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THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE AND COMPETITIVE EDUCATION IN POST COLONIAL AFRICA

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Abstract

The provision of education in Africa is best understood in the context of the political ideological influences of the countries concerned. Political assumptions about education influenced the provision of education in Africa in content and conduct of education in respect of vocationalisation of the curriculum and indigenisation of the language of instruction. Where as the colonial era was marked by the slow moving process of education, the post colonial era was characterized by the fast- moving process of education, though aimed at improving the masses, was not without its share of problems. As the way forward to maintain adequate and competitive education system, African State should maintain sound economic policies.

Keywords: Competitive Education, vocationalisation, ideology

1. Introduction

To understand the provision of education in Africa it is necessary to investigate the political ideological influences on the country's education system. An education system is designed to promote the political ideology of the time in a country. That is, the education system of a colonial country reflects the political system of that time, just as the education system of that post colonial state also reflects the political situation of the time. This paper focuses on the education systems of the post colonial Africa.

Politics determines the guiding principles of an education system. (Zvobgo 1997:20). The political ideology of a country influences its education system through the educational acts of Parliament (Lemmer & Baodenhorst 1997). Therefore there is a relationship between a country's education and its national ideals.

The question arises whether the post-colonial country's national ideals augur well for an adequate and competitive education system. To address this question, this paper explores the purpose of education and assumption about education in order to determine the nature of an adequate and competitive education. Next, the paper address the relevant themes characterising the education systems in Africa. A qualitative analytical design is used to investigate the provision of education

in post-colonial states. The data are analysed, conclusions are drawn from them and the way forward is suggested.

2. Adequate and competitive education

To understand the nature of an adequate and competitive education it is necessary to explain the concept of education, state the purpose of education and then determine what is adequate and competitive education.

2.1 The concept and purpose of education

It is necessary to explain the concept of education from a global perspective and from what Zvobgo (1997) sees as an African perspective. Both perspectives reflect common elements about education. From a global perspective, Barker (1994:50) defines education as

All those processes of learning which enable a person to acquire the skills, behaviours, knowledge, values and norms which are considered necessary to live a happy and successful life in the society to which he belongs.

Based on this broad definition, Barker (ibid) describes education in a number of ways which also serve as the aims of education:

- Education as the transmission of knowledge;
- Education as the achievement of understanding;
- Education as preparation for life;
- Education as the development of the ability to solve problems;
- Education as the formation of character; and
- Education as self-actualisation

The African view of education originates from the experiences of Africa with their former colonial masters (Zvobgo 1997:19). The African nationalist saw education as the vehicle to political, economic and social power. Influenced by this ideology, African states developed a policy that was aimed at making education accessible to the majority of indigenous people. Like Barker (1994), Zvobgo (1997:20) describes the post-colonial view of education in a number of ways which serve as the aims of education as well:

- Education as the vehicle for political, economic and social liberation;
- Education as the prime mover of development;
- Education as the vehicle for status and social mobility;
- Education as the key to success, a good job, salary and riches;
- Education as the provider of opportunities for self-actualisation; and

- Education as the vehicle for effecting political and ideological control of the masses.

The similarity between Barker's (1994) and Zvobgo's (1997) conception of the purpose of education is evident. From this conception it is clear that an adequate and a competitive education should fulfil the multi-faceted purpose of education as stated by Barker (1994) and Zvobgo (1997). It is clear that education is all the varied processes of learning aimed at preparing the individual for a better life and for making a contribution to society. Governments seek to use education for specific purposes (Ozga 2000:10). In African states education is viewed as a vehicle for achieving political, economic and social liberation. For example, after independence educated Africans held influential positions in government and in Business. Education has also been understood as a site of cultural transmission, where national identities could be fostered or even revised (Ozga 2000:10)

2.2 Political Ideological Assumptions about Education.

The purposes of education in Africa are driven by some assumptions.

These assumptions reflect a relationship between education and national ideals of states. In this connection the post-colonial African states have taken a number of assumptions about education for granted as follows (Dekker &emmer 1993 and Ishumi 1994):

- Education is a major instrument for achieving the goal of a unified nation, equality of opportunity, and thus circumventing situations which give rise to conflict.
- Through education, the nation's youth are made aware of maintaining the national political framework and thus instilling loyalty and patriotism.
- Education accounts for increased earning and material well-being in society and thus alleviating poverty.
- Education is an instrument in human capital, stimulating national economic, growth.

During the 1960's education came to be regarded as a sort of intellectual yeast which would ferment and transform pre-industrial societies by promoting knowledge, skills and attitudes favourable to economic and social development. The primary aim of education is seen as to harness and develop man's talents and potentials in order to fulfil his or her moral, intellectual and material needs and make a meaningful contribution to society (Zvobgo 1999).

Most post-independent countries of Africa saw education as an instrument for promoting their political aims and inculcating certain attitudes and values deemed necessary for advancing national and cultural identity. Educational policies of Ghana, in the 1950s were driven by these assumptions. Nyerere on education for self-reliance, indicates that the curriculum was used to further Tanzania's programme of national development and the country's ideas of socialising. Similarly, Kenya used education to foster national unity and suppress division along tribal, religious, or racial lines. Botswana used education as a strategy for development because it was thought that all the economic problems inherited from the British could be solved through reorganised and reformed educational system which paid special attention to the country's human resource needs (Dekker & Lemmer and Zvombo 99).

Education's positive influence for unity has been both unintentional and intentional.

There are two main ways by which education achieved unity for the African people. Unintentionally during the colonial times, education recruited and socialised the African leadership for nationalism. It brought together people of high calibre from different cultural backgrounds in such schools as King's College in Ghana; Tabona school in Tanzania; and Munali College in Zambia (Thompson 1993:35) and also University of Fort Hare in South Africa which played a role in educating prominent leaders. Secondly, through education, a common language was developed and this facilitated effective political communication (Thompson 1993:35).

During the post-colonial era achieving unity as an educational goal was deliberate and planned. In Tanzania giant steps were taken to use education for overt political socialisation to promote understanding of the national ideology and respect for political and social equality. (Thompson 1981:51). The ideology *ujamaa* or familyhood was used to provide education for life in the village communities. Further education was needed to meet high level men power needs of the nation. Students were selected on the basis of the academic achievement, and also on the basis of demonstrated qualities of commitment to their fellowmen. Thus through the villagisation policy the people of Tanzania had to learn socialism through living socialism in their lives.

2.3 Problems and Constraints in the Provision of Education in the Post Colonial Africa.

The post Colonial states political goals of education have sometimes been bedevilled with conflicting demands of politics, economics, and social pressure. Economic growth is largely dependent upon political stability (Mandaza 1987 and Thompson 1981). Yet, political stability is undermined by the following factors: the failure of economic development to meet the rapidly

expanding aspirations of the people; and the increasing inequality due to a widening gap between elites of the modern sector and the masses.

In some post-colonial states there was a problem of matching demands of socialist philosophy links with tradition such as **villagisation** in Tanzania and **humanism** in Zambia with demands of science and modern technology. This was the problem of preserving what is good in the nation's traditions and at the same time allowing the nation to benefit from the science and Technology of other nations. There is danger in putting too much emphasis on the local environment in the nation's educating system to the exclusion of the broader frame of changes taking place in African state (Thompson 1981).

The year of independence in Africa

provides a watershed between two periods: the pre-independence era marked by a slow moving.....process of education controlled by the colonial administration and limited by colonial aims and the post independence time fast moving, multi-targeted education, redefined and controlled or otherwise influenced by the national political machinery (Ishumi 1994)

According to Ishumi (1994:154):

- The failing of educating systems in African countries have been exacerbated by the demands of structure adjustment programmes proposed by the international financial institutions (International; Monetary Fund and the World Bank) as a cure for the ailing economics.
- Problems with teaching materials (Nigeria made special effort to Marshall funds);
- heavy reliance on the importance of suppliers from industrial countries for technical facilities [was singled out by UNESCO as successful to the Zimbabwe Secondary School Science Project (ZIM-SCI) which was initiated in 1981] and
- more is required on science clubs, school science fair and competitions, science magazines and newsletters.

Universities in Africa have had their share of the problem. The post independence African Universities have been challenged by two aspects of their mission: advancing traditions of schooling and solving national problems. This is more clearly shown in the Draft Charter of University of Ghana, the University of East Africa 1963; the University of Zambia act 1965; the University of Dares Salaam act 1970 (Ishumi 1994:66) and the University of Zimbabwe act 1982.

It is important that the state Universities work in close partnership with respective governments of their countries who give them financial assistance. Unfortunately the irony of the situation is demonstrated by constant closure of many African Universities. Ishumi (1994:77) attributes the problem to two situations which derive from government surveillance and political demands.

Reduced subsidies to what the international institutions define as non-productive sectors such as education and health resulted in a number of setbacks on the education system of post colonial African states. These include:

- shortage of textbooks, educational equipment, teaching and support material;
- greatly reduced quality of education; and
- undermined public trust in school and college.

In some countries secondary schools have resorted to double sessioning because of shortage of classroom space. This problem has in turn, led to the increased teacher-pupil ratio. Ishumi (1994:29) shows that studies conducted in Africa, Asia and Latin America have indicated shortage of classroom facilities and overcrowded classrooms in those countries. Opinion is divided among researchers concerning the effect of class size on education achievement. Ishumi argues that an overcrowded classroom “clearly abuses the pedagogical and professional expectations of teachers in terms of individual attention, supervision of conduct and monitoring progress”.

High teacher-pupil ratios have also been reported in Swaziland, Zambia and Mozambique. As is the case in Zimbabwe, the problems in these countries is due to the fact that many classrooms were originally designed for smaller classes during the colonial eras. This was at the legacy of the past. It is in response to these needs of the masses immediately after independence in Africa that triggered a need to accommodate large classes in the wake of free education for all.

The output of the primary school system in Africa has been only partly successful. Many school leavers were not provided with adequate science and vocational education and this resulted in unemployment of those who could not be admitted into tertiary institutions. The attitudes of the students and parents to regard vocational training as second choice has not helped the situation.

The teaching of the science has been affected by the following, as reported by UNESCO in 1987 in Ishumi (1994:103);

The first scenario pertains to the double identity of Universities. The prestige-pride is conferred on the institution as the highest centre of learning and scholarship in the land. However this very credit given to universities, provokes public fear and constant superstition. In this case the university and its scholars display views, arguments or belief that are contrary to the inclination of the political authority.

This means that the university by virtue of its status is regarded as the highest centre of learning and therefore expected to provide scholarship in research and in those issues of national interests. Yet, we often read from the press conflicts between university students and political interest. The situation is influenced by the kind of content and methods of teaching and the research methods that university students are exposed to.

The pages that follow present some themes emanating from the purposes of education and assumptions about education as the bases for adequate and competitive education. The purposes of education and the assumptions about education as stated above could be summarised by two themes: preparation for life and education as the vehicle for political and economic liberation.

3.0 Preparation for Life

Adequate and competitive education should indeed prepare an individual for life. It can be augured whether academic education is adequate as preparation for life or whether vocational education is, since it prepares an individual for the world of work. Vocational education and education with production have been given prominence in the post-colonial school curricula on the belief that they prepare individuals for the world of work.

3.1 The Vocational Academic Debate

Academic schooling has been seen as that to which all young people aspire or ought to aspire. With a few exceptions, vocational education has been seen as the field of those who have failed academically (Finlay, Niven and Young 1998:156). In Post independent Africa, the implementation of a relevant indigenised vocational curriculum which was directed at agricultural and technical training was based on political considerations.

In some African states vocational education was offered at lower secondary school level, but Kenya introduced vocational training in primary school. The large number of training institutions provide a parallel system with formal schooling, but focused on vocational and technical training in the same way. In 1977 Nigeria, introduced special science education in three Kano states. The three science schools were intended to prepare young people for the country's oil industry (Ishumi 1994).

3.2 Education with Production

A concept related to education for self-reliance is that of education with production. Both focus on the implementation of most relevant indigenised vocational curriculum. The slogan education with production gives vocational education an ideology and, socialist character in that it aims improving the productivity of the masses through education to offset the cost of education (Dekker & Lemmer 1993:482).

In some African countries, training with production centres have been set up. These have been established to offer the following: post primary vocational training, trade or work experience for youth. They include Botswana's youth brigades, established in 1965; and Kenya's village polytechnic, established in the 1970s and 1980s by church organisation and church groups (Ishumi 1994:122).

Just as the policy of self-reliance in Tanzania was linked to a rural agricultural setting, in Zimbabwe education with production was also related to rural agricultural setting. Since Zimbabwe was an agricultural country it was important that one of the activities for education with production be agriculture. This justifies the introduction of the Zimbabwe Foundation For Education With Production (ZIMFEM) programme in some boarding secondary schools in some parts of the country as a significant development.

4.0 Education As The Vehicle For Political And Economic Liberation

The foregoing section indicates how the curriculum prepares the country's citizens for life through balancing the academic with the vocational education. This section focuses on how education can be used as the vehicle for political and economic liberation.

Some of the ways which these goals can be achieved is through the indigenisation of the language of instruction and the provision of education for self-reliance.

4.1 Indigenisation of The Language of instruction.

The UNESCO report of 1982 declares that all education is best given through the medium of the learner's language (Ishumi 1994:134). However, the indigenisation of the curriculum seems to elude many curriculum planners who are also pressured to meet the technological economic demands of modernity (Dekker and Lemmer 1993:480). African states are embarrassed to continue using a foreign language long after independence because they see the foreign language as alienating the nation's members and also undermining socio-political integration of the country's citizens (Ishumi 1994:134).

However, since written forms of most African languages were only developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, it is believed that African languages were not capable of conveying knowledge in the same manner as European languages are (Roy- Campbell and Gwete undated page 10). Those who support the continued use of the colonial language as the language of instruction argue that the European languages have a developed literature base and a developed science and technical vocabulary. They claim that the continued use of the colonial language as the official language does not necessarily return people to old oppressive ways.

Only a few countries have managed to promote an indigenous African language either offering official status or a national medium of instruction for all grades of the primary school. Tanzania has achieved a little more than other African states in terms of indigenising the language of instruction. In 1967 ki-Swahili replaced English as the medium of instruction in schools and in 1981 English was only taught as a foreign language in the lower grades of the primary school, but after 1967 the ability of primary school pupils to communicate in English declined (Ishumi 1994:130)

4.2 Education for Self Reliance

According to Thompson (1981), following independence, most African governments tended to finance services for the people in order to meet the demands of the rural people. This made the people depend on government initiative and finance. An example, is given of Zambia which had to dispose of its resources as the people could not help themselves. They developed an attitude of petitioning for government help. On the contrary in Tanzania it was observed that people cannot be developed. They can only develop themselves. Thus Tanzania provided education for self-development since 1967 and even offered it as one of the subjects on the curriculum. The British

content of history was replaced by the Tanzania content. Schools were expected to practise the precept of self-reliance. In pursuance of the ideology of self-reliance the primary school curriculum focused on skills and values relevant to a rural agrarian society.

However, four major factors frustrated Nyerere's vision in the 1990's. These were:

- the people's economic difficulties;
- the people's traditional patterns of living;
- people's educational expectations since colonial time; and
- Nyerere's assumption that citizens can be inspired by political leaders to inspire personal ambition in order to embrace the philosophy (Dekker & Lemmer 1993:67).

5.0 Methodology

A qualitative analytical design was used through an analysis of three documents in order to determine how the post-colonial states :

- prepare their youth for life through academic and vocational education ;and
- attempt to achieve political liberation through indigenisation of language and the education for self-reliance.

The following three documents were analysed :

- A module by Roy-Campbell and Gwete
- An International Guide to Qualification in Education; and
- The Bulawayo chronicle

The *module* was a valuable source of information since it was written specifically for the B.A students in language and communication . However , its usefulness is only limited to the section on the indigenisation of the language of instruction . *The International Guide to Qualification in Education* is comprehensive, and is a reliable reference document covering the education systems in Africa and the world. However, there could be a gap in information from the time it was compiled to date . The *Chronicle* as one of the oldest newspapers is a useful source of information, but its information in this study is limited to Zimbabwe , although it can be applied to other African countries.

6.0 Data analysis and conclusions

6.1 Analysis

The information obtained from the main sources outlined in section 5 is analysed. The table on page 11 is an analysis of key issues drawn from an *International Guide to the Qualifications in Education*. The countries included in this analysis illustrate more adequately the issues discussed

in this paper. Many of those left out have similar characteristic to those included in the table. Roy-Campbell and Gwete (undated page 176) predicted that “as we move towards the 21st century more and more African countries are beginning to make more and more use of indigenous languages in education”

The table below summarises the provision of academic and vocational education and the language of instruction in the countries indicated.

A comparative analysis of the provision of education in post-colonial Africa.

| Country | Education free | Compulsory | Level of Technical Education | Language of instruction | Comment. |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Angola | - | From ages 7 to 11 | - | Portuguese | Technical Ed not indicated |
| Benin | Ages 6 to 12 | Ages 6 to 12 | Technical secondary school underside technical education | French | Gradual shift to national languages |
| Botswana | - | - | Technical secondary | Setswana English | Sentwa early yrs English. |
| Burkina Faso | - | - | Technically secondary | French | |
| Burundi | Free | - | Technical vocationally secondary | French | For pupils whiling to undertake tech Ed |
| Cameroon | - | Age 6 to 11 | Technical vocationally secondary | English and French | English to provide French elsewhere. |
| Central African Republic | - | - | Technical secondary | French | Sango is also used in some previous schools. |
| Chad | - | - | Technical secondary | French | Arabic also taught at primary school |
| Congo | - | - | Technical education | French | To allow a basically French system |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | | | Technical secondary | French | Technical from age 12 |
| Gabon | - | - | Technical at teacher training all | French | - |
| Gambia | - | - | Technical vocational | English | Different at further education |
| Ghana | 6 years primary 3 years secondary | 6 years primary 3 years junior secondary | Since 1987 changed from heavily academic to more vocational oriented. | English | Local language for 1 st 3 yrs. |
| Kenya | Primary free | Primary Ed compulsory | Technical training included | English | 8-4-4 system 8yrs primary, 4 sec 4first degree |
| Lesotho | - | - | Technical vocational secondary | English | Most of privates run by churches |
| Malawi | - | - | Technical Education offered as further education | Chichewa English | After primary English only |
| Mauritania | - | - | Technical education offered in higher education | Bilinguali French cerabic | Mechanical and electrical |
| Mozambique | - | Compulsory for seven years | Technical schools and institutes | Portuguese | Some technical institute industries |
| Namibia | - | - | Technical and higher education | English | Education for all to improve literally |
| Nigeria | - | - | Technical secondary | English | Local language 3 yrs |
| Senegal | - | - | Vocational secondary | French | - |
| Sierra Leone | Free in primary | - | Technical as further education | English | - |
| Somalia | free | Compulsory to age 14 | Vocational secondary | Somali and Arabic | English and station still apparent |
| Swaziland | | Compulsory primary education | Technical as further education | English | |
| Tanzania | - | Compulsory forcevency | Technical secondary | Swahili English in | Swahili primary English from sec |
| Togo | - | Compulsory to age 16 | Technical secondary | French | Though compulsory many children do not attend |
| Tunisia | - | Compulsory primary | - | Arabic and French | French used secondary |
| Uganda | - | - | Technical secondary | English | - |
| Zambia | - | Compulsory primary | Technical as further education | English | Local languages grade 1 to 4... |
| Zimbabwe | Free primary rural | - | Technical vocational as further education | English | Local languagesto grade 3 |

It is clear from the table that although the countries are independent the majority of them use the colonial language as the medium of instruction. In Benin although French is the official language, the government intended to implement a policy of involving a gradual shift to national languages. (the British Council 1996:126) From the table, it is clear that other countries like Ghana (grade 1 to 4) and Zimbabwe (grade 1 to 3) use indigenous languages as indicated in brackets. As indicated in section 2.2 in post-colonial Africa, education was seen as a major instrument for achieving the goal of a unified nation. This explains why in the table, some countries provided free and compulsory education at least at the primary school level. Some of the countries made education free, but not compulsory.

Botswana places English as the official language and Setswana as the national language of the country. Setswana is the medium of instruction from grade 1-4, while English is taught as a subject. English is the medium of instruction from grade 5 to university. In Namibia indigenous languages are used as the medium of instruction from grade 4 to university. In South Africa students should be proficient in two language as the medium of instruction with some knowledge of this as a subject (Roy-Campbell and Gwete undated page 182-192).

In Zimbabwe, Shona, Ndebele and English are taught in all primary schools from the first grade as follows.

- Shona and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Shona; or
- Ndebele and English in all areas where the mother tongue of the majority of the residents is Ndebele.

Prior to the fourth grade either of the languages referred to may be used as the medium of instruction, depending upon which languages is more commonly spoken and better understood by the pupils. From the fourth grade English shall be used as the medium of instruction (Education Act section 5).

Some African states such as Ghana and Nigeria in West Africa; Kenya and Uganda in Eastern Africa; Zambia and Zimbabwe in Southern Africa retained the use of English as the medium of instruction. The reason for the continued use of English in these countries is for practical economic and commercial considerations. This practice was also seen as being cost effective because the infrastructure in the school system was based on English as the medium of

instruction. In countries where there are many ethnic groups indigenising the official language and the curriculum would be a unifying factor. Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland ethnicity is not a problem, unlike in other countries characterised by different languages and dialects (Roy-Campbell and Gwete undated).

According to The Chronicle of April 7, 1983, the minister of education and culture in Zimbabwe indicated that with the right kind of education, there would be tremendous opportunity for the self employment in the country. The ministry was responsible for preparing the children for the world of work. The Presidential commission of enquiry into education and training in Zimbabwe stated that Zimbabwe's education was too academic and examinations oriented, making it difficult for high school graduates to be absorbed by the formal job market (The Chronicle December 30 1998).

The Minister's views in Zimbabwe reflect the views of most post colonial states about vocational education. Political considerations influenced the post colonial states to implement a relevant indigenous vocational curriculum (section 3.1). It is therefore not surprising that in the table all the countries, except two, reflect the provision of some form of technical/ vocational education. As indicated in the table, Ghana, for example, shifted from a heavily academic curriculum to a vocational oriented curriculum.

6.2 Conclusions

An analysis of the purpose of education and assumptions about education underlines two major roles of education: preparing individuals for life and education as the vehicle for the political and economic liberation of the society. The provision of adequate and competitive education in meeting these goals, is also linked to the national ideas of a state. In the context of the postcolonial states the national ideals about education are seen in terms of achieving political unity in order to protect the sovereignty of the state.

In preparing the individual for life, the post colonial states launched ambitious education programmes guided by the philosophy of education for all. As indicated in the table above, Some African states made the education free and compulsory and provided adequate education for its citizens. Unfortunately, it was not possible to provide competitive education because of certain

constraints which were the result of a quantitative expansion in the education system which could not keep pace with economic development.

In further efforts to prepare the individual for life, post-colonial states also accelerated the provision of technical and vocational education. Technical and vocational education was seen as the type of education that would prepare school leavers for the world of work, including providing skills for self-employment. However, technical education demands more financial resources than academic education and this has posed a challenge for many post-colonial states.

Attempts have also been made by the post-colonial states to use education as the vehicle for political and economic liberation. Attempts in making education promote political liberation have been achieved by making the school and university curricula relevant to the national needs and indigenising the language of instruction in the primary school, at least in the lower grades of the primary school. Although the school curriculum has been geared towards making education a means of achieving economic liberation, this has been frustrated by political instability in some African states and unsound economic policies.

7.0 The way forward

This paper has revealed that the post-colonial African states have made significant strides in the development of education in their countries in terms of :

- Education for all
- Vocationalisation of education
- Indigenisation of education and the language of instruction
- Expansion of secondary and tertiary education

It can be argued that a commendable attempt has been made in making education adequate in terms of content and quantity. However, it appears the quality of education has been undermined by inadequate resources. In this respect it is difficult to describe the provision of education in most African states as competitive.

As the way forward to maintain adequate and competitive education systems, African states should improve or at least maintain sound economic policies in order to provide the resources required for successful learning both at school and University level.

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