Cape being one of the black home lands, it faces such experiences. For example most of its schools face poor infrastructure and other aspects of academic development. The argument is that the root cause of such gaps does not emanate from the present, but a generational backlog and those responsible for interventions seemingly addresses the symptoms and not the root cause of such inequalities.

Apparently, even today, such inequalities do exist within provinces with the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces having the best schools which are well resourced and producing better qualified candidates as opposed to the other provinces like Eastern Cape (Eric et al. 2012). This form of developmental discrepancies poses a great challenge to both the provision of education and its quality thereof. Perhaps these gaps are not precedent in South Africa, a country being ranked as an upper developing country with reduced aid funds and other forms of external financial assistance. These researchers think that these disparities should

have been reduced in almost two decades down the line from 1994 (since attainment of independence).

It is therefore critical that the current policy makers especially the educationists and researchers put their heads together to chart out a strategy that will exterminate these disparities.

The Phenomenon of Violence in Schools and Homes

South Africa has an impeccable constitution allowing for a constellation of public entitlements to rights as well as an immense entrenchment of human rights. Unfortunately, the respect for human rights in the country seems to fail the litmus test. This more visible especially when environments that are not safe enough for children attending schools (Department of Police 2010). Many South African children and especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds are exposed to violence, abuse and exploitation.

According to the reports from the department of police in 2010, there was about sixteen percent (16%) increase in crime against children since 2009 (Department of Police 2010). This situation not only discourages children from learning, but also demoralizes and sabotages the whole child development derailing them from becoming productive and law abiding citizens in future. Gravely, violence in families disturbs the psychological well-being of the children and deters their learning. It is important that societies work to make the homes conducive enough to allow the children to attend to their assignment as well as get enough support from their parents to ensure quality learning.

Worse, spates of violence in the institution of learning, where some students or pupils bully their fellow peers instills fear and destabilizes the victimized students' state of learning. Such victimized pupils usually end up dropping from school to the detriment of their lives, their families, their schools, and the whole society at large. Therefore, the parents and schools managers should monitor incidents of bullying and timeously put in place measures to root-out bullying behaviors.

The Phenomenon of Drug and Substance Abuse among the Students

Drug taking and abuse presents a global problem which has apparently shocked the United

Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODOC) (Chatikobo 2015) prompting countries to invest heavily in the fight against drug taking and abuse.

The preponderance of drug abuse especially among both the school and out of school youths in South Africa has horrendous and pinching effects to learners and communities in general (Sonjani 2014; Chatikobo 2015). This is a social vice that continues to affect students' learning, their discipline generally and also the cohesiveness of their families. To this end, Randass (2008) observed that there is a high rate of indiscipline in schools in South Africa and has deteriorated to an extent that the learners severely injure both their teachers and their fellow peers. This makes the environment of learning a difficult one. The teachers usually work under an environment of fear and despondency. In many school environments in South Africa, both the reported and unreported cases of theft, vandalism, burglary, rape and even murder causes immense fear to the learners (Randass 2008). This causes long-standing physical, emotional, stress, low-self-esteem, impaired concentration, trauma and physical implications for both the pupils and the teachers. The government with the support of the community should therefore come up with strategies to 'mob-out' such evil vices and ensure the security of the learning environments especially in those rural areas heavily hit by such cases. This is because children have to walk long distance to schools due to lack of proper means of transport (Manomano and Kang'ethe 2015).

The Use of Second Language as a Medium of Instruction

The key characteristic of education is the use of language as media of instructions (Mandie et al. 2007; Mouton et al. 2012). The Ministry of Education (South Africa) highlights that the concept of the medium of instruction refers to the language used for teaching the basic curriculum of the education system (Ministry of Education 2003). Mouton et al. (2012) argues that language is controversial and problematic in nature. In the African education context, the use of second languages as a medium of instruction has been invertible due to the colonial linkages and the non-marketability of the local African languages. Despite the fact that South Africa has institutionalized and constitutionalized eleven

national languages among the majority native languages, English as the second language remains the medium of instruction in schools at large. Moreover, English language (seen as second language by many countries) in South Africa remains instrumental for important purposes while the native languages remain symbolically intended and perceived (Probyn 2005). This therefore, gives the learners who use English as their home language a greater chance and a positive attitude to perform well in schools.

The use of the English language as a medium of instruction has inarguable benefits such as the application of the language in the extended global population, expanding the socialization of the individuals outside or across the borders of one's immediate environs and enabling more chances for job market (Probyn 2005). However, the adversaries of second language as a medium of instruction argue that there are special problems resulting from the use of the language in training teachers, conducting business in all the social institutions and also socializing students to think and act in a way that promotes the English culture (Ministry of Education 2003). The phenomenon creates serious gaps in the understanding of the educational skills; and also lack the rigor of the content studied among the learners especially compared to when administered in their local dialect. For instance, South Africa being a young independent country, many of the black students and parents lack the interest to learn the English language, for it is associated with the colonizer and the oppressor of their people. For example in 2005, it was revealed that eighty percent (80%) of the learners in Eastern Cape had little exposure to English outside the classroom apart from the television and the popular music (Probyn 2005).

On the other hand, it is observed that, if Africans are educated exclusively in their own language, they would not be well equipped to take positions of responsibility outside their ethnical composition hence limiting their carrier opportunities (Mouton et al. 2012). Therefore, second language is perceived as a ticket for competiveness in the job market. In South Africa, unfortunately, there is mismatch of language use largely because the language for testing is not the same language the students speak at home. For instance, in 2011, The Trends in International Mathematics Science Study (TIMSS) revealed that, in countries where the language of instruc-

tion was not spoken at home, learners scored lower than where the language was spoken both at home and as medium of instruction in schools (TIMSS 2011). In South Africa specifically, the findings revealed that twenty-six percent (26%) of the learners reported that they always spoke the language of testing. This percentage is far much below and implies that second languages have not been fully embraced and poses adverse implications in education in South Africa. Therefore, this calls for a wise investigation into the matter to remedy the situation.

Despite the fact that students should be taught in the language they understand best, it should be acknowledged that students taught in their mother tongue and are expected to write their tests and assignments in English find it difficult to do well. They especially face immense challenges pertaining to literacy communication. This phenomenon has led many students who might have been good enough to move to further levels of education to drop out (Probyn 2005). Perhaps this is why some countries such as China have stuck to their guns to have the students learn in Chinese as their first language and learn English just like any other additional language. It is unfortunate that some countries such as South Africa appear to be much affected by the language factor. For example, in 2008, grade five South African children became last out of the forty (40) countries in literacy test, while the language of the test was their mother tongue (Michael 2008). These authors argue that perhaps the thoughts of the former Libyan President, Moumar Gaddafi for Africans to come up with an African language to match other global languages such as English and French is critical. Hopefully, such a language is likely to be understood with ease by the Africans than English.

Ill-prepared and Inadequate Teaching Staff

Undeniably, the quality of education can be pegged on the knowledge package, motivation and the experience of the instructor (Eric et al. 2012). This is why probably most institutions of higher learning ensure their staff is adequately motivated through further training and enhancing factors such as lucrative salaries and other fringe benefits. The quality of the teaching staff in any country, therefore, largely determines the quality of the education that learners are bound to experience. In South Africa, and especially in the Eastern Cape Province, the teacher input in the education system is believed to be very weak and hence leading into poor academic performance in the province (Wolhuter 2014). On the same note, Mandie et al. (2007) revealed that some of the teachers studied in the Eastern Cape Province did not indicate appealing quality in helping the learners in understanding the specific textual demands of the discipline so that they could gain control of their studies (Mandie et al. 2007). Most of these weaknesses were identified among the teachers who taught other subjects apart from the language subjects; while some teachers could not help the students identify some of the grammatical structures that were applicable in their lessons (Mandie et al. 2007).

Their research also revealed that most of the teachers never planned on how to teach, nor did they use different strategies for reading.

Therefore, many of the teaching staff failed to deliver due to; low skills and capabilities, lack of insight to identify strategies that would promote effective learning, and poor language proficiency due to having been poorly trained in English as medium of instruction (Mandie et al. 2007). This implied that the language competency of the teachers was open to criticism and was questionable. The quality of education can also be deduced from the teacher workload. For example in 2003, the ministry of education revealed that the ratio of the teacher to student was 40:1 in primary schools while in secondary school, was 35:1. When teacher workload is higher, it lowers their motivation and subsequently the quality of pedagogy (Ministry of Education 2003).

Inadequate Learning and Teaching Infrastructure

The fate of the physical infrastructure in the educational domain plays a key role in determining the quality of education (Wolhuter 2014; Department of Basic Education and UNICEF 2010). The state of classrooms and the seating facilities may influence the state of learning motivation at any given school. According to the UNICEF (2010), there is serious gap in putting the rightful infrastructure to support sound learning environments in South Africa, especially Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Kwazulu-Natal (Department of Basic Education and UNICEF 2010). The prevalence of poverty in communities is

often directly or indirectly reflected in the schools within those communities (Mouton et al. 2012; South Africa Human Rights Commission 2014). For instance, the poor state of facilities such as water and sanitation, lack of sporting and recreation facilities as well as the classrooms themselves is likely to be associated with the poverty state of the communities surrounding the schools (Nongxa 2010; Mouton et al. 2012).

Moreover, Michael (2008) argues that due to unreachability of the rural areas, the schools in such areas suffer inadequacy of facilities and hence learners' performance in such schools in comparison to schools in other accessible areas elsewhere is weaker (Michael 2008). As it would be expected, many schools in the rural Eastern Cape lack basic resources such as clean running water, electricity, libraries, laboratories, computers and spacious classrooms. For instance in 2008, it was discovered that in Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces, a class had more than forty five learners per classroom (Michael 2008). This condition is feared to have increased hence altering the smooth learning processes due to congestion. These are also the provinces where pupils are accommodated in dilapidated buildings that demotivate both the learners and the instructors (DBE, DSD, and UNICEF 2011). This reduces competitiveness for the children in such environments against their counterparts from richer regions. This scenario is echoed by Kang'ethe's (2015) revelation that handling large classes in some formerly disadvantaged universities was a possible cause of low motivation for both the instructors and the learners and was a recipe of low quality teaching and learning, with students from such environment being more likely to embrace low quality learning.

Poor Administrative and Management Prowess in Schools

The school's administrative management acts as the engine of the school and the success of the school rest on its hands. Against this background, many schools in South Africa lack proper and sound administrative management body (Wolhuter 2014). The administration systems have been made so complex that the people concerned do not clearly understand them and this has affected the quality of education negatively (Wolhuter 2014). Therefore, instead of making the administrative sub-system bigger and more cumbersome, it should rather be made efficient to enable better performance and improve the quality education in schools. Advisedly, the authorities at the central and provincial levels should monitor all the aspects of administration that may be hampering education efforts in South Africa. Due to the perceived parents' illiteracy, there is dire lack of active participation in schools by parents and hence leaving the whole fray of decision making to teachers (Department of Basic Education and UNICEF 2010).

It is also observed that the transfer of teachers training education from intermediate colleges of education to higher education institutions such as the universities has negatively impacted particularly on the capacity of the system to train, for instance, grade R and foundation phase teachers, including the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy (Michael 2008). Since then, there has been deterioration of teachers' quality. This movement has not been able to address the unique needs of the rural communities and the urban poor which is the largest segment of the Eastern Cape populace.

CONCLUSION

Reportedly, Eastern Cape Province suffers severe education pitfalls, especially in sciences, mathematics and languages. This is due to inadequate physical infrastructure and intellectual resources. The pitfalls are attributable and not restricted to the ever escalating poverty in the province, and ill management in schools among others. In an attempt to address these gaps, the paper advocates for more resource allocation, more staffing at both districts and provincial level schools. This will enhance tapping and harnessing of potential resources at their disposal. The paper also advocates for affirmative action in rural areas which are dominated by the black South Africans so as to level the ground and therefore work on the higher disparities existing in the South Africa today. Finally, there is need for a multi-sectoral support whereby the private sector and the NGOs should partner with the government in attending to the provision of educational services. Utilization of collaboration and synergies will likely reap huge dividends.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ushering in Tutoring NGOs - Helping Learners in Understanding Difficult Subjects

Due to the insufficient teaching and tutoring staff in schools especially those in sciences and mathematics domains, which are purported to be poorly performed in schools in Eastern Cape, NGOs providing special tutoring services should be considered to carry out the tasks. This is an opportunity for the educators to institute such NGOs.

Fostering Collaboration and Partnership between the Governments and the Private Sector

The provisioning of education is and should not be a 'one man's dance'. It should be a multi-sectorial supported initiative cutting across the governments, private for profit, and non-profit, organizations in tandem with international communities and the general public. These bodies should collaborate effectively to ensure new and continuing teachers have access to training in the use of information technology and communication that enables them to enrich student learning. Provision of online curriculum tools and resources that support the national curriculum and specialist subjects can be an impetus in the provision of quality education. Importantly, parents and the general public should partner with these key stakeholders and participate in their children's education through online learning, and access support mechanisms to provide vital assistance in schools in the deployment of information technology. It is through the multiple investment and efforts of leaners and the teachers, with the support from other stake holders especially from the department of education, that South Africa can improve the quality of education and score highly in the international standards.

Provision of Child Friendly School Environments

Convincingly, there is need for South African schools to be child-friendly as an intervention to improve the quality of education. This can be done through an integrated package of school and out of school interventions to enable a better learning environment. The inter-vention should range from health and safety, protection, teaching and community participation by the promotion of psychological and emotional well-being of the children. Significantly, special attention should be paid to the orphans and the vulnerable children to ensure that they are not left out of education circles.

Motivating the Youths to Develop Positive Attitudes towards Education

It is unarguable that adolescents constitute a vulnerable section of the human population due to what may be termed as identity crisis. At this point in time, the majority are in lower levels of schooling which are fundamental and therefore are a likely to be affected by the shocks of life. Socializing the adolescents to be motivated in education would be the wisest investment for any country. Perhaps this is because the adolescents are more vulnerable to dropping out of school or put less effort to their studies. They are also likely to be involved in drug use and substance abuse which may even worsen the situation. Therefore, equipping the adolescents by orientation to life skills and motivating them about the importance of quality education in present and future would be paramount for the country in achieving the nation goals and objectives.

Institute Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Schools

Quality assurance is an indispensable attribute in all services provided in the market in order to satisfy the customers' needs. Education being a key engine of any economy and progress of any society, there is need to put in place mechanisms to check its quality and assure that it meets both local, national and international standards.

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