

## *Original Paper*

# Professionalization of Educational Leadership for the Members of the Association of African Universities

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### ***Abstract***

*This study sets out to theorize and conceptualize internal stakeholders' provision of Educational Leadership for the Members of the Association of African Universities (AAU). It reviews research materials, policies and modalities in developing educational leadership, African Philosophies of Education (APE) and interviews of university academic staff and students in measuring the success of professionalization of educational leadership. The purposive sampling technique of data collection is used to ensure representativeness and qualitative methodology, including the use of document-based content analysis in order to generate valid, reliable and rich data based on interviews with academic staff, administrators and students. The findings of this study will contribute to the deeper understanding of internal stakeholders' provision of a decolonized Educational Leadership Curriculum (DELCC) objective at Postgraduate Diploma, Master's and Doctorate programmes in Educational Leadership is therefore proposed for African universities. This will enable education leader, schools and School system leaders to play a critical role in having a clear vision, the ability to communicate the vision to team members, the ability to organize in an effective and efficient manner, inspiring subordinates*

*towards the fulfillment of the organization's goals, and balancing the conflict of interest of all subordinates and stakeholders. The proposed leadership learning programs focus on the actual improvement of schools and the educational systems to achieve equity, diversity, social inclusion, peace, economic growth and prosperity. These leadership programmes will address the challenges of developing human capital and well-being, promoting employment and economic integration, governance, strategic management and democracy in the different African union countries.*

**Keywords**

*professionalization, educational leadership, decolonized educational leadership curriculum, association of African universities*

**1. Introduction**

Higher Education (HE) institutions in African countries have come under serious criticisms for failing to improve professionalization in educational leadership and the continuing globalisation of the sector. In an increasingly globalized world, educational leadership standards not only respond to domestic factors but also take into account commitments made at the international level and goals established collectively by a group of countries and global organisations like the African Union (AU), Commonwealth, the European Union (EU), Asia-Pacific (APAC), and organisations like United Nations (UN), the World Bank, United National Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Furthermore, for the Association of African Universities (AAU) in which development remains dependent on donor support, the leadership process itself is at least partly shaped by the modalities of external aid and the tools and procedures defined by the donor community. In this macroclimate of change from administration to management and leadership and the new situation of democracy and freedom in entrepreneurship, altruism, equity, peace and prosperity have become a major prerequisite for the rapid economic development of most African Union nations and in the light of globalization.

The Association of African Universities is a continental union consisting of universities on the African continent. The Ministries of Education (MoE) in African countries must engage stakeholders to develop high-quality leadership skills and behaviours that will adapt to new circumstances of globalisation. Improving access to leadership education for marginalized communities, developing the leadership capacity of head teachers and principals through on-the job training or using information technology, distance learning and part time learning opportunities, can help education leaders in both state, private and faith learning institutions in African countries to enhance their learning and adapt better to the changing global society. Provision of High-Quality Leadership learning programmes in the different higher education institutions has been a crucial part of the different Ministry of Education's to sustain a colonial aim that promotes alien legacies that suppress African customs, traditions, norms and values. Previous empirical studies about high-quality educational leadership studies in Education are common in most developed countries. Research on internal stakeholders' leadership effectiveness in

implementing professionalization of educational leadership in African Universities is scarce though literature on the quality of educational curriculum reform in African higher education institutions has either single or multiple case studies in employing qualitative methodology. Also, quantitative studies have focused on higher education reform outcomes, such as the university structures, decolonising the curriculum, staff and students' learning outcomes. Quantitative or qualitative measures of the process and impact of the leadership of curriculum programme reforms at continental or international levels are largely missing. A critical review of this will be presented below.

### *1.1 Objective and Research Questions*

This study aims to critically address education policies by theorizing and conceptualizing internal stakeholders' provision of effective Educational Leadership in Higher Education institutions that are members of the Association of African universities. The study shall address the following research question: What are the important factors perceived by internal stakeholders in higher education about the implementation of professionalization of educational leadership in African Universities?

### *1.2 Scope of the Paper*

Regarding the scope of this paper, the subject area would summarize the literature that has influenced this study. The aims of the study and research questions are then presented and followed by a justification about policies and modalities in developing educational and school leaders for the 21st century. Antecedents of the study illustrating theoretical and conceptual frameworks that would be used to interpret, analyse and discuss internal stakeholder's provision of the implementation of professionalization of educational leadership in African universities. We would provide a wider literature on high-quality leadership learning programmes in Higher Education. Also, the philosophical and methodological approaches would be outlined, followed by the analysis of the field notes documents and interview transcripts and the ethical considerations would be presented. Finally, the findings and discussions of data would be discussed.

### *1.3 Policies and Modalities in Developing School Leaders in the African Continent*

Here, we would analyse lessons that exhibit international policy reforms and expectations not only for the preparation for school leaders' role, but also for relevant in-service professional development and support for serving head teachers and principals. In most African countries, the Association of African universities (AAU) is the lead policy-making institution on policies concerning African universities. The AAU formulates policies and programmes for the development, management and administration of higher education institutions in Africa. It ensures that policies in African universities concerning school leaders' development are implemented. UNESCO encourages policymakers of developing countries to draw on research and examples of best practice to deliver successful reforms in this area. The present study is a contribution to this effort. It consists of international policy framework and aid modalities supporting educational leadership development in different African countries.

A global review of Education for All (EFA) observation since the twenty-five years of the movement has been marked by a shift in focus from quantity (access, enrolment and retention) to quality, as most

countries in both developed and developing countries have invested in teacher training, learning materials, equipment and facilities. It is worth noting that any educational system that lacks universal character violates the basic right to education for all. This exclusion which favours an elitist education leads to the denial of the rights of the indigenous communities, refugees, rural children, and street children to quality education, health, and social services. Sadly, only few countries in the African Union regions have attempted to tap the potential of education for all whose program is related to school leadership, governance, management and administration in their pursuit of better quality, effectiveness and efficiency in education delivery.

The main aim of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is a firm commitment of the international community to expand the vision of poverty reduction and pro-poor growth. This aim vigorously places human development at the centre of social and economic progress in all countries. There were eight international development goals for the year 2015 that had been established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) succeeded the MDGs in 2016.

All 191 United Nations member states, and at least 22 international organizations, are committed to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This study provides evidence suggesting why the Association of African Universities should work with its different universities and implement adequate leadership strategies that will enable the African continent to become a globalized world power as discussed in Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): especially the 1<sup>st</sup> which seeks to eradicate poverty and hunger; the 4<sup>th</sup> which ensures inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; and SG8 which seeks to promote sustainable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for people of our nations.

Allen & Lachapelle's research results also indicate that minor investments in leadership development can yield dramatic changes in a community's capacity to identify and address problems affecting educators e.g., Scholarships and grants by government, international organizations and NGOs are also encouraging Africans to become school leaders. This can be achieved by enabling as many children and adults as possible to go to school at a very little or no cost and graduate with qualifications to work as leaders. Some NGOs in different African countries have also partnered with Government and international organizations in providing jobs in rural areas to reach out to the poor.

Sector-Wide Approaches or SWAs as they have come to be called, reflect a common goal, governance; coherent vision of education developed in the second half of the 1990s as one of several means for development agencies to achieve greater coherence in their approaches to providing development assistance. The Institute for Health Sector Development (IHSD) provides an overview of experience of education in SWAs in Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia to address this question and make recommendations as to how strategy development can be improved. Boak & Ndaruhutse discuss the various considerations necessary when choosing such policy frameworks or aid modalities. We note

that UNESCO has been instrumental in supporting the development of education systems in its member states, working across a range of areas, including sector-wide policy and planning, teacher policies and development, adult literacy and non-formal education and gender equality in education. UNESCO's intervention in SWAps modalities vary according to needs, but reflect different key functions including capacity-builders in member states and catalysts for international cooperation. Through these functions and its international mandate, UNESCO is well placed to support countries at different stages of the development of school leadership.

Budget support is a particular method of giving international development aid. This is also known as an aid instrument or aid modality and has been used for developing the capacity for teachers and school leaders. During the past two decades, some donor countries have changed the way they work by contributing parts of their development assistance directly to partner countries' budgets. The aim of budget support is to better align support with country policies and to reduce the burden of multiple and fragmented aid projects like supporting the development of teachers and school leaders. Budget support, as this type of aid is known, also attempts to strengthen the country's financial and management systems by using them, and, ultimately, to achieve better development results through more efficient and effective spending. There is growing interest from various stakeholders in assessing the impacts of budget support and finding out whether budget support is indeed an effective way to support the leadership development of school leaders for poverty reduction. The OECD methodology was tested in evaluations of budget support in Tunisia, Mali and Zambia in 2010/2011, and, after revision, it was used in Tanzania and Mozambique in 2012/2013. Evaluations are now underway in Morocco and Burundi and many other African countries.

This study proposes the curriculum policies for implementing educational leadership objectives at the diploma, Master and Doctoral programmes could enable countries in the African continent to achieve equity, social inclusion, peace, economic growth and prosperity. These policy frameworks and aid modalities addressed are usually used by most developing countries for developing human capital and well-being, promoting employment and economic integration, governance, strategic management and democracy in the different African union countries. It also demonstrates that the Association of African Universities can work in partnership with member universities and improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their support and influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions. It is appropriate that civil society and other donors can work together to bring about policies that will increase African countries with the tools such as suggested policy frameworks and modalities that can help in the implementation of professionalization of educational leadership in different African countries. Donors should work in partnership with the Association of African Universities and support the emergence and development of policy making processes that are formal, transparent and accountable to the interests of the poor, and conduct their policy dialogue through them.

### *1.4 Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework which informs this study is drawn from the provision of professionalization of educational leadership learning programmes in Higher Education in African countries and Leadership Learning programmes in Higher Education.

#### *1.4.1 Professionalization of Educational Leadership in Higher Education in African Universities*

The implementation of the professionalization of educational leadership requires innovative practices to ensure improvement programmes within African universities. This requires a broader range of students not just to apply and begin, but to stay and gain qualifications that meet Higher Education expectations and gain employment or venture into business in the current job market. Whilst professionalization of educational leadership inevitably involves some form of organisation improvement, Fullan and Stigelbauer suggest that lack of attention to the process of improvement is a major reason for its failure in most African societies. Fullan's model identified four broad phases in the improvement process namely: initiation, implementation, continuation and outcome. The implementation phase is said to be crucial since it identified the major factors affecting implementation which African governments and other stakeholders should consider before committing the university improvement effort or rejecting it.

Professionalization researchers have consistently stressed the importance of Higher Education institutions' commitment to nurturing leaders and managers in academia, and the form of developing the capacity of middle managers and students' use of information technology to enhance teaching and learning in the changing society scenarios. This study reports about increasing international interest of universities' provision of formal, informal and non-formal leadership learning opportunities within the framework of the principle of lifelong education.

The African Union considers the distinctiveness of the provision of professional programmes in universities, professional schools and vocational training institutes in Higher Education from the students' perspective in different learning institutions in Africa. In particular, the students' experience was addressed within different specialities; the context for curriculum development; professional learning programmes; academic advice and support; and the student life-cycle was addressed. An investigation into the similarities and differences between the experience of students studying in universities, professional schools or vocational training institutions revealed extrinsic and intrinsic features, such as social life, costs, resources, administration and tutor accessibility.

#### *1.4.2 Leadership Learning Programmes in Higher Education*

Throughout the world, universities are creating educational leadership learning the diploma, bachelor, master or doctorate levels that offer career growth to educators. This approach can enable teachers and other educational professionals to become school administrators, such as principals or head teachers and even university lecturers.

Eacott and Asuga evaluated the Botswana Primary Education Improvement Project (PEIP) in 1981, funded by the USAID and Primary Schools Management Development Project (PSMDP) (1999-2002).

This was a joint venture between the government and the British Department for International Development that sought to develop the management and instructional leadership skills of primary school heads in order to make them more effective at their jobs. The PEIP project was institutionalized through the establishment of a Department of Primary Education at the University of Botswana.

Evans and Yoder noted that the PSMDP project consisted of three training units: i) leading the learning school; ii) leading the ethical school; and iii) leading the person-centred school. These projects had a significant impact but, there is a consensus that much work still needs to be done in relation to leadership preparation and support in Botswana. Pansiri and Pheko added that a systemic national training policy and or national training institute are the desirable paths forward. Some other African countries like Eritrea and Gambia are already providing mandatory training for head teachers. In Eritrea, this takes the form of a short management course for newly appointed school directors, while Gambia offers a one-year certificate for head teachers, also focusing on school management.

With regard to the South African model and the role of the institute of South Africa's path to national qualifications for school leaders, it is clear that aspiring school leaders in South Africa must obtain the National Professional Qualification for Principals (NPQP) like in the English system to qualify as a candidate for school head teacher. Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi explained that the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) based on the National Qualification Framework (NQF) has been introduced and it is believed to be the first national qualification of its kind in Africa. The ACE is a practice-based two-year part-time course addressing the professional development concerns of head teachers. This is delivered by universities through an agreed common framework with the former National Department of Education and the National Management and Leadership Committee.

In Kenya, there was an evaluation on the Primary School Management (PRISM) project that was implemented from 1996 to 2000 courtesy of donor funding, providing 16,700 teachers the opportunity to participate in school management learning activities with a range of educational stakeholders through support groups. According to Eacott and Asuga, the national institute, the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI), was established to serve as a catalyst for poverty reduction by enhancing educational leaders' management competencies and bringing about a paradigm shift among educational leaders. The Ministry of Education in Kenya, through funding from US Agency for International Development (USAID), conducted the Kenya Educational Management Capacity Assessment (KEMCA) which concluded that most head teachers feel that they either had not been prepared for their role or lacked key administrative skills even when they had attended courses.

Kenya, like many other African countries is part of the current United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and Varkey GEMS Foundation have funded 10,000 Principals Leadership Programmes (with Ghana and India). As a policy initiative, the Teachers' Service Commission (the employing body of educators) requires school administrators to attend a minimum of two development courses annually. Although there are some courses offered by KEMI, universities, systemic authorities, professional associations and consultants, school leadership preparation and

development remain *ad hoc*, haphazard, and not responsive to the needs of current and aspiring principals.

Ebot Ashu argues that primary school head teachers in Cameroon do enjoy pragmatic approaches to in-service-training that include the following content: pedagogical management, functions of head teachers, management of teaching and learning, human resource management, resource management, personnel management, financial management, learning and assessment, school relationship management, learning development, the school within its environment, performance management, self-development of leaders, health and safety, research in education, and leadership in education.

Ebot Ashu has critically conducted an assessment of the Master of Education degree in Education Leadership programme at the Faculty of Education of the University of Buea-Cameroon which envisages the growing recognition and use of Essential ICT Management Skills for School Leaders, Leadership in Education: Deputies and Middle Managers, School Resource Management, Education Administration and Planning, Leadership in Education: Senior Leadership, Managing Education Change Policy, Research and Statistical Methods in Education, Strategic Management in Educational Leadership, Seminar in Research Methods in Educational Leadership, Organisation Effectiveness, Improvement and transformation, Human Resource Management, Review Moderation Systems and Process, Practicum and Thesis.

UNESCO discussed about the theory programme of most French African countries like Togo, Ivory Coast, Benin, Algeria, Morocco, etc., which consists of gaining an in-depth understanding of school administration and management in schools or different workplaces. According to Collins, the image of organisational leaders as experts in administration, strategic leadership and team management skills were the most distinctive modifications in the content of leadership and management development programmes in most French Speaking African countries. Huber and West argue that the French system emphasizes experiential methods and course-based learning opportunities.

Overall, it is evident to summarize that the need to improve schools, organisations and educational systems performances through the development of leaders and managers has not been given priority by many African countries. In turbulent times, we argue that educational leadership thought in different African countries may be relevant to develop the current and new generation of global head teachers, principals and university leaders and managers through partnerships between governments, international agencies and universities in Africa and western societies. In the next section, the philosophical and methodological approaches are considered in more detail, allowing a critical review of their appropriateness for the study.

## **2. Philosophical and Methodological Approaches**

The aim of this section is to locate and justify the research approach and the case study methodology used. The section falls into two distinct parts: Firstly, the research will be located within wider African Philosophies of Education (APE). Secondly, the researchers will clarify their research methodology and



method and give details of how they analysed the interview transcripts, considering issues such as validity and ethics.

### *2.1 African Philosophies of Education (APE) as They 'Fit' in Developing a Decolonized Educational Leadership Curriculum (DELIC)*

The notion of an African Philosophy of Education (APE) in developing a decolonised educational leadership curriculum (DELIC) emerged with the advent of a de-colonial education and the call for an educational philosophy that would reflect this renewal through a focus on Africa and its cultures, identities and values, and the new imperatives for education in a postcolonial era. This section is proposing a framework to inform future research into the integration of APE with DELIC. Adopting this framework can be a powerful tool to help local and international scholars create real social change and justice.

**Table 1. Approaches to Knowledge: How African Philosophies of Education (APE) “Fit” in Developing an Epistemic Educational Leadership Curriculum (EELC)**

| African Philosophy of Education           | International Educational Leadership Curriculum  |
|---|--|
| <i>Ethnophilosophy</i>                    | The features of ethnophilosophy could be used to resolve practical school or educational system problems. Education for Africans means absorbing a new language and new thought forms of school leadership that describe the worldview or thought system of the African continent. Ethnophilosophy is embodied in communal African customs, poems, music, arts and culture and literature etc. African educational system leaders need to align with an elusive “world-class” standard.  |
| <i>Ubuntu (Ochemabissi Ka Ore Ezuume)</i> | A potential new global leadership philosophy that all stakeholders have to fit in to an organisation and be involved in the sharing of resources. Ubuntu promotes the common good of society and includes humanness as an essential element of human growth. In African culture, the community always comes first. The individual is born out of and into the community. Therefore, he will always be part of the community. Interdependence, communalism, sensitivity towards others and caring for others are all aspects of Ubuntu as an African Union philosophy of education. |
| <i>Community (Etek)</i>                   | Knowledgeable school leaders will be able to transform their own schools into authentic learning communities that prepare today’s youth by using clear criteria that are aligned to pedagogical and philosophical purposes. They recognise that given the increasingly transparent organisational boundaries in a decolonialised and postmodernist world, there is a need to   |

develop a vibrant and culturally affirming learning community and leadership network.

**Reasonableness (Atah)** A good school administrator is an educational leader who provides reasonable means to make known their culture and values to the rest of the world; promotes the learning and wellbeing of all students; exhibits understanding of educational leadership, school effectiveness and school development, and coaches evolving culture and values that affect today's education system. Such leaders make reasonable budget requests and always prepare a solid rationale for his/her manager, etc.

**Moral (Ayaamba) Maturity** One important aspect of moral education is to help citizens to be truthful, virtuous, honest, responsible and compassionate. Another is to help students to be informed and reflective about important and controversial moral issues. Both purposes are embedded in African Philosophy of Education and School Leadership.

**Maat or Ma'at (Moninkim)** This is an ancient Egyptian goddess who is the personification of truth, order, and righteousness, symbolized by a feather. School educators must be trained to acquire understanding about the African continent's representation of creation and truth. Maat was a deity of truth, justice, harmony, equilibrium, cosmic law, and righteousness, incorporating a holistic blend of theory and practice. Maat represents order (of the social world and/or the cosmos), and ethical and moral righteousness or justice for the Egyptian or say African people and not to Westerners alone. The kind of leadership and teaching needed today requires school leaders and teachers to have a high-level of moral and cultural orientation and not her ideological opposite Isfet (Egyptian *jzft*), meaning injustice, chaos, violence, confusion and misery. Thus, to do evil is against the principles of Maat.

**The Teachings of the Vizier Ptahhotep (obasinjom)** The virtues within Ptahhotep's philosophy are not only necessary for a successful organisation or system but also for general good behaviour in God's order: modesty, justice, generosity, self-control, truthfulness, and moderation are regarded as the ideal of human action; whereas greed, fornication, cursing and defamation are condemned. Warlike virtues, such as courage or bravery, which we often see in sources from Greek antiquity, are completely absent in the African continent.

**The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant** The leaders are not simply jockeying for power and position; they also have to focus on the duty of those in authority to dispense justice equally under

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- (Ntii-aloh Nkpak)*** the law. A good magistrate is one who does not discriminate because of a plaintiff's class but who recognises the divine benefits of living in balance and maintains justice for all the people
- Imhotep (Ntuifar)*** The image of Imhotep has fostered a world revolution in black education, focusing on the contemporary independent black school movement that has stressed reading and learning as a way to become a fully realised leader. The medieval period produced the philosophical schools of Timbuktu and Egypt and Africans observed the development of great leaders. Imhotep, Socrates and many other Greek philosophers sum up the benefits of such education. Imhotep encourages Africans and the world to learn to embrace what matters, to learn to convene in dialogue about what matters, and to learn to express in writing to our peers what we think is important about what matters.
- Kemetic*** This pertains to ancient Egypt, especially to its religion. When it came to the acquisition of knowledge, Kemet (the ancient Name of Egypt) was the centre of most, if not all, ancient learning. At the centre of this learning was the Mystery School, a secret learning centre (until c. 570 B.C.) where one went to become a whole person, and thus help mould civilization and its philosophy. The Mystery System was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds (Acts, 7:22). Its curriculum was a rigid and lengthy process designed to ensure (1) an educated leadership, and (2) peace among the populous via effective leadership (3) Secret World (philosophy, theology); and (4) the school (mystery) of Pharaoh. Furthermore, Kemetic education required students to master the ten virtues of: (1) the control of thought; (2) the control of action; (3) steadfastness of purpose; (4) identity with spiritual life to higher ideals; (5) evidence of a mission in life; (6) evidence of a spiritual call to Orders or the Priesthood in the Mysteries; (7) freedom of resentment when under persecution or wrong; (8) confidence in the power of the master teacher; (9) confidence in one's ability to learn; and (10) readiness or preparedness for initiation.
- As Above so Below***  
***(Ossow yah Enssi)*** As in the macrocosm, so in the microcosm; 'as above, so below' tells us Isis, the goddesses of learning and culture who is in the public mind, associated with theosophical leadership in the East' as a new 'World Teacher,' or as the Christ returned, proclaimed by the Star in the East' as a new 'World Teacher'. The first thing we learned from 'as above, so below'
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is that the leaders in high-performing education systems control over others; so school leaders, teachers and students in low achieving educational system may be more likely to give up trying harder to become like them.

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*Source:* Adapted from Ebot Ashu & Lavngwa.

This study emphasises that the “APE” “fits” in developing a ‘DELIC’ that will increasingly become a truly global phenomenon supporting school leaders’ development and school improvement. African philosophers of education must do their utmost to make their discipline “fit” into today’s international educational leadership curriculum. Research, if it is to influence practice, must be incorporated into teaching, especially for pre-service and in-service training of school leaders. Given that educational leadership training remains in its infancy, there is a need for greater attention to advance scholarship that is based on empirical evidence that is grounded in perspectives from different regions and societies in Africa.

The above framework presents assumptions in research that deal with the understanding of the basis of the African reality. The notion of APE in DELIC emerged with the advent of a de-colonial education and the call for an educational philosophy that reflects this renewal. It focuses on Africa and its cultures, language, identities and values, and new imperatives for education in a postcolonial era. Such an African Union Philosophy of education based on indigenous epistemologies and socio-political values must liberate Africans from the sad historical experiences of slavery and colonialism that ‘enchained’ them and must dialogue with humanity to be relevant.

### *2.2 Methodology*

This study adopted a qualitative interpretive methodology because it allowed the researchers to get the data directly from university stakeholders themselves by hearing their views, voices, perceptions and expectations through interviews in ZOOM meetings during the COVID Pandemic period. This strategy contends that knowledge is subjective and truthful in a way that is faithful to the original as possible. The study combines the best features of a case study including the review of research materials, documents and transcribed interviews recorded as a case study. The conclusions reached, in the absence of quantifiable data, although subjective in nature, will be based on clear evidence emerging from the interviews.

### *2.3 Sampling*

The technique used in this study is random sampling. The approach of random sampling involves the selection of international stakeholders from a larger group (universities population) literally at random and each member of the population had a known, but possibly non-equal, chance of being included in the sample. In this study, three groups were interviewed—one comprising 2 Professors and 2 Associate Professors; 2 Lecturers and 2 Assistant Lecturers and 4 students from different case study universities in Cameroon, Nigeria, South Africa, Botswana and Uganda. The three groups were chosen to add

validity to the data generated by means of respondents' triangulation. A detailed breakdown of the sample is given in Table 2.

**Table 2. Interview Sample**

| University   | Professors and Lecturers and |                | Assistant Lecturers |                | Students       |                | Total          |                |
|--------------|------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|              | Zoom Meeting 2               | Zoom Meeting 3 | Zoom Meeting 3      | Zoom Meeting 4 | Zoom Meeting 4 | Zoom Meeting 4 | Zoom Meeting 4 | Zoom Meeting 4 |
|              | Target                       | Actual         | Target              | Actual         | Target         | Actual         | Target         | Actual         |
| University A | 4                            | 4              | 4                   | 4              | 4              | 4              | 12             | 12             |

The respondents interviewed were as diverse as practicable: females and males, various ages, job roles, level of experience and so on. We used students studying at different levels at the Faculty of Education in different African countries. The researchers were not personally acquainted with any of the respondents and their consent was sought.

#### 2.4 Methods

The two research questions (highlighted above) for this study determined the aim of the study and established the philosophical and conceptual frameworks for the methodological approach. The research design flows from the initial research questions and a qualitative design was chosen comprising elements of field notes documents and interviews as good examples of a case study research design and methods.

#### 2.5 Field Note Documents and Interviews

The field note documents analysis-based research were designed around the literature review. The basis of this understanding informed the identification of different policies and modalities in developing school leaders for the 21st Century: lessons from around the world.

#### 2.6 Interviews

This study employs interviews as a structured group process to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about internal stakeholders' implementation of professionalization of educational leadership in Higher Education improvement programmes in African Universities through ZOOM meetings. The semi-structured interview questions schedule guided the interviews. The enquiries were based on the research questions. However, flexibility was given to Professors, Associate Professors, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Instructors and students to develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised.

#### 2.7 Field Note Documents and Interview Analysis Process

Field document analysis develop from literature and policy documents from around the world exhibiting international policy reforms and expectations for the preparation for school leaders' role, but

also for relevant in-service professional development and support for serving head teachers and principals are presented thematically using emergent themes which are dealt with individually and in turn using relevant codes to create data sets; for example, PD2ZM1Utt10-Utt14, as coded by Ebot Ashu, referring to Policy Document (PD2), and the Zoom Meeting 1 (M1) which took place and whose quote was taken and Utterance (Utt) 10 to Utterance Utt14 in the field document analysis.

The transcribed interviews were coded with numerical numbers to create data sets as recommended by Silverman and the analytical technique of pattern coding was used to interpret the interviews. This enabled the researchers to come up with relative manageable themes related to the research questions, and allowed preliminary analyses undertaken by the allocation of codes.

For the interpretation of the results within philosophical, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, interviews consisting of alphabetical codes were assigned to each Professor (P), Associate Professor (AP), Lecturer (L), Assistant Lecturer (AL), Instructor (I) and student (S) as a descriptor for where the interviews were collected; respondents were not referred to using their real names but were assigned an alpha-numerical code based on their numerical number (e.g., (AL1ZM3Utt2-Utt4 or AP1ZM3Utt3-Utt5). The first code AL1ZM3Utt2-Utt4 refers to interview analysis from Assistant Lecturer 1, the Zoom Meeting 3 (ZM3) took place for which the quote was taken and Utterance 2 to Utterance 4. The second code AP1ZM2Utt3-Utt5 identifies Associate Professor 1 and Zoom Meeting 2 (ZM2), Utterance 3 to Utterance 5 or P2ZM2Utt6-Utt8 referring to interview analysis from Professor 2, the Zoom Meeting 2 (ZM2) took place for which the quote was taken and Utterance 6 to Utterance 8 in the interview transcript.

### *2.8 Ethical Considerations*

International Policy guidelines and aid modalities framework provided the framework for the research activity undertaken in relation to the analyses of the policy documents. For example, in accordance with the Association of African University ethical guidelines, the researchers had to adhere to those guidelines in order to ensure respect for policy documents, knowledge, democratic principles, the excellence of educational research and intellectual openness. Ethical considerations were given the highest importance in that informed consent was sought from all the samples and their gatekeeper, in this case by the different stakeholder's universities. Care was taken to inform respondents that video-recording would be used in Zoom meetings but their identities would be safeguarded and the reporting would be done in anonymity. The Association of African Universities research guidelines were adhered to in order to ensure respect for each person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom.

## **3. Result**

This section presents the findings, broken down into themes, based on qualitative data collected from the Zoom meeting note documents and interviews with university stakeholders' (Professors, Associate

professors, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Instructors and students) inquiry in the form of process-outcome evaluation.

### *3.1 Professionalization of Educational Leadership in African Universities*

A range of important perspectives on educational leadership development could also be found in an interview with an Associate Professor and Professor to assure the researchers that school leaders are eager to engage in a Postgraduate Diploma and Master's in Educational Leadership that would lead to employment as principal or head teacher (AP1ZM2Utt35-Utt36). There is a true need for a professional Doctorate in Educational Leadership (EdD) which improves the behaviours and leadership skills of educational leaders, and it is the university's internal policy to support the development and learning progress of these stakeholders through their daily practices and external evaluation (P1ZM2Utt32-Utt36).

Meanwhile, an instructor explained that the most important mission of the university and educational system was to develop a vision and strategy that would influence and empower practitioners and young education leaders with high quality leadership, change management skills and sustainable leadership development theory outcomes (I1ZM3Utt24-Utt26). An Associate Professor and a Lecturer lamented on the internal and external factors that drive the decisions of the educational system are to provide a safe, secure and healthy learning environment; engage stakeholders in management and leadership duties (AP2ZM2Utt19-Utt21); involve stakeholders in in-service leadership training so that leaders can assign tasks to aspiring leaders that will optimize their performance and build successful learning institutions in the African continents (L2ZM3Utt6-Utt11).

An Assistant Lecturer added that newly recruited Lecturers must be experienced and must have published in peer reviewed journals and be ready to offer greater flexibility in teaching, learning, research and outreach and they must be able to improve pastoral provision to qualify for administrative duties (AL1ZM3Utt24-Utt26). An instructor also articulates similar views by noting that Higher Education institutions in most African countries can also include leadership courses for middle and senior leaders, strategic management, school resource management, managing educational change, leadership and school effectiveness course content in new forms of assessments (I1ZM3Utt6-Utt8). A professor insists that ICT-based pedagogies should cover a range of learning contexts including e-learning in Master and Doctoral degrees as in America and other approaches to e-portfolios, e-assessment projects and using software and mobile technologies to support learners in their degree programmes (P2ZM2Utt16-Utt17).

Another Professor and a Lecturer emphasise that course modules should include diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice that will enable educational leaders and managers in the different African universities to learn to resolve the tensions and demands placed upon them (P1ZM2Utt32-Utt34) by stakeholders, their government and international funders (L1ZM3Utt38-Utt39).

Students' experience was a strong consideration within the context of professionalization in Educational Leadership in the interviews with stakeholders. A government funded Postgraduate

Diploma and a paid Master and Doctorate programme in Educational Leadership (EdD) were recognized as a strength, particularly for those pursuing professional routes and those who want to study locally (S3ZM4Utt3-Utt5). High quality leadership was expected from structured partnerships between schools, universities, different Ministries of Education (MoE), international organisations and the Association of African Universities (AAU) arrangements and funding agencies (S4ZM4Utt6-Utt8). Some students claim that most lecturers and middle managers have been very supportive in providing academic support, leadership skill development and career advice. They are enhancing students' capability in different subject areas and in their employment (S2ZM4Utt8-Utt9) as educators in universities.

The interviews suggest that whilst students feel a strong need to fit in a professional training programme in any given African university sponsored by the state or any given international organisation (S3ZM4Utt16-Utt18), they want African universities to support progression pathways and their achievements in educational leadership (S4ZM4Utt12-Utt14). Most stakeholders stressed on motivating factors with significant funding resources and employment at the end of the programmes (S3ZM4Utt24-Utt25). Finally, a recurring theme mentioned by many was the criticality of ideas on inclusive learning and employment opportunities. So, putting the learner first was the key to our findings.

#### **4. Discussion**

Having summarised the themes and described the evidence in response to the research question, the researchers now relate these findings to the literature reviewed and theorised. This would focus on the impact these findings can potentially contribute to the deeper understanding of internal stakeholder's effectiveness in the implementation of professionalization of educational leadership in African Higher Education Improvement Programmes

##### *4.1 Professionalization of Educational Leadership in African Universities*

Both the literature and findings acknowledged that professionalization of educational leadership is the process of giving educators professional qualities, typically by increasing leadership training or administering required qualifications for any given profession as discussed by Eacott and Asuga in their presentation of the South Africa National Qualification for School Leaders issued by the Institute of South Africa. Professionalization is a social process by which any trade or occupation transforms itself into a true profession of high integrity and competence as evaluated by the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) rooted from the National Qualification Framework of South Africa. Initiatives of professionalization in educational leadership extend from raising aspirations, through fair admission to retention, flexible progression, outreach partners, flexible delivery and lifelong learning as in Kenya through Kenya Educational Management Institute (KEMI).

The Association of African Universities (AAU) working in partnership with universities and their African Ministries of Education (MoE) need resources to create suitable high-quality leadership



training for teachers, head teachers and principals' professional qualification in educational leadership. Depending on the stage of their professional journey, African universities essentially are effective and competent establishments in providing a Postgraduate Diploma and a Professional Master in Educational Leadership for Principals and Head teachers, and graduates who can continue for a Doctorate (EdD) in Educational Leadership can enable school leaders to teach in universities.

The findings support Eacott and Asuga in their commitment that proposes that Ministries of Education (MoE) in African countries must work in partnership with universities to support the development of educational leaders. Fullan and Stigelbauer suggest that lack of attention to the process of improvement is responsible for the Association of African Universities and universities in African countries' failure to subject educational leadership training for school leaders. The findings accord with Eacott and Esuga presenting the South African model that proposes educational leadership objectives for a Postgraduate Diploma, Master and Doctoral programmes that could enable countries in Africa to achieve peace, economic growth and prosperity.

Findings also uphold that in most African countries as elsewhere, universities accept challenges and profound transformations, shaped by the theatre of political, economic, cultural and social changes that should encourage university and school leaders to work in harmony through the Association of African Universities with local and international partners. These findings corroborate Government policies for a sophisticated approach in educational leadership that is based on the student lifecycle in developing leadership skills.

#### *4.2 Conclusion and Recommendations*

This evaluative case study was conducted in the form of reviewing policy documents and interviews with university Professors, Associate Professors, Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers, Instructors and students. It contributes knowledge pertaining to internal stakeholder's effectiveness in the implementation of professionalization of educational leadership in member universities of the Association of African Universities, and so provides practitioners in Educational Leadership with 'what works' in the context they know and understand better.

##### *4.2.1 The Contributions of Knowledge*

This study supports the need for further understanding of internal stakeholders' provision of high-quality leadership in Higher Education for the 21st century effectiveness in the implementation of professionalization of educational leadership in African universities which has become a dilemma for education and social science researchers.

##### *4.2.2 Professionalization of Educational Leadership in African Universities*

This study proposes a government funded educational leadership objective for a 9 months' programme for a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational leadership (90 Credits), 2 years Master in Educational Leadership (M.Ed EDL-120 credits) and 3 years paid Doctor of Education programme (EdD, 180 credits) that will enable African countries to achieve diversity, equity, social justice, peace, economic growth and prosperity. These Decolonized Educational Leadership Curriculum (DELC) supports the

role for head teachers and principals and the professional Doctor of Education (EdD) programme that supports academicians.

#### 4.2.3 How the Decolonized Educational Leadership Curriculum (DELIC) Can Be Applied

The researchers and respondents of the ZOOM focus group meetings envisage that efforts towards the decolonization of educational leadership in African Universities will need the growing recognition and use of Essential ICT Management Skills for School Leaders at the Postgraduate Diploma, Masters and Doctorate levels, are designed to equip participants with knowledge and skills related to the use of ICTs for educational purposes.

The *Leadership in Education for Deputies and Middle Managers* course at both Postgraduate Diploma, Master and EdD levels focuses on the changing roles, responsibilities and professional development of deputies, middle managers and senior management teams (or leadership groups), in schools and other educational organisations.

*Strategic Management in Educational Leadership* at both Master and Doctor of Education (EdD) programmes will help participants to deliver the best outcomes for their pupils as they learn to plan strategically for their respective schools and educational systems.

*Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Social Justice* at the Doctor of Education (EdD) level will deepen students; experience of the multicultural nature of the African continent, and further all aspects of indigenous pedagogy while advancing our commitment to diversity, equity, social inequality and social justice in Africa. We must introduce the principle of decolonization (of knowledge, teaching, and pedagogy) so that it can most succinctly capture the elements of diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice.

*School Resource Management* is learnt at Postgraduate, Diploma and Doctorate (EdD) levels. It sets out to provide students with the knowledge to be financially literate and to interface confidently with the finance function in order to achieve the school's strategic plans. With sustainability as a cross cutting theme where students are introduced to the main topics in accounting and finance, this is intended to impact on the strategic decisions that are made in organisations every day. By using case studies and projects, students gain hands-on experience in the strategic deployment of financial literacy by managers.

Regarding *Leadership in Education*, senior managers learn leadership in education at the Postgraduate Diploma, Master and Doctorate (EdD) levels that will enable both managers and leaders to develop knowledge, understanding of critical perspective—based upon evidence drawn from research, scholarship, practice and the wider literature—of the work, lives, careers and perspectives of senior managers as leaders within educational institutions and contexts.

*Managing Education Change Policy* is a course that is learnt at the Postgraduate Level and Master levels is an important prerequisite for increasing the potential of educational leaders to manage changes they initiate in their different learning establishments.

*Organisational Effectiveness, Improvement and Transformation* is a Master and Doctor of Education (EdD) course that will help develop staff and students' skills in change management, improve

organizational effectiveness, enhance their decision-making, and develop analysis and research expertise.

The *Human Resources Management* is a course learnt at both the Master and Doctorate (EdD) levels and it is designed to enable school leaders to understand and be able to apply relevant content knowledge in leading and managing people and material resources.

An interesting module for the Master programme is the *Entrepreneurship* programme (ENT) which is a cost-effective investment in the development of entrepreneurial capacity of young people. Students learn foundational leadership and venture-vetting skills that are appropriate for starting a new business, advancing in their current company or joining a brand-new business (versus one that's already established).

A National Centre for Education Research is required in every African university so that it can enable rigorous research that contributes to the solution of significant educational problems. The Association of African Universities can work with qualified university centres and students to examine the effectiveness of educational programs, practices, and policies, including the application of technology to instruction and assessment.

The school of education research centres in Africa can support the different Faculties of Education in providing a compulsory course in *Education Research and the Researcher's Identity and Epistemology* at the doctorate level that would address the need to embed research enquiry within a particular research paradigm. Research students in African universities are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the interplay between research paradigms, African philosophies, ontology, epistemology, methodology and research methods prior to initiating a research project.

The *Research Design and Methodology* course at the doctorate (EdD) level seeks to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to conduct a research project, with specific reference to data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of results and the presentation of research. Using *Sources/Producing Analysis in Research Methods* at the doctorate level also builds on the research skills developed in earlier modules. These research modules will be delivered in tandem with the Thesis at the doctorate level.

All students are obliged to do *Practicum in Educational Leadership* at Postgraduate Diploma, Master and Doctorate levels which is designed to give students a hands-on experience in educational leadership. Students are required to spend 200 hours in an educational organisation under the supervision of a cooperating leader or manager or academic staff of the department. Students explore current thinking on how organisations are judged as effective or improving. They are challenged to critique contemporary research in these areas applying the views of colleagues both locally and globally. Every candidate in the Master or doctorate level in Educational Leadership (EdD) completes a culminating Thesis (Diploma, Master and Doctorate levels) employing their professional knowledge and new learning in order to demonstrate transformative and distributional leadership, organization, and community change and sustainable leadership.

Overall, this study proposes Educational Leadership programmes offering more interactive, reflective and experiential learning approaches than the education administration courses provided in the different African universities. Further research is essential to find out what kind of leadership curriculum influences students, schools, university, educational system and the Association of African Universities performance, and the circumstances under which these performances may be most effectively enhanced. Given the ever-increasing investment in decolonising education curricula in developing countries, this becomes a disturbing void in the educational research.

This study concludes that for internal stakeholders to succeed in the implementation of Professionalization (P) of Educational Leadership programmes within schools, universities and educational systems in African countries, there needs to be greater international collaboration with the Association of African Universities for schools, universities, Ministries of Education (MoE) in African countries, and that quality assurance mechanisms need to be standardized across institutions. Furthermore, stakeholders on these programmes need a greater time to reflect upon their activities and that the provision will be most effective where there is a critical mass of staff and students.

This study also concludes that clear strategic planning involving internal and external stakeholders is needed in the relative effectiveness of partnerships, but that differences in the relative status of partners can become a source of tension. The Association of African Universities can collaborate with universities working with schools in a variety of ways but sometimes it becomes a big challenge with large mixed-economy states, faiths and private schools with diverse higher education links.

#### *4.3 Limitations of the Research*

Besides struggling to decentralize and implement professionalization of educational leadership in African countries, higher education faces management deficiencies associated with overly decentralized decision-making which makes it hard for institutions to respond to local conditions, needs and preferences of students, lecturers or establishments. This over-centralization and tight control of educational leadership in some countries whereby the whole country's educational system is administered from the capital city constrains educational initiatives from the lower rungs and communication cannot flourish. Also, evaluation of activities is not yet decentralized. Complete decentralization or a federal system of government is required in the field of evaluation of work quality to improve leadership, access and professionalization in both universities and professional learning institutions in African countries and the global leadership community.

#### *4.4 Suggestions for Further Research*

We propose an improvement of leadership skills of school and university leaders by updating participants about relevant and current sector trends and providing global professional networking opportunities with peers. Our new models offer knowledge sharing, new organizational frameworks and leadership skill acquisition that should enable those who work with case studies in building on participants' experiences. There are proposals to develop a local, national or international marketing

and communication strategy to promote educational leadership training across the full range of providers.

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