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Book Review

Title Of Book: Critical Issues For Educational Leadership In Ghana

Anthony Afful-Broni,

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Reviewer: Prosper Kwamiga Nyatuame

Nadine Gordimer, a Nobel laureate in Literature declared that the education system in South Africa is a "wreck." Her reason is not about the fact that the essence of education is no longer seen or felt among the South African people. Today, with the numerous challenges confronting the African continent, for that matter Ghana, the question of whether our educational leadership is doing enough to improve the quality of education keep on recurring. The debate about education and in fact, educational leadership has graduated or shifted from the existence of theories and philosophy of education to the use of education in ameliorating the predicaments in our societies. The call in the pronouncement of Gordimer therefore is to challenge those engage in philosophical inquiry into education on the African continent to expend their energy in reviewing the relevance of their pursuit and rather roll their sleeves, get their acts together and solve the problems of education. This is where the book; *Critical Issues for Educational Leadership in Ghana* comes in handy as a veritable resource material for all those who are interested in solving the problems confronting education in Africa in general and Ghana in particular.

The book: *Critical Issues for Educational Leadership in Ghana*, though not a proposal to kick-start a reform in education across Ghana, it does present the reader with some challenges and dilemmas that confront leaders of educational administration in Ghana and to solve problems of education in Ghana. The book of 129 pages comprises nine chapters. Each chapter raises critical issues regarding education which should be of interest to parents, teachers, school administrators, policy makers, researchers and anybody who has a stake in improving the quality of education in Ghana. The critical issues raised by the author begin from the mission and vision of education to include teaching as a profession, the roles of parents, family, and the community. Apart from discussing the roles of each of these socializing agents in contributing to the growth and development of the child as a socially, economically and morally acceptable member of society through the school system, the author provides overview of perspectives and scholarly opinions concerning leadership in education for interrogation. He asserts from the very beginning of the book that for a school, for that matter, education in Ghana to achieve its purpose, there must of necessity be a visionary leadership with missionary zeal who is prepared to remain focus and also ready to bring all

stakeholders on board in fulfilling the mandate of producing a future generation in whom the older generation can confidently entrust our societies, institutions, and the country as a whole without trepidation.

Chapter one of the book strongly makes a case for leaders in educational administration to design and follow through with a mission statement that is: specific, reliable, realistic, achievable, motivational, acceptable to all, market-oriented and subject to review after a considerable period of time. In discussing leadership and mission statement, the author makes no presumptions about the challenges that a leader is likely to confront. Consequently in chapter two, the author presents to the reader, the maintenance and progress dilemma leaders in educational administration face for perusal. According to the author, the maintenance and progress dilemma is a balancing act that a good leader in education has to master very well in order to achieve the goals he/she sets him/herself. The author is careful to note that leadership in these matters is complex and so, it is, inappropriate to be judgemental when discussing them. He encourages educational leaders to endeavour to confront the status quo in a manner that is innovative and progressive. In his explanation of maintenance and progress, the author expends effort to make the reader appreciate the fact that though the two concepts may seem diametrically as opposing each other, it does not need to be so because, at times, "the process of maintenance could contain elements of progress"(p.27). It is within this context that he advised educational

leaders to master the act of balancing maintenance and progress judiciously.

Another critical issue that the author brings to the fore is couched in a form of a question; "Is the teaching profession the last resort?" (p32). In answering this question, the reader is led through the history of education. Also, the reader is made to differentiate between traditional/indigenous and formal/western form of education. According to the author, teaching as a profession, had enjoyed a place of honour, respect and prestige in days gone by. However, in recent times, many factors including; inadequate remuneration, immoral and scandalous behaviours, lack of seriousness towards work by most members of the profession, and the perception that teaching can be done by anybody and everybody at all have contributed to the fallen image and lack of recognition for people in the profession. The author asserts that research findings and literature abounds with information about the role of teaching in national development yet the profession is suffering serious attrition because the practitioners lack the motivation and the necessary impetus to remain in it. Thus, making teaching in the minds of many people, a profession of the last resort. Nonetheless, the author cautioned that this phenomenon is not exclusive to Ghana alone, many African countries and some European countries are also bending under the phenomenon.

As if to say that the predicaments of teachers, for that matter, leadership in education are not yet over, the author brings to the fore the crucial issue of examination malpractices that have

fraught the educational system at all levels in Ghana. He deals comprehensively with the importance of examinations, and the causes and effects of examination malpractices on the whole education system. The author minces no words in making the reader to understand the fact that examination malpractices poison the entire system of education in many ways and there is therefore the need for concerted efforts from teachers and other stakeholders in curbing the menace.

Given these challenges that have plagued education in Ghana, the author identifies ingredients in society, which when tapped, can bring about improvement and progress in the schools, and for the matter, education of the Ghanaian child – the roles of Parent-Teacher Associations, the Community, and the Family as a unit of society. The author discusses these critical issues in general sweep and in factual details from chapter 5 to 9. Finally, he provides illuminating roles that these socializing agents or stakeholders of the education enterprise can play in achieving quality education in Ghana. The author, for example, has demonstrated in the book that, being mindful of the benefit of education; Parent-Teacher Associations are collaborating and supporting local schools, heads of schools, teachers and communities. He strongly advocates the importance of parent-teacher associations in ensuring that there are mutual and collaborative efforts among parents and teachers aimed at continuous commitment towards the quality of their children's education. Also, realising that the school forms part of

the larger community and also knowing that the community does impact on the school, he recommends collaboration between the school and the community in order for the school to be relevant and successful in training “people to become more useful members of society who will better contribute to the survival, growth and progress of the nation” (p 82). The author also reminds leadership of education to be conscious that “the school exists, not on its own, but to meet, fulfil, or satisfy the social, moral, and economic needs of society such as producing a literate population, helping to produce the manpower needs of the society and transmitting the society's culture to the young” (p 85).

Afful-Broni recognizes in his book that the family is society's most basic unit; therefore its role in preparing/laying foundation for the child who is the future of society is very important. The author accordingly reasoned that educational leaders should effectively combine efforts with the immediate family of children in providing the necessary school environment, opportunities and training for children to develop and become useful members of society. Also, aware that broken homes impact negatively on the upbringing of children, Afful-Broni draws the attention of parents and educational leaders to the implications of broken homes on the education of the Ghanaian child. He advocates the following solutions to mitigate the menace of broke home – post-marriage counselling, strengthening of guidance and counselling units in schools, education through workshops/seminars by PTA/ School Management

Committees/Department of Social Welfare and other organisations.

Two things make this book stand out. Firstly, while this book may appear as a course-text for students or as introductory text to an in-depth understanding of the concept of educational leadership, its perspectives and theories are well grounded and practical. More than a scholarly work, *Critical Issues for Educational Leadership in Ghana*, brings out the crucial issues that are germane to quality education in Ghana. Afful-Broni through objective scrutiny, examines the facts about educational leadership in schools with the aim of improving it.

Secondly, the obvious utilitarian quality of discussions couple with the

simplicity of style of presentation marks out *Critical Issues for Educational Leadership in Ghana* for commendation. The use of simple language and deliberate absence of complex analysis of issues makes the book easy to read and also easy to comprehend.

Afful-Broni, in this work, has given educational leaders: the school head teacher, the school administrator, the classroom teacher, the PTA chairman, the parent and any person who is interested in effective leadership in schools towards improvement in quality of education in Ghana, an invaluable resource material and companion.