



Individual Submission Summary

'Leave Education for Educators': Educators' perspectives on achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 in Post-conflict Liberia

In Event: *Teaching, teacher training and teachers' as educators*



Thu, April 18, 10:00 to 11:30am, Hyatt Regency, Floor: Atrium (Level 2), Boardroom C Proposal

With 12 years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Ensure inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030, established in 2015 by the United Nations member states. This interpretive and qualitative case study investigates how educators in post-conflict Liberia perceive the role of policymakers towards educational change and sustainability in the context of SDG 4. The research study addresses these questions: How can post-conflict Liberia achieve quality education in the context of SDG 4? What are the roles of educators and policymakers in realizing education quality in Liberia?

Liberia's education system is challenged with growing demand with limited resources, high number of out-of-school children, overage enrolment, lack of qualified teachers, poor institutional support for teachers, institutional capacity deficiency, lack of school quality standards and gender inequality.

In addressing some of the above challenges, Liberia's government through the Ministry of Education (MoE) introduced several reforms to ensure that the education system achieves quality and contribute to sustainable development in the country. A prominent example of such reform is the public-private Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL) now known as the Liberia Education Advancement Programme. This education reform outsources the country's primary education to private education service providers including Bridge International Academies. However, the PSL was received with outright backlash from national and international education stakeholders. Some critical arguments against the PSL include that this policy infringes on Liberia's constitutional and international commitments to education. The PSL will undermine the public system in fulfilling its responsibilities of providing quality, accessible, equitable and free education to all.

This research study analyses data collected in Liberia for a Master's thesis that investigates teacher agency and quality education in post-conflict Liberia. 29 semi-structured interviews with teachers and other educational stakeholders were conducted in Liberia. Non-random sampling technique was employed to select research participants (teachers, school principals, teacher-trainers, teachers' association executives, and policymakers). The Critical, Cultural Political Economy of Education (CCPEE) theoretical framework by Robertson and Dale (2014) was used as an approach to reflect on the



institutions in Liberia were analysed and the study finds that teachers are often not involved in education decision-making and reforms processes. Economically, the teaching profession is less paid with limited resources, thus hindering the possible participation of teachers in educational processes. In addition, the teachers' union seems not to be in agreement with many of the education policies introduced by the MoE. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the views expressed by educators' (i.e., teachers, teacher-trainers and teachers' association executives) highlight a critique of the role of the policymakers in fixing the education system for sustainable development. Many of the educators posit that policymakers introduce reforms based on vested interests and not for addressing the inequalities that are entrenched in the country's education system after the 14 years of civil war (1989-2003) and the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak (2014-2015). One informant who summed up the generally expressed view of educators' on the role of policymakers toward educational change and sustainability in post-conflict Liberia said, "to achieve education quality that will lead to sustainable development, we must leave education for educators". The findings of this research study are instructive because educators such as teachers are key to the success of any education systems and they must feel 'a sense of ownership' in the educational processes and have their inputs recognized by the political elites when drafting education reforms in post-conflict contexts. Existing political, social and economic institutions in post-conflict Liberia should create platforms/opportunities that will enable active participation of teachers and consideration of their inputs in education decision-making processes. This will in turn, propel progress towards goals for quality education.

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