

A Comment Paper

to

Education in Developing Africa

(Prof. Abel G. M. Ishumi)

By

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November 27-30, 1986

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I, first of all, would like to pay my respects regarding an excellent paper presented by Professor Abel G. M. Ishumi, which does give us a profound understanding of the education of Africa.

Main Points of Paper

The paper of Prof. Ishumi has over 40 pages and is composed of the following three parts:

- a) an overview of educational achievements in the post--Independence Africa;
- b) to highlight the major and critical problems facing today's education.
- c) to propose some reforms for the future.

Among these parts, a) is an indispensable document, especially to the readers who are interested in the educational development of Africa, which has an adequate explanation of primary, adult and higher education.

b) seems to be a main part of this paper, which points out sharply the difficult problem and failure of African education, on the difference of a).

b) investigates mainly the explosive increase and inefficiency of primary education, educational wastage caused by school leavers, and the difficulty of education language and language policy in Africa.

c) tries to propose some possible alternatives for the future, to the problems mentioned in b)--low efficiency of education system, reduction way of school leavers' problems, and the fundamental approach to African language policy.

I, in my comment, would like to give some observations to the above b) and c) of Prof. Ishumi's argument. If my comment could associate with the argument, I will be pleased as a scholar of African education.

First, Prof. Ishumi states an internal inefficiency of education system, taking the investigation into text-book, teacher-pupil ratio and the qualification of teacher, which are full of proper understandings.

Prof. Ishumi seems to attach more importance to school leavers' problem. This is a common problem prevailing in the developing countries, and we can observe the more rate of drop-outs, even in Latin America than in African region. In this context, Prof. Ishumi considers four objects of basic education, taking 3 R's, enquiring mind, attitude of cooperative life and a mastery of practical skills, which seems to me very relevant pursuits. At the same time, we are happy to have a rare report of a four-year research study conducted by Prof. Ishumi. Thanks to this study, we come to find the relationship between the school leavers' problem and rural-urban migration (and the reason why they move to town).

We also realize by this paper that the African language problem is serious and grave.

My Observation

In this connection, I wish to convey my observation to the African education, which is divided into three parts:

1. Modernization--introduction of Western education. Africa is now shifting to the civilization with printing type, after long centuries which were painful and abandoned. She is introducing Western-type education at the expences of falling down of traditional tribal society. Through this education system, each of the countries is planning to get a situation of literacy of people, and replacement of foreigners and unity of multi-racial societies. But I think it is more important that national education policy should be always reflected from a common people side.

2. Basic education and literacy.

If we take the United Nations' standard of literacy (ability to read and write), the literacy level of African children is low. However, the ability of hearing and explaining of them is fairly high, which may be sometimes ranked at the highest level in the world.

The basic condition of primary enrollment is still weak and there is much difference in the area.

3. Higher education.

The Addis Ababa plan (1962) was attained most in Higher education level, while not in primary and secondary education. But in this higher education, the urgent faculties such as agricultural management or agricultural machine--has not yet been developed, I think.

The educational cost per student is said to be over 1,000 U.S. dollars. In the sence of educational expenses, the international common university or university with specific faculty should be established, by sometimes using the international aid.

Two educational thoughts

Here I think it is better to recollect the educational thought of two distinguished politicians of Africa. One is Jomo Kenyatta and another is Julius Nyerere.

J. Kenyatta sought the difference of western education and African education and found that in "human relation" (Facing Mt. Kenya, 1938).

That is to say, the essence of western education exists on the individuality of human kind, while that of kykuyu does on the relationship of human kind. This was finding of J. Kenyatta.

J. Nyerere of Tanzania told the people that western education was not good, because it taught the sense of value in colonial days, and raised four reasons as follows:

- 1) western education produces only a handful of elite,
- 2) the farmer who has been given an education is apt to abandon the farm,
- 3) people rely only on the knowledge of books and teacher, and underestimate past experience,
- 4) while in school, people go out of labor.

These two thoughts, I think, are full of insight into African education.

Prof. Ishumi concludes in the final page: This paper has attempted a survey of the development in formal education in post-independence Africa, and by which increased educational opportunities to train manpower. But the paper has pointed out the critical problematics mainly in inefficiency, school leaver, and confused language policy.

Finally, I wish for African countries to eliminate the difficulty above mentioned year by year and to get to the development stage, which is abundant physically and spiritually.