



THE GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO QUALITY EDUCATION - AN OVERVIEW OF FREE QUALITY SCHOOL EDUCATION IN SIERRA LEONE

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Abstract:

The Free Quality School Education (FQSE) is a critical priority policy of the Government of Sierra Leone for national transformation through education. The Government of Sierra Leone is aware of the influence and power of education in national development and, therefore, has prioritized education as its flagship program. This paper is to establish a positive effort made by the Government of Sierra Leone in its commitment to implement and bring to reality the Free Quality School Education countrywide. The paper introduced in brief the historical flashback of education in Sierra Leone, followed by the changes in the education system. The researcher viewed some problems of education in Sierra Leone over the years. In an overview, the paper went on to demonstrate the Government's effort in promoting education since independence in 1961. As a point of clarification, the paper reviewed the knowledge of Quality Education. In a clearer picture, the paper views the result and analysis of Government commitment in the Free Quality School Education. The methods used for the research were interviews, observation, discussion, and information from the internet and books (secondary data). The paper highlighted the conclusion with recommendations.

Keywords: quality, education, commitment

1. Introduction

In any society, culture, community, country, education is the yardstick for development, enlightenment, and transformation. Education is the source of empowerment and the key to the future of people within a locality and environment. Education is essential for the livelihood and sustainability of man irrespective of any tribe, region, surname, or color. Any society needs well educated and well aware people to lean-to the conventional

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norms and unfounded traditions of the old times for better development of the people towards necessary development. Sierra Leone was colonized by the British. Therefore, Sierra Leone played a pivotal role in the success of the British colonial project in West Africa in the 19th century. Sierra Leone served as the administrative base for the colonies of Lagos, the Gold Coast (Ghana), and Bathurst Gambia. Intellectuals, clergymen, and professionals from Sierra Leone in (1866) Sierra Leone served as medical doctors, engineers, and civil servants in Ghana, Gambia, and Nigeria in the 18th and 19th centuries. So, Sierra Leone was the cradle of education during the colonial rule. Therefore, Sierra Leone contributed immensely to Britain's successful administration of all its control in West Africa in the 18th and 20th centuries. Sierra Leone gained this opportunity as it was fortunate to serve as the host of the first Institution of higher education-Foray Bay College-in British West Africa. As such, Sierra Leone served as the bedrock of Britain's colonial project in West Africa. With such a privilege, Sierra Leone inherited a well-established British educational system with a higher quality education like that of Britain in those days. As a result, Sierra Leone became the first British experiment in social energizing in colonial West Africa. She became the first British colony to apply a constitution full of legislative and executive councils. In a nutshell, when Sierra Leone gained independence from Britain in 1961, she inherited the British System of Education at the levels of 7-5-2-4- which call for seven years in primary, five years in junior secondary school. Two years senior and four years at Tertiary level [4].

The quality of education in Sierra Leone before and after independence, to some extent, was one of the best around the world. The Foray Bay College was established in 1827, and because of the base it provided within the sub-region, it gains the epithet, "Athens of West Africa." It is said to indicate that, due to the negligence, mismanagement, and corruption, the educational system in Sierra Leone fell considerably over some time. The quality of education is no more than that state it was before and years after independence in 1961 [1] [2].

1.1 Problems of Education in Sierra Leone for the past years

Sierra Leone, which used to be called "Athens of West Africa," lost its glory in education for decades. The educational sector was given little attention in the National Budget, which is 12% in 2018. The Basic and Senior Secondary Education sector received inadequate funding and support. Its teaching standard went down below quality to just the quantity of graduates. Incapability, the ability and capacity of the average learners leaving the school are low and lack much prospect to perform in society. In reality, so many schools lacked teaching and learning materials and accommodation of a conducive environment for learning.

The corrupt practices in many educational institutions of secondary and tertiary that exhibited multiple crimes of examination malpractice which started creating mixed feelings in people about the credibility of the certificate issued to many graduates who cannot express or perform when given a task to accomplish within the field claimed by a significant field indicated in their certificates. Sierra Leone faced problems in the quality

of education. There was a significant shortage of trained and qualified teachers mainly to teach in remote areas or villages within the country. Besides, the students lacked learning materials and textbooks. Two or three students used to share one book. There was a high rate of illiteracy rate and a higher number of dropouts. Secondary school attendance was low, with a net participation ratio from 2008 to 2012 of 39.9% for boys and 33.2 percent for girls. Another pending problem was the challenge of child girl education, traditional belief, poverty, unemployment, ignorance, and illiteracy mounted to that deprivation of girl child. Many were subjected to sexual harassment, sexual penetration, and rape. Other girls were disposed of too-early marriage, and child labor and favoritisms take over the cycle of gender inequality [5].

In Sierra Leone, girls used to get married as early as age 11 or 12, and more than 60% of women throughout the country are married before the 18 years. The defects hindered the education of the girl child. The girls were deprived by their parents to stay home for domestic work, while boys were sent to attend schooling. Education was under debate as there has been a considerable rise in the state of dropouts/failures, especially with the secondary and university education system. As it was eminent in the recent West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE) outcome, for instance, it was determined that 95% of students in Sierra Leone failed to secure the accepted mark needed to enroll in University programs [9] smoothly. An additional indication of student failure was attributed to the behavior of some teachers who are no longer performing their duties genuinely because they entice the children into buying pamphlets and handouts from them and doing extra lessons with them. For extra lessons to be full of students, teachers teach minimal in school and concentrate more on teaching in the extra classes. Indeed, these lessons were organized to campaign for opportunities to augment their meager salaries and sustain themselves in their teaching job. The involvement of teachers to seek to get money is due to the reality that teachers' salaries in the teaching profession are comparatively too low/small for their livelihood [9] [(10)]. In a WhatsApp message, it is alleged that the average teacher salaries in Sierra Leone are US\$ 120. With this unfortunate condition of teachers, it is observed that many people frown at renting teachers in their houses, as it is believed that teachers are poor in Sierra Leone. Teachers always complain of poor salaries, late payment, underpaid, their salaries cut by heads, and so on.

Teachers bear the burden for the learners to learn. Teachers have a central role in the education system. Without a teacher, there is no education. When teachers fail in their duties, education will fall fail. Some years ago, teachers went on a strike by going to school, sign the register, but just sit down without teaching. This was called "Go slow strike." All such behaviors affected the learning and student because there are set syllabus to be covered within a set time frame. Another hidden disease in some schools, particularly mission school (Government Assisted), the proprietors, mission education secretaries, and other leaders, do demand the money paid as subsidies to heads of school. They specify a certain amount/certain percentage from the school subsidies to be paid to the mission. To fully exploit the subsidies, they make sure they are part of the school

account signatories. Most heads of schools who refuse to obey or give them the money will automatically be sacked or eliminated or transferred to other poor schools. So, school subsidies that the Government pays to heads of school for the running of the school and promoting or provision of school materials, motivating hardworking teachers, is raped from the heads of schools by some heads of missions. In most cases, a fake analysis of money is prepared and sent to the Ministry of Education as a report. So, the school subsidies of mostly mission schools mostly go to the private pocket of mission authorities. All these activities are founded by some heads of school, inflating the number of students to have a high sum of money to be paid by the Government as subsidies. In some areas, the Ministry of Education officers collaborate with heads of schools to have a large sum of money from the Government by way of not correctly checking/ refusing to do a proper headcount of pupils in schools so that they will also have a share when the Government pays the money. Thorough monitoring and supervision are not done by some officers of the ministry of education in schools to secure the brown envelop from heads of schools. It is difficult to have an on the spot check of children in schools because the head of school usually has a secret informant to tell them the movement of the team; all these are done in securing the secret brown envelopes. This was a living observation and experience of the researcher as a teacher and a researcher in primary and secondary schools in Sierra Leone [26].

Another pending defect that is also hammering education is the payment of salaries mode. The Bank Account of any teacher is a secure way of teacher salaries. The defect is as a result of the comportment of teachers to the heads teachers/principals of the school. Some teachers who are located in specific areas refuse to go to those schools. They agree to be employed for a particular location, but some refused to report to their specified school location. They leave a teaching vacancy in a specific school. Some heads of school are faced with this problem. The heads find it challenging to control them or change them from the voucher because they receive salary directly without any condition to the Bank from the school authorities before payment. The deployment of teachers is done to have an even distribution of the teachers to all districts or chiefdoms countrywide. These are some of the problems of education in Sierra Leone, which need immediate attention for a remedy.

1.2 The Government's effort in Promoting Education since Independent in 1961

The Government of Sierra Leone, like any other Government, is playing its role in promoting education in all sections and at all levels within the country. The Government functionaries cover the training of competent teachers that will facilitate the teaching and learning in a more dedicated way. Also, the teacher working in the classroom improve themselves with the assistance of the Government; education is an essential base for prosperity and advancement. Education is very instrumental in strengthening our democracy, develops our civic life, and lay out a clear road map for economic success. The Government acts as a supporting weapon to schools by subsidizing and controlling the school administration. As Sierra Leone gained its independence in 1961, the

Government emphasized the British inherited form of education because this sector was observed as the bedrock of development in democracy and economically-viable community of the world. With the focus on Tertiary education, colleges were consolidated for reasons of economy and more effective use of training staff/teachers countrywide. The Institute of Education was instituted in 1968 to administer the activities of all colleges and organize in-service courses for teachers. In 1964, Njala College was upgraded to university status [7].

The Education Act, No. 63 of 1964, opened a gap for administration and control of secondary schools by Boards of Governors. The purpose of secondary education then (and now) was to make provision to every girl child with knowledge which took into cognizant:

- character and personality development;
- the cultivation of desirable attitudes;
- interest, ability, and aptitudes;
- the workforce need of the country;
- the economic resources of the slate that makes education useful to the country and the provision of o opportunities for a satisfying life. [6].

1.3 The Educational System Change

Concerning the structure, Sierra Leone inherited a bookish type of education from the British colonizers in 1961 called 7 – 5 – 2 – 4 system of education. In 1993, the system was converted to 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 to meet the standard of the world and withstand the power strength of the country [12] for education in various forms that includes school fees for low-income parents and guardian. The Government pays subsidies to schools' heads, provide a grant to college or university student in the way of paving accessibility of all students to education. The Government supports education to fight against poverty. When citizens are educated, they have the opportunity to secure jobs for self-reliance, which may open doors for their survival. It is certain that eliminating poverty calls for the eradication of illiteracy within society. The Government also provides school feeding programs to help needy students in schools and to attract other children from poor homes in a bid to seek survival. Food help students sustain their energy in schools. It also helps students concentrate on the lessons [11] [8].

The Government acted toward empowering school leaders and teachers in the direction of professional responsibility and setting of standards for quality learning and teaching of students. Sierra Leone has laid many legislations and policies that are focused on providing access, equality, relevant, and functional quality education to its citizen, countrywide. Ever since the assumption of democracy, the Government has made legislation and policies in improving the quality and standard of education in Sierra Leone. The legislation and policies include:

- The New Education policy for Sierra Leone (1995).
- Tertiary Education Commission Act (2001).

- An act that was established the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) for specifically empowering and mending Tertiary Education in Sierra Leone. It is charged with an individual responsibility of guiding the Government, planning the Budget of Tertiary Institutions, fundraising, and the entire day-to-day running of institutions countrywide.
- The polytechnics Acts (2001) is an Act that determines polytechnic Institutions and polytechnic councils. This body is to the control and supervision of polytechnic Institutions, the mandate to offer a quality course content student and staff recruitment and certificates of diploma.
- The National Council for Technical, Vocational, and Other Academic Awards Act (2001) – This was born as an independent body whose mandate calls to certify and validate awards in technical and vocational education and teacher training, approving technical and vocational institutions and lapses concern on issues to MEST and TVET. It gives a fixed scope of teachers' training curriculum and founding conduct examinations.
- The Education Act of 2004 – This Act formed the key legislation that surrounds education in Sierra Leone. In a bright spectrum, it shows the structure of the education system for all types and levels of education in Sierra Leone.
- The Local Government Act of 2004: The Act re-builds and rebrands local governments and local councils as a way to exercise and implement decentralization of responsibility and duties that involve all parts countrywide.
- Universalities Act of 2005: This Act opens the gate of multiple universities' establishment. It started by separating Njala University and the University of Sierra Leone. It paves the way for more universities like the University of Makeni (UNIMAK), Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology (EBKUST). A new one has just been accrediting on probation, University of Management and Technology (UNIMTECH) – formally known as IAMTECH – Institute of Advanced Management and Technology.
- Moving Education Forward – Education Policy 2007: This act rebranded the 1995 policy and added some necessary guiding principles that fortified education in Sierra Leone [11].

1.4 Sierra Leone and Education for All

All over the world, education is given individual attention and priority. Every country needs literate and reformed individuals for responsible management and service to the Nation. The collective international world is aware of the pending problems of primary school enrolment, access to schooling for girls, early childhood education and care, and the educational and developmental gap that needs to be filled as a collective responsibility for growth and development for all countries with particular regards to the universal balance of education, Governments came together to set objectives for "Education for All" in a conference in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand. The World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) was attended by 155 countries that were joined by 125

non-governmental organizations and Institution and 33 intergovernmental organizations [14] participants, identified on expanded vision and a renewed commitment. The Vision Covered:

- universalizing access and promoting equality,
- dedication to learning,
- expanding the means and scope of basic education,
- preparing the environment for learning, and
- strengthening partnership.

The Governments were committed to set projecting target in expanded early childhood care and developmental activities, improved learning achievement, a universal primary school; expanded training for youth and adults; reduced adult illiteracy; and increased seeking of knowledge by individuals and families; skills and values necessary for good living that is sound for sustainable development [15].

The Government of Sierra Leone is a Commonwealth member very committed to the "Education for All" scheme. Providing education for all the conference was organized as a follow-up by the World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000[13]. The delegates detected some shortfalls, though there was considerable progress in some areas of the previous policies. In providing improvement, delegates rebranded commitment to the EFA proposal and further identified six specific goals. Among them, three goals were set to be achieved by 2015, but goal five was also targeted by 2015. Goal 2, which was also targeted by 2015, is to ensure that all children, especially girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free, and compulsory primary education of good quality [16].

Global consultative meetings continue to be in improving the quality of education. Africa, like other regions in the world, held their further consultative meetings in February 2015. The joint meetings echoed the objective of ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all [17][24]

A Commonwealth report in 2015 made analyses of educational standards in Sierra Leone. The report highlighted that; the population of Sierra Leone was estimated at 6, 090, 0000, while the school-Aged population was 16%, and the birth rate was 4.8, but the Human Development Index was low at 0.37. The preprimary in 2015 measured to have a school life expectancy at 0.07, while the Net Enrolment rate was average and growing by 0.4 per year. The school life expectancy was below average by 0.5 standard deviations and falling by 0.03 per year.

With a further commitment to the section of inequality, disabilities were committed as a human right priority. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol was signed and ratified. The gender priority Index showed that-primary-1.00, primacy – 0.98, JSS – 1.01, and SSS (upper secondary) – 1.01. The urban and Rural primary dropout rate indicated that: Urban – 1.3, and Rural – 1.6. There was shallow education as a report found a significant number of parents with primary-aged children paid for private tutoring. It was believed that it was as a result of the flimsy reason for the need to complete their syllabus in time [16].

With the lens on the Quality of Education, it was realized that the funding indicator has shown that funding of GDP was 11.69%, while the funding of the Budget was 8.29%. The youth literacy rate was 90%, while the adult literacy rate was 80%. In a more precise breakdown, the funding (% GDP) for preprimary was 0.79; the primary was 1.79, JSS was 1.60. The teacher-student ratio for preprimary was 22, the primary was 26, JSS was 18, and SSS was 15. The trained teachers for preprimary were 57%, the primary was 48%, JSS was 73%, and SSS was 75%. It is noteworthy to know that "Averages" are calculated globally and clustered by Human Development Index Levels (very High, High, Medium, Low) using historical data to project 2015 figures [17].

1.5 Quality Education for Quality Life in Sierra Leone

Education is not just for students to acquire academic skills, but rather, education help students become more resilient in the face of hardship, feel more connected with the people around them, and aim higher in their aspirations for their future. Education is the medium at which children experience society in all its facets, and that knowledge can have a profound influence on students' attitudes and behavior in life. The Government solves challenges of education by seating and attending to student's psychological and social needs and helps them develop a sense of control over their future and the resilience they need to be successful in life.

For the Government to diversify and develop the country's low human resource, it is but necessary to strategize in promoting New and Sustainable Source of Economic growth as well as improved living standards. Therefore, the Government has focused on advancing its education sector. Gradually, any effort to improve the education foundation of the country must start from the beginning, which is to provide quality basic education for all its citizens. This commitment is reflected in the Government's Education Sector Policies, which is one way, or the other has affected positive change by stimulating an increase in enrolment rate of preprimary, primary, and secondary education.

Even though there is considerable improvement yet still, the Government faces formidable challenges in meeting and furthering these gains towards attaining quality basic education for all citizens.

In the effort pursued to address these challenges the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology have involved in many changes and adjustments by way of propounding policies such as The Education Act of 1964, changing of the system from 7 – 5 – 2 – 4 to 6 – 3 – 3 – 4 in 1993, the New Education Policy in 1995; Tertiary Education Commission Act (2001); The Polytechnic Act (2001); The Nation Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards Act (2001); the Education Act of 2004; The Local Government Act 2004) University Act (2005); and some others. The provision of quality education is regarded as the main factor in speeding the future growth and development of Sierra Leone. Advancing basic education for all learners is a fundamental pillar in the right direction.

The principal purpose of the Education Act of 2004 was to make primary education "Free and compulsory," but there was still a challenge facing the education sector for its affordability. Some other challenges included the overcrowding of students in schools due to lack of space and materials. Many district/chiefdoms lacked the opportunity to have a secondary school, essential water, and sanitation facilities in some schools. By way of improving access, equality, and completion status in Sierra Leone Educational System, there was an aim of increasing access to free Government of Sierra Leone preprimary education for learners 3 to 5 years old from 11% in 2020. Also, to increase the entry and completion rates in primary school from 75.4% in 2016 to 85% in 2020 by putting down the expenditure rate of parents to schooling [3]. Besides, the Government to increase school infrastructure in primary, JSS, and SSS to provide accommodation for all learners with a conducive learning environment, and to increase school facilities in all districts/chiefdoms in Sierra Leone. It is remarkable to note that improving the quality and relevance of the education system as another essential pillar in quality education to attain a higher possible level of integrity and performance. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology were set to improve the performances and assessment of students by making sure that at least 50% of all the children attending primary education or school have enough learning materials such as Notebook, exercise books, ledgers, pens, rulers and so on. To also make available textbooks, particularly for core subjects like Mathematics, Language Arts, Social studies, and Integrated Science. More so, to ensure the education sector is well served and free of corruption by eliminating and fighting against examination malpractice rate by 20% in 2020, whereby preparing a national strategy and action plan; that will be sure of 100% implementation of policies and stakeholders [3].

The Education Sector Plan of Sierra Leone is a Government strategic document that focused on the 2006 country status report (the diagnostic and analytical foundation of the prevailing circumstance of education in Sierra Leone) and the 2004 poverty reduction strategy paper. These documents spelled and covered how the Government of Sierra Leone will continue to develop education from the damage done by the war (from 1991-2000) with the notion that, by 2015, all children would have gone to school and received quality education [18].

1.6 Free Quality Education in Sierra Leone

With the constant and rampant frequency of massive failure and the poor standard of education in the country that has led to war, corruption, lawlessness behavior; underdevelopment and backwardness, the Head of State-His Excellency, President Retired Brigadier-General Julius Maada Bio – in his campaigning to the Sierra Leonean citizen promised that when elected president, education was top on his agenda to build up the human capital of the country, skills training, health and the promotion and protection of vulnerable Sierra Leonean. The president had the aspiration and belief that developing the human beings of Sierra Leone is the best goal to address the problems of Sierra Leone. Therefore, His Excellency, president Retired Brigadier-General Julius Maada Bio,

affirmed his commitment to the introduction of a new system of education under the banner of New Direction called Free Quality School Education in August 2018. As a determined and committed Head of State, the president justified his promise to the people of Sierra Leone by allocating 21% of the national Budget for the implementation of Free Quality School Education [19]. The Free Quality School Education of the New Direction is focused on taking over the control of the education system, particularly at preprimary, primary, junior, and secondary school levels. The FQSE is set and package to remove the burden of paying school fees on parents and guardians. Besides, the Government provides learning materials such as text and exercise books to all pupils, and teaching materials to all teachers. Also, the Government will pay school fees, and others subside to all school heads of Government and Government-assisted schools for the provision of furniture, expansion of school infrastructure, school amenities like water and sanitation facilities. In this regard, the Government of Sierra Leone under the leadership of His Excellency, President Retired Brigadier-General Julius Maada Bio, has distributed over 12 million exercise books to learners of Government and Government-assisted schools countrywide. Besides, it has also distributed more 94 containers of core textbooks supported with teaching and learning materials countrywide. The Government has also expanded schools to deprived and under-served areas with the comprehensive benefit of the school feeding program introduced. It is peculiar that the enrollment rate increases in all levels of schooling, which prompted the Government to increase more and recruit more trained teachers and distributed all over the country that meets the required capacity of pupils and students. Indeed, the Free Quality Education (FQSE) is the topmost priority and key aspiring accomplishment of the Government of Sierra Leone as a weapon behind the development and transformation of the country through education.

2. Methods

Due to the coronavirus Epidemic, all schools were closed, and social distancing was to be observed. The researcher could not gain access to individual offices and libraries. The researcher got knowledge from secondary data such as the internet, articles, books, and other documents. Besides, the researcher discussed with some prominent educationists and leaders of schools. Some other officers from the Ministry of Education and other personalities were interviewed through mobile phones. As such, the research was done through interviews, discussion, observation of schools, and fact from secondary data. The result was analyzed both quantitative and qualitative means.

3. Review of Knowledge

The paper reviews the knowledge of Free Quality Education base on the following subject:

- The meaning of Quality Education;

- Obstacles of Quality Education;
- The benefit of Quality Education.

3.1 What is Quality Education?

In transforming our world to a better place for everyone, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations, and Goal Number 4 was a special goal-focused directly on education:

"Goal 4 – Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning."

The pronouncement for a Quality Education does not only center on the accessibility of education but rather a grand step in making sure that all children have the privilege of quality education. The notion of considering education to focus on literacy and numeracy is indeed something of the past. Education is far beyond the content delivery system: instead, it is a system programmed to assist children in reaching their full ability, talent, and capacity and go into a society wholly educated and as productive citizens. The SDG was set in 2012 with the view that every child should go to school, and the quality of schools should improve in such a way that learners prepare to be more productive citizens; stand by to lead a better future.

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations commented that; *"Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful and tolerant societies"* quality Education is viewed as one that is pedagogically and developmentally wake and educates the learner in transforming to active and productive members of society.

In support of SDGs and seeking quality education, ASCD, based in Washington D.C, elaborated on quality education as:

"A quality education one that focuses on the whole child-the social emotion, mental, physical, and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or geographic location. It prepares the child for life, not just for testing"[20].

It is noteworthy to know that Quality Education makes available resources and direct policy that makes provision for all children to attend schooling healthy, learn in a conducive environment. It provides the result required for individuals, communities, and societies to progress in life. As such, quality education is propelled by quality teachers, quality learning materials/tools, and a safe learning environment [20].

3.2 Importance of Quality Education

Quality Education empowers individuals to promote all their attributes and skills necessary to capture their potentials as complete human beings and members of a community. In a statement by the Delors Commission (UNESCO, 1996):

"Education is at the heart of both personal and community developments: its mission is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talents to the full and to realize our creative potential, including responsibility for our own lives and achievement of our aims."

In light of the above, it is obvious to know that, Quality Education is a human right and a public opportunity that governments and other public bodies should contemplate making available to a child at an early age. More so, quality education provides empowerment, quality, and enlightens that make citizens contribute immensely and meaningfully to society [21].

3.3 The Obstacles to Quality Education

Education is a fundamental human right, which many children still do not have the opportunity to get, especially in extreme poverty and villages. Indeed, children living in poverty areas experience more profound deprivation of access to education. Their cases vary: some do not go to school because there is no school around their homes, while others are deprived of the inadequate training of teachers in the school that lack the skills to effectively help the children to learn. Many developing countries experience problems of children's access to education as a result of language barriers, gender roles, child labor, and poverty. By the testimony of research, the world's most vulnerable children from the deprived community are young girls, children with disabilities who, in most cases, miss out on school. In reality, the world needs to act forcefully with great effort to achieve Global Goal 4. Which is Quality Education by 2030? Problems of Education include:

- 1) a lack of funding for education;
- 2) having no teacher, or having an untrained teacher;
- 3) no classroom;
- 4) a lack of learning materials;
- 5) the exclusion of children with disabilities;
- 6) being the "wrong" gender;
- 7) living in a conflict country or the risk of conflict;
- 8) living in a far distance from school;
- 9) hunger and poor nutrition;
- 10) the expense of education. [22]

The truth about education is that it is expensive in any country. The continuous payment of salaries to teachers, lecturers, the staff of ministries, the building of schools and colleges, support to training teachers and lecturers, procurement of school materials, payment of fees and other subsidies, the administration of education countrywide and some more hidden expenditures are a significant burden to a government. Therefore,

governments of developing countries can barely rely on their financing for the promotion of education—there is a need for foreign aid to supplement the educational Budget.

The teachers are the backbone for education in any school. It is, therefore, necessary for teachers to be trained and be well paid. In other words, teacher effectiveness and efficiency are the most significant predictor of student learning. So there is a need to train and retrain teachers for proper work. Inclusively, the environment for learning is also vital for the concentration of children in the learning process. The availability of learning and teaching materials is another point of consideration. The teachers need materials to assist in preparing their lessons, notes, display of information, share and guide their lessons. In teaching the issue of disabled children is another big problem since they cannot be treated the same as ordinary children [22].

Learning will take place when the children are not exposed to hunger and poor health condition. So, a child must be stable for concentration and understanding of lessons. Education indeed is involving, so the Government has a lot to offer to achieve Quality Education.

3.4 The Benefit of Quality Education

Education is one of the most significant investments a nation can make in its citizen and its future. Besides, education is a powerful source of change and promotion of health and good livelihoods that gives input to social stability and stir long-term economic growth. Education is also important to the success of every individual. Lack of Access to education is a weapon that paves ways of transmitting poverty from generation to generation [23]. The provision of quality education to children around the world helps reduce the poverty rate of the country, promote peace and tranquility for the state, and foster great development that will lead to prosperity.

4. Result and Analysis of Government Commitment to Quality Education

4.1 Promotion of Accessibility

By all indications, His Excellency Julius Maada Bio with New Direction agenda is dedicated and committed to maintaining the principles of democracy, transparency, and accountability, human capital development, and persistent civil engagement. Indeed, the Government of Sierra Leone, under the leadership of His Excellency Julius Maada Bio, has explicit knowledge of several challenges within the education sector in Sierra Leone. These challenges cover a range of issues like access to schools and school completion, a high percentage of school drops, excessive exposure of examination malpractice, and poor condition of teachers, shortages of teaching and learning materials in school, the burden of payment of fees to parents and many more. Therefore, the Government is well committed to ensuring that children have access to schools in their environments, which will allow them to reside with their parents or guardians. Also, the Government is committed to providing teaching and learning materials to all schools countrywide [24].

In targeting the attainment of the goal of Free Quality School Education, the Government of Sierra Leone under the leadership of His Excellency Julius Maada Bio has implemented the first phase of FQSE by making sure that:

- There is no school and admission fee payment in Government and Government-assisted schools throughout the country.
- School subsidies paid timely to school heads of Government and Government-assisted schools.
- Free distribution of exercise books, pens, pencils, chalk, registers, sporting equipment, and core subject textbook to all the Government and Government-assisted schools should be a priority.
- Empowerment of school feeding programs to remote and deprived areas countrywide and increase school structures in so many chiefdoms/districts countrywide.
- Increase the number of trained and qualified teachers' recruitment in the paying roll. Teachers are distributed to remote areas to create a balance for Quality Education countrywide.
- All schools are provided with more furniture that will make teaching and learning convenient for learners and teachers.
- The teachers' salaries have been increased by 30% countrywide [19].

As a result of the above, in the 2019 school census, the number of schools increased from 10,747 to 11,180; that gives an overall increase of 4%, this covers 7.8% in preprimary, 2.3% in primary, 6.7% in junior secondary and 7.4% in senior secondary. The enrolment number of students in schools increased speedily by completely 7000,000 due to the introduction and implementation of Free Quality School Education (FQSE) since September 2018. The enrolment increased by 40,000 i.e. 44.1% at preprimary; 403,000 i.e. 29.4% at primary; 136,000 i.e. 43.2% at junior secondary and 99,000 i.e. 47.9% at senior secondary. The 2019 census further pointed out that schools in Sierra Leone have a total serving teacher of 83,054, 66,501 (which commands 83.7% of teachers practice in approved school employed and paid teachers by the teaching service commission has a total of 29,872 of which: 835 in preprimary, 18,462 in primary, 6,662 in junior secondary and 3,913 teachers in senior secondary [25].

The system also relived the payment of school fees, paying off the textbook from the parents and guardians. Besides, there is increase awareness of the relevance of education in developing people, whereby the number of child-girl enrolment kicked up. The issue of making education a privilege is suppressed to the awareness that education is a right and imperative for all children in Sierra Leone. There is an implementation of school-feeding, which motivated and inspired children, mainly from poor, remote areas, to go to school for learning.

4.2 Equity of Education Countrywide

The system demonstrates the quality of education throughout Sierra Leone. It is very eminent that there is no unbiasedness or segregation in schools. All children are the same

in the classroom. All children of Sierra Leone, despite any state of being, home background, and physical status, intellectual and socio-economic conditions deserve equal opportunity to enjoy and cherish the Free Quality School Education. Likewise, all schools of physically challenged children are provided with school materials, equipment, and infrastructure improvement to encourage the blind, deaf, dumb, and other physical disabilities to feel a sense of belonging to the human family of education. With much campaigning for the education of girl child, there is a suppression of some mishaps such as rape, early marriages, and teenage pregnancy in the country. The culprit of any girl-child abuse is penalized. The Government also made provision of busses for the transportation of school children to and from school. Another major defect of quality education in school was the two-system shift. Children at that time have a few hours to be taught in schools, whereby, there were too many private classes where teachers put more effort to distort money from parents. Under this regime (The New Direction), the two-shift system has been stopped in all schools to provide more hours of children's education in schools. Of course, the school syndicate formally has been discouraged for diversifying teachers' concentration of the right materials in school as a government-prescribed curriculum [25].

4.3 Kicking Away Examination Malpractices in Sierra Leone

Furthermore, there was too excessive exposure to examination malpractice countrywide. The New Direction government has unfolded this undignified disease call "examination malpractice," which is the most profound factor that destroyed Quality Education. The Government has taken drastic and severe measures against all culprits of examination malpractice. The measures included database technology that forces people to do the correct action, active control, and management.

His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio, in the first place, made stringent measures to eliminate or curb examination malpractices in Sierra Leone. In his opening address of the new comprehensive primary school at No. 9 community in Freetown on September 16, 2019, the president made this pronouncement:

"Examination malpractice destroys the soul of our education system, and we must all support the current efforts by the Anti-Corruption Commission, ACC, to pursue all those involved in examination malpractice. However, those efforts by the ACC must be within the law, adhere to due process, and respect human rights. As a government, we have engaged in heightened and robust monitoring of all public examinations, which has led to the uncovering of the massive scale of examination malpractice."

"Therefore, as immediate steps to address examination malpractice, I wish to announce the following: First, all those caught or suspected of examination malpractice should be prosecuted without delay or exemption; second, any teacher or school head caught and prosecuted should be terminated from service, and third, all centers suspected of examination malpractice should have their results canceled," [27].

Acting on the dictate of His Excellency, the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) became desperate to hunt defaulters. On Saturday, September 7, 2019, four teachers were paraded as culprits of examination malpractice during West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination in Freetown. A week that followed, Saturday 14, 2019 September, the Commission arrested another seven people that were writing examination for students in a private house. Besides, the same week, 65 students were rusticated and expelled by the University of Sierra Leone for examination malpractice. As such, every citizen stands by to report any case of examination malpractice to authorities for action. On October 21, 2019, Concord Times Newspaper revealed that a press released from the University of Sierra Leone (USL) informed the general public that three lecturers from the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) dismissed for alleged examination malpractice. Besides, students were also expelled at the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology for examination malpractice.

For the sake of credibility, education has to possess value and deserve National and International accreditation. Indeed, education must have integrity. The system, therefore, mends education to provide Sierra Leoneans a Quality of Education that is free from all types of fraud and malpractice. It is geared towards hard work for students by reading their books, study their notes, and faithfully taking their examination independently for them to claim integrity [27].

4.5 Payment of Tuition Fees to Schools Countrywide

As a fulfillment of commitments by the Government, the Ministry of Finance working with the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) made a total payment of Le 146,927,817,600 subsidies for tuition fees of pupils in all Government and Government-assisted schools for preprimary, primary, junior, secondary for the 2018/2019 academic year and the first segment of 2019/2020 academic year. The rest of the schools' subsidies are delayed to get proper and correct enrolment of pupils in school. It is observed that some school leaders inflated the enrolment to get higher payments. The Government picked up this defect and therefore affected the recently completed and validated headcount from all schools. The Government determines to pay school fees, supply teaching, and learning materials (TLMs), and textbooks for the rest of the academic year yet to be paid. The Government is still desperate to continue checking schools for proper and correct record systems [26].

4.6 Promotion of Technical and Vocational Training

As a commitment to building the human capital and middle human resources of Sierra Leoneans, the Government has launched the National Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy and the skills development project to make the base for the job market. The launching activity was done at the Ministry of Information and Communication Conference room on June 11, 2020. Skill training is right for all applicable citizens. In complementing this work, some citizens may be accorded the opportunity to go and study some skills abroad and come back to train others. No citizen should go or

sit idle without work; all citizens should have something to do that will make him/her self-reliance; that will suppress and eradicate poverty in the country [26].

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to note that education is a crucial weapon to develop a nation. Education is the yardstick in shaping the culture, morality, and labor of a county. Sierra Leone invests in education for its changes or development. The British colonizer invested a high standard of education in Sierra Leone. The Government of Sierra Leone inherited a bookish type of education system- the 7-5-2-4. The Government of Sierra Leone changed the system of education in 1993 from the 7-5-2-4 to 6-3-3-4 system. Due to massive public examination failures, and many examination malpractices, the system was again changed to 6-3-4-4. Again, the New Direction revert it to 6-3-3-4, which is now in progress.

Due to the poor condition of the country, attributed to the fall in the standard of education countrywide, His Excellency, President Julius Maada Bio made it a commitment to developing education to a better standard through the implementation of Free Quality Education. The Government of Sierra Leone is presently committed to improving all sectors and levels of education countrywide. The Government stimulated higher enrollment in schools by making education free to all pupils and students, whereby the burden of payment is relieved from parents. The Government also provided enough teaching and learning material, school subsidies, increase schools' environment, increase salaries, and through monitoring of all schools. There were high cases of examination malpractices countrywide, but the Government is engaged in eliminating that disease from all educational Institutions, all culprits of examination malpractice punished by law. Teachers are made available in remote areas of many chiefdoms /districts, and school feeding facilities are provided in some poor, remote environments to attract the attention of low-income families to education.

The commitment of the Government in education has increased the role of students, teachers, schools, and colleges. All citizens now have full awareness that education is compulsory for all children of Sierra Leone, and parents who tempt to restrain their children from education penalized. Quality of education is gradually increasing by making sure that students take a genuine examination and get good results. Education is the key priority in the present-day Government of Sierra Leone.

6. Recommendations

- 1) The Government maintains the continuous and increase of payments of teachers and other officials of the Ministry of Education. So, there will be no further corruption in education countrywide.
- 2) The employment of effective and efficient school supervisors to monitor the various school management in Sierra Leone. The supervisors should have a clear understanding of teaching and learning experiences.

- 3) The timely payment of subsidies to schools, colleges, and universities will help solve the problems.
- 4) The Government also should track proprietors that are demanding subsidies paid by the Government to heads of schools for the administration of education.
- 5) To avoid the corruption of citizens countrywide, the Government should provide harmonize salaries for all levels of educational standards in Sierra Leone, so that trained and qualified teachers will not abandon the classroom for other jobs due to salary differences.
- 6) The Government should look at the scale of work of primary and preprimary teachers since the foundation of education starts from early childhood. There should be trained and qualified teachers to start those levels and not untrained and unqualified teachers. The Government must increase the number of trained teachers for preprimary and primary schools with more incentives.
- 7) The Government should check some secondary schools, particularly government-assisted schools. There are schools with one principal running two schools at the same time. The same principal is principal dignitaries to two schools (both the junior secondary and senior secondary).
- 8) The Government should check all principals and Head Teachers; some are pecked in those positions out of influence and not by experience and promotion as a condition from the education policy of Sierra Leone. The ladder of promotion and position in the classroom is a set principle of Teacher- Head of Department-Senior Teacher-vice principal/Assistant Head Teacher- Principal/Head Teacher. Each step has a letter of recommendation from school Head, and approval from the Ministry of Education, let principals produce those documents. A penalty should be levied to all culprit because that is corruption. The research discovered that so many principals/head teachers are self-made without going through the main line of education policy. The Government should check those positions and penalized corruption principal/head teachers; that is one big source of destruction of education; people open schools to make money and not for the sake of education improvement.
- 9) The Government should hunt principals who are supposed to be teachers in a particular school but are principals of another school, paid by the Government of Sierra Leone. At the same time, they are principals running another Government Assisted school. Quality Education will be eminent by the elimination of corruption from students, teachers, heads of schools, school authorities, and the MEST officers.
- 10) Education secretaries are for missions, the Government should work directly with Heads of Schools. Some education secretaries are signatories to all the schools of the mission countrywide to get a share and full demand of what the Government may send to school account for the development of the schools. Let all heads of school forward the information of the school account, including names and

members of signatories. The Government should cross-check all the banks for defaulters. The Government should penalize any person found in two accounts.

- 11) The Government of Sierra Leone should motivate and invest in young educationist.

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