

## Provision of Quality Education Mauritius in Quest of Quality Education

**Veerunjaysingh Subrun and Leena Subrun**

Port Louis, Mauritius

**Abstract.** There has been a growing concern about the provision of quality education in the Mauritian school during the past few decades. Provision of Quality is a very important factor for the continuing growth of educational system in Mauritius. This study has been carried out by studying the different papers published by different Governments elected in Mauritius through the Ministry of Education and Human Resource (MOEHR) by the ministers in quest of providing quality education to the nation. The findings of this study are intended to help Colleges leaders and the Government to better understand the needs of Quality and hence maximize their effectiveness and efficiency in achieving and imparting quality education. The exploration of Quality education was studied in line with papers published by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource of Mauritius (MOEHR). The focus was therefore on the needs of the provision of quality Education and the effort made by the Government towards imparting a free quality education to the nation. The study revealed that a certain level of Quality of education exists in the Mauritian Education System. This is due to the caring environment and the provision of facilities to enhance the teaching and learning process in the school. On the other hand, there are other important factors which cause great dissatisfaction. The implementation and the publication of New Educational Reforms have been the major concerned. Some recommendations have been put forward on how to improve quality and to achieve quality. Recognition for the value of the published Educational Reforms and the devotion, commitment, and contribution to the achievement of Quality Education will positively motivate Education Ministers to stay enthusiastic in working on the same path of the other educational ministers in quest of providing a quality education the nation.

**Keywords:** Education, Quality and Leadership.

### **Education**

Education has been the priority of the successive governments in Mauritius. Almost all the governments are investing massively in educating their citizens. Education plays an essential role in the development of the country's younger

generation to lead a successful life in this world of dynamic and global competition (syed Zubair Haider et al, 2015). Education can be defined as a lifelong process during which an individual acquires knowledge, skills and attitudes (values and the moral dimension of education).

Years after years the Mauritian government has invested massively in the education sector so as to produce a highly educated nation. The Mauritian's Government is creating the enabling conditions for a high-quality learning environment that will transform the existence of the students by ensuring their well-being and livelihood while facilitating their transition to responsible adult citizenship (Education reform in action). The Special Education Needs and Inclusive Education in Mauritius of MOEHR 2006 stated that the Government is committed to leaving no child of our Republic behind and this is shown through the National Policy and strategy Paper on Special Education Needs. The Government of Mauritius had a vision to convert Mauritius into an education hub and today in the year 2015, the vision has been realized with the implantation of many universities Mauritius. In the venture to change the world into a better place to live, new ideas have been challenged by the Governments. Thus the ever fast changing world of education has witnessed major changes.

The MOEHR in 2014 in the report Education reform in action stated that education helps in coping with adversity and contributes to the common good; our students need to be imbued with a sense of values, ethics and nationhood, thus empowering them to adopt the right attitude at the right moment and at the right place. This proves that the Government is concerned with the future of education system and they started to ask many pertinent questions about the future of the education sector. The process of devising new plans in education to meet the requirement of the job market has turned up to a new tenure called educational planning. Today, educational leaders and responsible governments have dedicated themselves to the new thought of moving towards educational planning. The Mauritian's education ministers of successive Governments have tried to carry our Educational planning through different educational report; Master Plan 1991, White paper 1997, Action Plan 1998, Ending the Rat Race 2001,

Strategy planning 2008-2020, Education Reforms in Action 2008-2014. The strategy plan is mutable and the Education and training sector has never been always dynamic (Education and human resources strategy plan 2008-2020). It has been noted that educational reforms have been the priority of each and every Government. The international organizations have marked the education system as a top priority and thus new training programs have been created. Social scientists have been searching on this burning issue and as a result a large variety of literature is now emerging. The concept of leadership in the field of education has a great importance in the upliftment of the education system though a quality education which will prepare the citizen of tomorrow to face new challenges. The different leadership styles of leaders in the education system has a made their presence feel in the world of education in the provision of quality education. Many universities in Mauritius and as well as in the different part of the world are now providing many courses in the field of

educational leadership so as to better equip the educationist to face the new challenges in the education sector.

The first Prime Minister of Mauritius, Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam came with a vision of free education in 1976; his aim was to educate his people so that they can progress by facing the new technological world. He was a farsighted person and an excellent education planner as his strategic planning has brought a lot of prospect to the present nation. Today Mauritius has witness a considerable investment of resources, made by the government, on both human and material. This has in turn resulted in an impressive progress achieved in terms of free education up to the age of 16. Free textbooks, free transport and even free meals are being provided in some areas so as to attract children to school. A fairly wide range of higher education courses at the University of Mauritius and Mauritius Institute of Education are also being provided to the Mauritians. The Government aimed to provide an inclusive educational system, starting in the early years of development, and aimed at responding to the educational needs of each and every child through a child-centered pedagogical approach and a flexible and adjusted curriculum that will help each child to develop his or her potential (Special education needs and inclusive education in Mauritius).

The government has provided sufficient financial support to the education sector by using tight budgets. The Private and Confessional schools are also subsidized to a greater part by providing grants, soft-term loans facilities, equipment, training of educators and by making provision of buildings for the holding of pre-primary classes (Master Plan 1997). The curriculum in the Mauritian education system has been broadened to include more technical-oriented subject so that the people can fit in the highly technological worlds of today (Master Plan 1997). The government is providing educators and rector courses to uplift the education sector. The Pay Research Bureau of Mauritius has been playing a key role in the upliftment of the education sector. In his last publication the requirement to be a rector in year 2013 has amended by stating that a diploma in the field of educational leadership and management is a must and educators need to have a Post Graduate Certificate in education to be appointed as educators. In order to be successful Karani, Sharon R. (2011) stated that Quality Management practices ought to be the integral part of any organisation's strategic management.

## **Quality**

The term quality is a universally used, but, it has a wide range of interpretations. Even if the term quality is used across the world, it does not have a common definition since it cannot be describe as it is a dynamic term. The definition of expression quality depends upon the situation and upon the person who is using it.

Quality is usually conceived in a qualitative sense where it refers to the relative quality of an entity. Generally it is used to judge the degree of satisfaction of similar products and services. Thus, quality is highly subjective term and

sometimes it is confusing since all individuals are different from each other and it also depends upon the different circumstances.

The concept of quality goes parallel with excellence and it satisfies the standards and norms. Horine, Hailey and Rubach (1993), pointed that the most crucial element of quality is "fitness for purpose". While, Willis and Taylor (1999), stated that customer satisfaction is the most crucial element of quality. Fitness of purpose and customer satisfaction are both considered as the backbone of quality, they walk hand in hand most of the time.

Since time immemorial the need for quality has always been present. Human beings have always searched for things of beauty and quality and like to be well treated.

At the beginning of this new search for quality, quality education was only being looked at from the management's point of view. The quality of educated people to be produced for the job market was usually determined by the universities and the education sector without taking the needs of the job market into account. The job market did not have lot of choice in some field and they had employed people with alternative qualifications. But today new courses are being embedded in the school curriculum so that educated citizens can fit into the job market. New subjects like travel and tourism, twenty first century science and recently entrepreneurship have penetrated the secondary school curriculum of Mauritius.

The educational world has witnessed many drastic changes, throughout the last few decades. The social changes have a great impact on the whole system of education. Pisa 2000 pointed out that management strategies are easily amenable to policy makers to produce the best performance. Thus, more responsibilities have been added on heads of schools to strive for the provision of a quality education. The school leaders have to develop and enhance their leadership and management skills such as delegation, negotiation, team-building and counselling skills so as to provide quality education to the population at large. The strategy plan 2008-2020 of MOEHR aims to build a system that ensures a supply of quality personnel that work collegially with a strong management and quality assurance system to improve and support learning achievement and overall development of all learners

### **Quality Education**

The Government of Mauritius is investing massively in the education system as there has been a growing concern for imparting quality education in Mauritius. The Education Reform in Action 2008-2014 of the MOEHR is to provide a quality education for all and a Human Resource Development base to transform Mauritius into an intelligent nation state in the vanguard of global progress and innovation. Since 2012 the MOEHR is allocating a monthly per-capita grant of Rs200 to children of age 4+ and 3+ and about 22360 children attending private Pre-Primary school are benefiting from the per capita grant yearly (Education reform in action 2008-2014).

The objective behind the quest for imparting quality education is that education occupies a fundamental position in the development of decision makers, professionals and the workforce which the country needs for its new economic trajectory. Colossal investment and tremendous efforts are being made by the Government to produce educated people so that they can in return produce quality products and services to the nation. In view of retaining the children in pre-school not only free education and free transport are provided but also a daily meal, school materials and psychological support services are offered freely by the Mauritian Government (Reform in action 2008-2014). Quality education will bring a better life (Master Plan, 1991), better prospects and higher status for everyone. Public and private schools are being called upon to perform better and to continuously improve and turn into learning organizations. The

Government of Mauritius has invested massively on the extensive program of extension, renovation and construction of secondary schools so as to increase the choice of State Secondary Schools given to students in all regions of the Republic (Ending the rat race, 2001). The schools are becoming under the scrutiny as they are shifting from the comfortable frame of convention (Aspin et al, 1994) to take up the challenge of instituting stimulating methods for total quality learning and teaching: a changing approach. The report Strategic planning 2008-2020 showed the commitment of carrying out fundamental improvements in the education system with the idea to provide a "World Class Quality Education" to facilitate the employability of the Mauritians in the new sectors of the emerging economy. The plan of the Government is to impart quality education at all levels, right from pre-primary through to post-secondary education sub-sectors, and training sector (Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020). The different leadership styles are applied in the field of education so as to make schools perform better and to provide a quality education. Karani, Sharon R. (2011) concluded that total quality management is an enhancement to the traditional way of doing business and it is a proven technique to guarantee survival in world class competition. However, the concept of quality is achieved if the people are properly trained and if they applied the proper leadership styles in the day to day circumstances of the school life.

### **The quest of Quality Education in Mauritius**

Mauritius is trying to bring the necessary reforms in the education sector with the hope to bring superiority and quality education with the view of achieving a "World Class Quality Education." At the International Symposium on Education in 1989 held in Mauritius, the need for excellence was raised among the main concepts of the conference. Thus the Master Plan for education was published in 1991 under the aegis of the Ministry of Education to impart a better education to the citizen of Mauritius. The report "Quality Initiatives 2006" was launched in January 2006 by the MOEHR and the Minister of Education declared the fundamental concepts of "quality education and excellence", thus communicating the main agenda of the government towards the implementation of the goal of excellence.

The Pay Research Bureau report in 2008 recommended for the setting up of a New Quality Assurance Division and Inspection Division at the MOEHR for the educational sector to cater for Quality Education in the Mauritian educational Sector. The aims of these Divisions are to ensure quality audit of human resources, curriculum, infrastructure and equipment thus ensuring quality in education at large. The Mauritian Government aimed to provide an equitable access to quality education, by ensuring that all learners attain high levels of achievement in Literacy, Numeracy, Information, and Communications Technology and such essential Life Skills as sound human values, healthy lifestyle and so forth as the basis for lifelong learning and good citizenship (strategy plan 2008-2020, 2009). The ultimate vision is to transform Mauritius into a highly intelligent island, a hub of knowledge which will serve the Region. Furthermore, it will act as a Centre of Higher Learning and Excellence by constructing an innovative and knowledgeable Human Resource base so that Mauritius can adapt with the rapidly changing world for a sustainable national development.

In the venture of achieving a World Class Quality Education, the Mauritian schools are transforming the main vision of the Government into action. The stakeholders must share the same view about quality and must work toward the same goal.

### **Reflection on the education system**

During the past few years, in order to increase the percentage of Higher School Certificate holders, the MOEHR under the aegis of the Government of Mauritius has cropped up with new criteria for the admission of students to Higher School Certificate. The minimum requirement for admission to Lower six was four credits but it has been amended to three credits at first attempt or two credits at second attempt at the Cambridge School Certificate to be admitted to Lower Six. Thus, this proves that the Mauritian Education system is moving towards mass education and not quality education. The barriers have been lowered so that many students have access to education at the Higher School Certificate level and finally they can be admitted to the universities. This strategy of the Government is contributing towards mass education but the cost of mass education is that the standards of the Mauritian education system are being lowered. This means that the Government has derailed from its mission and vision of imparting quality education as it is not in line with the mission and vision of the MOEHR.

The Mauritian Government has always believed that the only key to success is to educate his people. Thus the unending investment on the Mauritian education system has made Mauritius to shine among the African countries and even among some European countries. Recently in 2014 the previous Government came forward with the idea to modernize the education system by introducing e-learning through PC tablet. The present Government is walking in the same pathway to provide each and every student of form five a tablet. This is a new era of modernisation in the Mauritian education system.

Today the present Government is laying more emphasis in the planning and introducing the concept of nine years schooling in the Mauritian education system. The nine years schooling aims at eradicating the stress of CPE exam. The Government aims to retain the students in the system till they attain the basis education to fit the job market and thus the child will be better equipped to face the future world. The education system will then guide them toward either the vocational system or the main stream. But this report is still under the scrutiny and construction of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource.

The Quality Assurance Division Team has been recommended by the PRB 2008 and it has been set up by the MOEHR to monitor and improve teaching in the State Secondary School.

### **Quality Circles (QC) (senior management Team)**

To achieve quality, the creation of a Quality circle is a must in the schools. The Quality Circles (QC) is a management method, adopted from the Japanese industry and is now being applied to the education sector (Freed et al, 2000). The Quality circles consist of a small group of persons who discuss problems associated with the institution, seek solutions and try to implement these solutions so as to eliminate problems. The QC functions similarly as the Senior Management Team. They are responsible to devise strategies to find solutions to problems. The QC must comprise of H.O.D, teachers and management (Rector), thus there will be the participation of the employee in the decision making process. Better solutions will be found while consulting the QC because people concerning the problem at the grass root level will participate in the decision making process.

### **Recommendation**

The term quality education needs to be well redefined by the MOEHR. The different stakeholders of the education sector need to have a consensus on the definition of the term quality since it can be interpreted in different ways.

The different standards for the provision of quality education must be standardised by the MOEHR so that all the stake holders abide to the standardisation. The Quality Assurance Division of the MOEHR must check and take necessary actions so that the colleges abide to the standardisation in the provision of quality education. New educational leaders must be formed so that the educational system develops new avenues in the education system. Moreover the leaders of school must be formed by the government.

Realisable reports must be published because the future government may not work in line with the present government. Thus the law must be amended in such a way that the report published must be to a certain percentage. Moreover the report must be SMART-Specific, Measurable, Achievable, and Realistic within a Time frame. The time frame must be within the mandate of the present Government.

## Conclusion

The Government must ensure that all schools adopt and work in line with the mission and vision statement of the MOEHR. They must try to provide a World Class Quality Education and Education For All, which is the vision and mission of the MOEHR. The term quality education must be well defined and standardized so that all schools can keep abreast with the innovative changes and use proper leadership skills to provide a World Class Quality Education in the context of globalization to enable young Mauritians to achieve moral, intellectual and physical development to achieve high academic standards. To achieve this goal, a sound atmosphere of leadership and management must prevail in the schools. Steenkamp (1998) stated that a good school culture enhances the quality of work-life for school teachers and other stakeholders as it provides a safe working environment, fair supervision of the rector, participation in decision making processes, opportunities for advancement, growth and cooperation. The educational report published by the successive Government must be reframed in such a way that the objective is achieved within the time frame.

## References

- Aspin, D, Chapman, J & Wilkinson, (1994): Quality Schooling. A pragmatic approach to some current problems. London: Cassell
- Evelyn Chiyevu Garwe, The effect of institutional leadership of higher education provision
- Freed, J.E., Klugman, M.R. and life, J.D. (2000), A culture for academic Excellence: Implementing the Quality principles in Higher education, Jossey Bass, san Francisco, CA.
- Horine, JE; Hailey, WA and Rubach, L(1993): Transforming schools quality. Quality Progress. Vol. 26, No.7.
- Karani, Sharon R. (2011): Effects of Total Quality Management implementation on business performance in service institutions: A case of Kenya Wildlife Services
- Master Plan 1997: Master Plan for Education for the Year 2000: The Mauritian experience
- Ministry of Education and Human Resource (2001): Ending the rat race in the primary education and breaking the admission bottleneck at secondary level
- Ministry of Education and Human Resource (2006): Special Education Needs and inclusive Education in Mauritius
- Ministry of Education and Human Resource (2009): Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020
- Ministry of Education and Human Resource (2014): Education reform in action 2008-2014
- Pisa (2000), School factors related to quality and equity
- Pay Research Bureau report 2008
- Steenkamp RJ (1998): A quantum leap needed for quality protection. Pretoria: Van Schaik
- Syed Zubair Haider and Azra (2015): Analysing the role of private colleges in developing the effective education system in pakistan
- Willis, Th and Taylor, AJ 1999: Total Quality Management. Vol 10, No.7