
The Contribution of Nelson Mandela in African Education

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world” one of Nelson Mandela's famous quotes and it portrays he firmly believed in education for the masses. He believed in the power of education that extends beyond the development of skills for the purpose of economic growth. He also desired the type of education that can contribute to nation building and success. The right to quality education should be a basic privilege enjoyed by every young Person in the world regardless of their race, gender or place of origin. Education is indeed the key to success and everyone should be provided with the opportunity to access it.

Easier said than done, access to quality education has been a major challenge for many young people, especially in Africa. Although the problems are stark and real, noble efforts are being made by the government and various community organizations to try to eliminate these problems. I would like to confess my delight to the men and women like Nelson Mandela whose selfless sacrifices to ensure quality education has impacted positively on the lives of many young people. But as it is always said charity begins at home. That means each one of us has a role to play in our societies to bring the changes we need.

One thing I wish I could do is to provide education for all. Shortage of trained quality teachers has always been a problem in the community I come from. This obviously affects the examination performances of schools in our area. After finishing my final primary examinations, a couple of friends and I decided to go back to our former primary school and support the teaching staff with certain duties. Over the years I had learned the importance of giving back to the community. I would assist in marking the papers and sometimes participate in group discussions with the incoming candidates. This really boosted their confidence to actively participate and interact with us freely since we were almost agemates. It was my fervent hope that I'll have helped someone realize their dream of passing their exams. We also enjoyed ourselves interacting with them instead of just sitting at home idling around.

It turned out I had passed my exams and before long I was reporting to secondary school, it was a good school in the city. Yet another chapter in my life. I joined the Maths and Science club in my first year. In my final secondary year, I was the club's secretary. The meetings we always held in a very large classroom with a blackboard. While there we would discuss a variety of questions and help each other understand different concepts and formulae. This brought me a lot of joy because I made a lot of friends and I also cherished the feeling of knowing I helped someone overcome a class challenge in school through our numerous discussions.

I was also part of the Guidance and counselling team. We would attend training on the

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weekends on how to be better counsellors and attend to other students. Our club had some basic things like shoes, shoe polish, toothpaste and other small accessories thank our patron and other well-wishers. These things would be given to needy students at the beginning of each term and this significantly reduced the cases of theft among students. I believe that providing a conducive environment for us students with everything we require enables us to attain the optimum concentration in classwork with no bits of destruction worrying about what we have and don't have. Our club changed a lot of lives I believe.

One of the biggest achievements we ever made was arranging and participating in our school's charity walk. It was aimed at raising funds to cover the school fees of young brilliant needy students in our school who had huge amounts of balance. We sent invitations to the schools around and our patron sent cards to big names and some political leaders asking for their support. I was really proud to be part of such a club. The money raised was more than we had anticipated. Fee balances were cleared and that significantly reduced the number of students that were always sent home due to fee balances.

Going forward, eagerly waiting to be part of the African Leadership University community, upholding Nelson Mandela's legacy and doing what he desired to bring change will be my willpower and driving force. I'd like to be a selfless and forgiving leader just as Mandela showed us in his times. Despite being confronted by challenges of apartheid and physical imprisonment he did not cease to fight for what he believed in. He sacrificed his freedom so others would be free. He had the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness which he portrayed in rejection for revenge. Characters all leaders should aspire to have.

As a leader, I will also fight for equity, equal rights and privileges for both me and women. No discrimination of gender. Mandela taught us the importance of treating people equally based on their qualifications and not whether they were male or female. He ushered hundreds of women into politics to allow chances of being leaders. He endured girls also attended schools as much as boys did. He was determined to eliminate violence against women. He tackled human rights issues through protests and also ensured black people attained full citizenship.

Mandela also had vision. His unequivocal vision was a free South Africa with equal rights for all, regardless of the skin colour, whether black or white. He articulated the vision confidently at every opportunity even when facing the death penalty at his trial for terrorism. His vision was never compromised. He was firm.

What Nelson Mandela did for South Africa and the world is priceless. He saved his generation and future generations to come. He used his energy to protect rights of Africans at whatever cost. This teaches us to have no limitations when a goal is to be completed.

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