Committee IV
Crises in Education in the 1980's:
A Survey of Educational Values and Systems

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EDUCATIONAL VALUES AND HOPES FOR UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION IN AFRICA

by

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"By the year 2000, Africa will not be lying in a ditch beside the high road. It will be at the bottom of a deep, black pit."

Overheard at the Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa, 1982.

The person who uttered that exclamation of hopelessness was not an America, Asian or European, but an African working at the E.C.A. itself. To quote the remark and even to give it leading prominence does not necessarily imply agreement with it. Two things are indeed implied, however. One is that the remark is taken seriously: it could come true, as the World Bank's Berg report indicates (World Bank 1981). The second is that any crisis in education in the societies of Africa is only a part of a much more comprehensive process of crisis. Whether education is merely a powerless victim of larger forces, actively fuels the crisis or can contribute to solutions is the concern of this paper.

Before I address myself to it, I want to make two points. The first pertains to people who live in glass houses and who are tempted to throw stones. Britain, the European Community, the West, of all of which I am a member, have their crises, too. They are indeed accused of causing much of Africa's. Any particular aspect of disruption in Africa can be found a counterpart in apparently less severely stricken societies. To discuss motes or even beams in Africa's eyes, then, is not to be blind to the flaws and iniquities

of my own society. But they will not feature in this paper.

My second point is the peril of talking of Africa as a coherent entity. No continent as vast as Africa can be that. No person can speak for all of Africa and few generalisations can be wholly valid. In the simplest terms of political geography, we are talking of 53 sovereign states with populations ranging from 90 million down to less than half a million. Even if we exclude the 5 states of the Mediterranean litoral, we retain a considerable spectrum of people's polities, languages, cultures and economic circumstances. Can any useful statements successfully embrace them all without quibble? Any attempt to talk of Africa then must needs be cautious, with qualifications like "by and large", or "granted numerous exceptions". At the same time, even the qualifications imply that in some respects and to some degree, the societies of Africa do have features and problems in common and that the commonness is sufficient to warrant discussing them as a group.

In the first place, all but two* of the 48 Sub-Saharan states are still coping with the repercussions of having been created and colonised by European powers. As is well known, they are not "natural" states of single Tribes or nations, nor were the amalgamations of tribes - or on occasion part tribes - into new entities like Nigeria

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*The two are Ethiopia and Liberia. The one is of course the successor to an indigenous empire and has still to exert armed force against some of its component peoples. The latter is the outcome of another form of colonisation, but has exhibited familiar repercussions.

or Northern Rhodesia the outcomes of gradual assimilations. On the contrary, they were in the main suddenly imposed by military force, often grouping together peoples who had historically been on terms of enmity with each other and simultaneously splitting tribes and classes. Since the welding influences of the colonial powers were, in historical perspective, not long lasting, the fissiporous tendencies within most of the states remained powerful. Nonetheless, the marvel is that all these states have so far held together, because the centripetal forces have proved more powerful. Maintaining such integrity, however, has required discarding the political institutions bequeathed by the withdrawing colonialists. Elective, representative pluralist democracy has proven inadequate in all but two or three of the states. One party states, virtual dictatorships, military regimes, political coups and civil wars characterise the continent, and may indeed be a necessary price for holding the states together. Whether the states, arbitrarily formed as they were, should be held together is an issue beyond discussion here.

Another name for the phenomenon of inner disunity is the weakness of national identity. As a colleague remarked, "It is easy for us to think of ourselves as kinsmen and tribesmen. But what does it mean to be an A-to-Zian? This is something difficult". This is a crisis of culture and is common to most African states. It is relevant to this paper, because even the colonialists saw that a state-wide system of schools could be used to educate for a consciousness and emotion of nationhood and nationalism. Their practice of posting teachers around the regions was aimed precisely

at broadening consciousness and loyalties, as indeed was the establishment of 'national' boarding schools.

It was also aimed at necessitating the use of the colonialists' language from a very early stage of schooling. For one consequence of the arbitrary corralling of tribes and peoples was that the entities formed were mostly polyglot, often to an extreme degree. Not unnaturally, the colonising powers imposed their own language as the official medium and with that their own styles of thinking and expression. Therefore, few African states have a lingua Franca that is indigenous. And the very force which kept their constituent peoples apart before the Europeans came, is still powerful in inhibiting them from adopting and promoting an indigenous medium now, despite the common roots of a great many of their languages. So the school remains an institution which facilitates a wider sense of national identity and simultaneously loosens the roots and bonds of indigenous culture.

A brief qualification is necessary here. Had the European colonial government worked with the missionaries to install universal primary education, it is possible that the homogenisation of the peoples might have progressed further, so that the post-independence strains might have been weaker. As is well known, however, the school systems of Africa were ill developed under the colonial powers and accommodated only minorities of their peoples. The homogenising process then touched only a few people and had the effect of forming them into small pools with a certain amount of privilege with the

colonialists and a certain degree of estrangement from their own cultures.

The fact that the colonisers themselves were relatively few and in the pursuit of their own ends continuously affected only minorities of the colonised, engendered wider spectrums and possibly more numerous divisions among the colonised. The ranges between the utterly westernised or "black European" and the uncontacted hunter or subsistence cultivator emerged. The differences were not simply cultural, but entailed economic gulfs, differential access to the state's powers and resources and experiences of impersonal bureaucratic government contrasting with the more ascriptive tribal processes of regulation. There emerged also the stresses of responsibilities to the older networks of kin and tribe conflicting with the newer ones to impersonal employers, institutions and regulations. The school of course had a prominent role in fostering the new outlook, for in the early days many of the teachers and until recently most of the teacher trainers came from the colonising societies and conscously, even righteously, inducted their students into their own, more "modern" values.

Also common to the states of Africa is the drive for western forms of development or modernisation. Whether particular governments have chosen more capitalistic or more socialistic approaches, and whatever the consistency of effort, the pursuit of higher standards of living, greater degrees of social mobility and higher levels of social security is universal. The relative success of these

efforts is reflected in the adequate rates of economic growth achieved by just over half the 48 states, at least until 1977-78, and in the high rates of population growth occasioned by marked declines in infant and child mortality. The results of success of course occasion their own crises. For instance, had infant mortality not declined, many more states would have been closer to universal primary education than they are. (See Tables 1 and 2)

At the same time, the very straining for success and mobility has often entailed costs in administrative efficiency and probity. Here, indeed, it is unsafe to talk of Africa as a homogeneous group, for the range of experience is wide. On the whole, however, it can be said that administrative and managerial systems tend to fall short of even reasonable expectations and in consequence tend to generate private effort to get round them. Privilege and inequity are the consequences, damaging to the moral fabric of a society.

The very form of their genesis, then, their current compositions, their aspirations, public and private, their energy in seeking them - with the private frequently at odds with the public - combine to put most African states in a situation of endemic and continuous crisis. The current world economic strains are only a grave exacerbation of something long-standing. As will be argued, education is an element in this complex of crisis, both contributing to and being damaged by it. The crisis in education is of a piece with general social crisis. As in politics and economics, it is generated by the past, sharpened by aspirations for the present and

future, and complicated by traffic with the wider world.

The drive for modernisation has almost everywhere been accompanied by a drive to get more and more children into school. Two reciprocally reinforcing reasons impelled this. One was the official and universal view that modernisation without a properly educated workforce was impossible. The second, possibly more powerful, was the universal practice of measuring fitness for modern jobs, i.e. for social, economic and political mobility, by attainments in school. The first reason created the official legitimation for expenditures on schools, teachers, universities and their accompanying paraphernalia, - for "proper education" meant the school, nothing else. King Sobhuza of Swaziland certainly wished to build on his people's traditions, but he had few followers; and James Kenyatta of Kenya did not use his anthropological training to develop traditional bases, but promoted schools instead. The second excited public demand for schooling and simultaneously paved the way for public devaluation of the older processes of education.[1] What the colonialists had introduced in niggardly and skimping ration, the independent governments turned into an enthusiastic and hasty tide. Whatever the effects on traditional culture and education, the drive for modernisation and mobility

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1. The repercussions of these two forces are traced in 8 anglophone states of east and west Africa in JASPA 1980 and 1982. Studies of francophone societies can be found in JASPA.

demanded and was almost everywhere accorded the spread of western schooling. Table 3 illustrates the speed at which scholastic education took hold in the two to three decades immediately after Africans gained controlling influence in their governments. Table 4 provides the evidence of the priority given schools and universities in terms of national resources. In many states, the allocations for scholastic education are the largest single item in national budgets.

In contrast, but logically enough, the allocations for traditional education are everywhere nil. For traditional education almost by definition could not contribute to modernisation, so as to justify official investment. And since it was non-competitive and aimed at preparing young people for particular occupational slots and not for a range of possible careers, it could not serve as a channel of economic and social mobility. So it did not excite public interest. Instead, it has grown steadily weaker, as the confidence of the older generations in their own values and skills has been sapped by the wonders of modernisation and perhaps by the amused, though often disguised, contempt of the modernised.

The weakening might not matter, if the schools and their superstructures had proved able to provide a comprehensive substitute for the older forms. In the event, they have failed, both quantitatively and qualitatively. On the one hand, they have not been provided for everyone. While a dozen or so states have indeed achieved virtually universal primary education, the majority of

African states have not. Table 5 sets out the latest figures on enrolment ratios in most of the states of Sub-Saharan Africa. Even if they are biased towards optimism, they show nevertheless that large deficits still remain. They also show that in all but one of the African states the majority of young people cannot expect to enter secondary school or even forms of post-primary occupational training. For the most part then African young people can rely at most on 6 to 7 years of primary school and thereafter, at the age of between 13 and 16 years, have to fall back on traditional forms of education. By that time, however, their outlooks have changed and they eye traditional forms of life and livelihood with some alienation and reluctance. Reciprocally, the traditional educators no longer feel themselves wholly equipped to handle the 'new' young. It is important to keep in mind too that social and economic mobility is as much an aspiration of families for their children, as it is of the young themselves. Hence, the adjustment from a 'modern' education back to a 'traditional' mode can be reluctant and slow (see for example JASPA 1980).

Compounding the problem are the content and quality of what the primary school offers. All over Africa there have been attempts to make schooling relevant to agrarian and non-industrial societies. They are not recent: some can be traced back to the 19th century. None has so far shown signs of convincing, widespread and sustained success. The failure to make the primary school answer to the 'needs' of its pupils or of the country, as distinct from their and

and their families' 'wants', is of course one element in the alienation from traditional life. Another is the failure to achieve a generally high quality in learning whatever actually is taught. Granted all the exceptions of outstanding schools and outstanding pupils from mediocre schools, it seems to be true of Africa generally that the achievements of primary school pupils is much lower than those expected from pupils in industrialised states. As Heyneman (1983) argues much of this disappointment can be ascribed to meagre unit costs actually invested in pupils (Table 6).

Here of course is an ironic obstacle. Most African states devote a large proportion of their budgets to schools, yet because of the meagreness of the budgets themselves, the actual resources reaching the individual student are insufficient to accomplish the objectives of schooling. And because of the emphasis accorded secondary and tertiary institutions, the resources reaching the average primary school child can be infinitesimal. There is indeed a high priority for education, but the general constraints of poverty gravely handicap their pursuit. The handicaps are not merely physical in the sense of deplorable premises, unusable furniture, absences of texts and learning aids. They are also moral, for there is scarcely a state in Africa where the school-teachers do not bemoan their niggardly emoluments and arduous conditions of service. That they are often justified, despite actually absorbing 70 per cent and more of the educational budget in their salaries, is a reinforcing indicator of poverty. Their low morale and plaintive alienation

often reduce their teaching to a subordinate priority in terms of both time devoted and quality.

There is of course the further issue of the moral example to their pupils. That the teachers might be better off than many is neither here nor there. The relevant fact is that they are worse off than some and sometimes only equal to others to whom they feel they should be superior. Such an expression of orientation and value in life cannot but be part of the submerged but powerful curriculum, which shapes the aspirations and outlook of the young.

The drift of the preceding pages has insinuated that virtually all Africa aspires to 'modern' employment with its high and regular salaries and enviable conditions of service; and that, as the school is used as virtually the sole conduit to such employment, the only real educational value is "getting ahead". That is, of course, an overdrawn statement. True, 'modern' employment is indeed a goal of official development plans. An instructive example is the Tanzanian Perspective Development Plan of 1981 which proposes to strive for 30 per cent of the workforce to have secure salaried employment by 2000 A.D. That such an expression should come from a government long dedicated to 'self-reliance' and rural and agricultural development is an index of the attraction of 'modern' conditions. It is also the Tanzanian government which has striven most strictly to keep the expansion of secondary and tertiary education in line with the growth of 'modern' employment and so underlined the connection between schools and jobs, which is made

less explicitly and officially in other societies, but no less powerfully.

Nevertheless, two qualifications are worth entering. All over Africa there remain pockets, sometimes substantial, of people who have no use for the school. The nomads of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Nigeria are one sort (King 1972, JASPA 1981, Opakas 1984). They have no yearning for "modernisation" or the "modern sector" and hence see no purpose in the "modern sector's" schools. The mining-cum-herding families of Botswana and Lesotho can use the modern sector of South Africa to increase their wealth and herds, without any help from the school and so are not pressingly concerned to send their boys to school (JASPA 1979, Allison 1983). Their girls, however, are another matter and will be discussed in a moment. Some peoples in Northern Nigeria, Northern Ghana and elsewhere in the Sahel reject the school on two grounds. They are not interested in the modern sector for one thing and, for another, perhaps more important, are suspicious of the insidious western-cum-Christian values propagated by the school. Here, indeed, schooling and modernisation remain linked in perception. And it is one of the failures of educators all over Africa that their preoccupation with the conventional school has prevented them from developing an education which would supplement and improve the traditional education of the peoples concerned, but which was not necessarily scholastic, qualifying, selective nor associated with conventional modernisation.

The second qualification is the acknowledgement that many people value schooling for the skills, knowledge and vision it helps to develop, whether or not it also leads to a modern job. The very families who are careless about schooling their boys in Botswana and Lesotho, nevertheless send their girls along. Nowhere else in Africa - except at times in Swaziland, a society also affected by the South African mines - do girls outnumber boys in primary and secondary schools, and even in the university (JASPA 1979, Allison 1983). While it is true that many girls do secure modern jobs, it is also true that many remain as full-time housewives and farmers and also see that their daughters get a schooling. Less dramatically Boakye and his colleagues showed that in southern Ghana many children boys and girls, go to school, because their parents value literacy, numeracy, discipline, politeness, some command of English and wider knowledge of the world. They were at the same time well, even painfully, aware that their hopes of modern jobs were virtually nil (Boakye and Oxenham, 1982). Delinking schooling and jobs had not led to a devaluation of the school, still less to its abandonment.

That said, it remains true, as the statistics of expansion have demonstrated, that most African governments and people have opted for the school as the major vehicle of education. It seems also to be true that, at least in respect of post-primary schooling, the major motor of demand is the intent to qualify for modern jobs. In official terms, this is the formation of low, middle and high level skilled manpower. In private terms, it is the ambition for

mobility and personal betterment, economic, social and possibly political. That the private aspirations may outweigh the official in the final patterns of learning and allocations of resources is reflected in the balances between general secondary education and technical vocational secondary education. The passages in development plans devoted to manpower development sound hollow against not simply the statistics, but even more against the apparent trend. Twenty years ago vocational and technical educated accounted for one-seventh of secondary enrolments. In 1981, they accounted for just over a twentieth (Table 7).

Is general secondary education really the best way of preparing those minorities who can get it to be the kind of manpower needed for social, political and economic development? Or is it more simply the case that governments and other 'modern' employers prefer generally educated personnel to mould to their own purposes? Philip Foster long ago (1965) explained Ghana's answer to the question in what he called the 'vocational school fallacy'. His thesis sounded plausible for much of Africa then, and sounds just as plausible now. The sad drawback is that, restricted as they are, secondary school enrolments have expanded faster than have jobs with 'modern' employers: even now the modern sector of employment can accommodate a quarter of the work force in only a handful of African states. The continued and growing dominance of general secondary education possibly reflects the desperate scramble of the more successful young to qualify for the modern sector and to escape the need to

create their own modest livelihoods, as must the majority of their coevals. It is this scramble, ambition and determination for better 'modern' styles of living, for economic and social mobility - and possibly political as well - which seems to be the dominant, driving and moulding value in education in most (but not all), of Africa.

The problems that this value generates have long been articulated ad nauseam, but find re-expression in this quotation from the most recent development plan put out by the government of Kenya:

"(i) A seven, eight or even nine year basic education programme cannot produce school-leavers who possess the maturity and skills to enable them to enter modern sector employment without further training.

(ii) The attitudes of both parents and students to formal education as a route to modern sector employment need to be changed since many school-leavers will be forced to look for employment in the informal sector, non-urban activities, especially small-scale agriculture and rural non-farm activities.

(iii) Scarce government resources cannot support unrestricted expansion of the education system without having an adverse effect on its quality. Moreover, these resources might be used for programmes which either directly or indirectly create jobs and training opportunities outside the formal education system.

(iv) A greater share of the cost of post-primary education, particularly university education must be borne by the privileged few who receive it. However, Government should provide bursaries for poor students so that they can profit from education ..."

(Kenya Development Plan 1983-1987, p. 149)

This pragmatic acknowledgement of the power of private value in the competition for public resources implies that other values for education are forced into secondary consideration. An example of what those valuesmight be can be taken from Africa's most populous state, Nigeria. In 1977 its military government arranged for the formulation of a National Policy on Education. The goals to be striven for were

- a free and democratic society
- a just and egalitarian society
- a united, strong and self-reliant nation
- a great and dynamic economy
- a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens

The means to move towards these goals were

- the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity
- the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society
- the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around

- the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of his society
- life-long education as the basis of educational policy
- educational activity centred on the learner for maximum self-development and fulfilment
- the development of self-learning
- the liberalisation of educational assessment and evaluation through forms of continuous assessment of the progress of the individual
- relating education to overall community needs;
- increasing adoption and improvement of modern educational techniques
- expansion of educational facilities, easing of access to them, increasing flexibility for alternating between study and employment.

(Nigerian National Policy For Education, 1977, pp 4 seq.)

Although these statements are drawn from a state on the capitalist road - with considerable state intervention - none of them would conflict with the aspirations expressed by those with more socialistic leanings. Combining self-development for the individual with contributions to the development of the community and larger society is the leit motif of special commissions on education, even

if the preoccupations of development plans seem to be more with productive manpower. The issue is the extent to which it can be achieved in educational systems which are necessarily intensely selective - as Table 5 indicates - and therefore intensely competitive and which must compel the individual to be more concerned with himself than with his neighbour or community. The divisive bias is naturally deepened in societies where not to compete and not to be selected probably means losing out on most opportunities for a life of some security and ease. To substantiate that suggestion, Table 8 offers a few comparisons from a small selection of African states. It will be seen that incomes in the rural sectors - where the bulk of most populations still make their livings - are well below the rest and that the modern sectors are still relatively restricted. To expect schools, which are given the task of sorting between the fortunate few (a literal elite) and the disappointed many, to give priority to values which contradict the criteria of sorting, is to be unrealistic.

Yet the values overtly espoused by the Nigerian government are those overtly espoused not only by virtually all the other governments of Africa, but also by most across the world. If the argument is sound and a selective school system does in truth militate against them - even if it cannot destroy them wholly - would some other institutions or set of institutions foster them more effectively?

Earlier, there was mention of traditional African forms and processes

of education. In perhaps a third of the current African states, they remain the only processes available to half and even more of the children. Elsewhere, majorities of young people have to fall back on them, when their tincture of primary schooling is done. Can these processes be utilised to mitigate the crisis in school systems? They have proved as effective as any educational institution in forming the morals and kin values of their students. But, patently, they were not designed to educate children for participation in national bureaucratic states. Their purview is necessarily local. Nor did they educate children for social mobility. On the contrary, their biases were conservative and tended to educate towards relatively fixed, circumscribed and stable roles. They certainly educated children to form skilled labour forces. Otherwise, the peoples of Africa could not have survived, let alone flourished, in frequently difficult environments and seasons. Nevertheless, the skills they fostered and the knowledge they imparted are not sufficient either to cope with the problems proliferating from the collisions and communications with the Europeans and others or to sustain the aspirations which have grown from the problems. As a most basic illustration, the traditional skills of subsistence agriculture, land and water use are not sufficient to match the population explosion sustained by Western medicine. Current values in education favour the encouragement of questioning, exploring, innovative problem-solving, self-motivated and directed teaching. Traditional values, on the

other hand, seem biased towards authoritative prescription and a conservative transmission of what is known. Innovation exists, of course, but is cautious and can need to be legitimated by considerable authority. By themselves then, the traditional forms and carriers of education would suit the new goals of education only in so far as the new overlapped and did not exceed the old.

Would it be conceivable to harness the 'traditional' with the 'modern', so that each might offset the shortcomings of the other? As far as I know, the only attempts at such a combination in Africa have concerned the Koranic schools of Moslem communities, and I confess that I have seen no systematic studies of their operations and outcomes.[1] Let us create, then, a scenario about what we might call a 'median' African state to probe the possibilities of such a teaming, especially for the purposes of retaining good 'traditional' values and promoting good 'modern' ones.

The state would have a population of around 5 million souls, with a population growth rate of 3 per cent per annum. Its per capita national product would be around US$400 per annum. An earlier economic growth rate of 6 per cent per annum between 1970 and 1980 has been halved by a combination of poor weather and international trading recession, so that it is barely keeping pace with population growth. The expansion of employment in the public and private modern sectors is at a standstill. Its gross primary school enrolment ratio would be about 65 per cent, with perhaps 80 per cent

1. Examples can be cited - Ghana's Continuation Schools, Kenya's Village Polytechnics, Sierra Leone's Bunumbu Project, Tanzania's Folk Development Colleges - where local craftspeople, traditional and modern, are brought in to help the school. However, the traditional forms and processes are apparently not adopted or adapted.

of the boys and 50 per cent of the girls getting some schooling. However, only 50 per cent of the boys and 30 per cent of the girls actually complete the primary course: the rest drop out, mostly in the first two grades. The recent economic difficulties have slowed the expansion of primary schools as well, so that the primary enrolment ratios are just staying ahead of the growth in the child population. About 15 per cent of an age group gain entry to secondary schools, 20 per cent of the boys, 10 per cent of the girls. The quality of education at both primary and secondary levels would be poor and getting poorer. The reasons are the financial difficulties and inflation, which make not just the supply of materials more than a little difficult, but devalue and delay the salaries of the teaching and civil services to the point of despairing demoralisation. Education already takes 20 per cent of the government's budget which is shrinking in real terms, so that further allocations are out of the question.

The already established degree of schooling and 'modern' employment means that the values both of social mobility and of mobility by merit, not ascription, are also widely current - although breaches of the latter are alleged and complained about. There are wide inequalities in income, well being and security, with no near prospect of their being substantially narrowed. Modern sector incomes and standards of living are handsome and modern sector employers, like the government itself, continue to insist on selecting employees primarily by criteria of degree of literacy

in the official language, attainments in mathematics and one or two other indicators of mental ability. However, some social groups remain wholly uninterested in the modern sector and somewhat hostile to the school, which they regard as a corrupting influence.

The government itself has to be assumed to be both benevolent and impartial - which possibly dents its credibility as a 'median' African state. It is actively interested in increasing the real incomes of all its people, raising the quality of life for all on an equitable and impartial basis, maintaining impartial justice, seeing that its people are equipped to ensure that the state's services and agencies serve them well and impartially and encouraging the people to take active and informed roles in influencing political policy.

How might such a government in such a situation conjoin old forms and new, so as to achieve a more universally accessible, higher quality, more effective but no more expensive education? Included in the ideas of higher quality and effectiveness would be

- the moral dimensions of relations with other people, elders, coevals, juniors, the community, the state, and larger society, the rest of the human race; the questions of rights, duties and obligations
- the cultural aspects of individual talent and community cooperation

- the political dimension: combining local loyalties with a national consciousness and a commitment to national unity; the roles expected of the ordinary citizen in her or his locality, as well as at a nation-wide level
- the economic areas of the willingness and competence to create decent livelihoods out of the resources at hand together with assistance from the local community and national state
- the extended economic area of preparedness in both attitudes and skills to take part in the growth of the 'modern sector';

as well as the more direct pedagogical concerns of cognitive development through reading, writing, reasoning and mathematics - which, as noted earlier, form the first basis of selection to the modern sector and its highest rewards, and so constitute a central value of scholastic education and the major preoccupation of teaching practice.

The enquiry can begin precisely at this point of central value. Are literacy, numeracy, memory training and elementary reasoning axiomatically the core of systematic education? Are they inescapably the basis of skilled and innovative manpower, a culturally self-enriching populace, a law-abiding and politically informed citizenry? Many ancient and contemporary examples contributing to a negative response could easily be cited, but the weight of opinion would probably lean to a positive. Granted the positive, are these skills necessarily best taught to large groups of children from the age

of 6 or 7 years? If the studies of Scribner, Cole and their colleagues (1981) among the Vai of Liberia are any indicator for the rest of Africa, the answer would seem to be a mild and qualified 'Yes'. Are they best taught in separation - if not in complete isolation - from everyday life? That question is perhaps best answered by another and more practical one: what alternative institutions would be available to the 'median' African government?

The traditional institutions seem widely to be three: the family and kin net, second, the elders of a community and the special societies for initiation and other purposes - the Poro on Liberia, the Nyau in eastern Zambia - and, third, the various craftspeople like midwives and instrument makers. So far, the first two seem to have been widely recruited only as suppliers of labour and finance to maintain the schools. Parent-Teacher Associations, though frequently encouraged and legally required, have little role in the actual education of the young. The third set, as remarked earlier, have indeed in some places been asked to assist in teaching, but only as insertions into the ordinary patterns of the school. None of the three can anywhere be termed an integral component of the scholastic system.

It might be argued that, had there been any genuine 'modernising' role for these institutions, it would long ago have been revealed and developed. Certainly, all three have been almost totally superseded as planned elements in systematic education in the countries, whence African societies drew their own patterns of modern education.

They are likely to be similarly superseded all over Africa in due course. The realism of even considering their possible utility can then be dismissed. Against such an objection stands a cardinal fact attested by the tables: in most countries of Africa for most children and young people, these institutions remain the most important in their education. They are likely to continue so for the next decade and perhaps the next two decades. The possibility of deliberately incorporating them into 'modernising' education may indeed prove chimerical, but might at least be pondered. They could mitigate the disjunctions between traditional and modern values and facilitate the emergence of more authentic, less imitative, more self-confident cultural and national identities and consciousness.

Let the median African government consider first the issue of literacy and numeracy. It might recall that in countries like Sweden and the U.S.A. (e.g. Fagerlind and Saha, 1983), much of the early spread of literacy occurred through family instruction. It might also take into account the custom of the Vai in Liberia of transmitting their own particular syllabary through instruction between friends (Scribner and Cole, 1981). From there it might devise ways of redeploying a proportion of its primary school teachers to enable the adults of households to instruct their young in the 3 Rs. Given the size of the average African family, a healthy teacher:learner ratio could be achieved through a ration of one teacher for perhaps six or seven households. An idea offered by the Cuban and Nicaraguan literacy campaigns suggests that teachers going out to learners may be more effective than having the learners

congregate about the teachers. Sessions held in houses for their occupants at suitable times might prove more successful than conventional centres.

The elementary literacy and numeracy thus acquired would need of course to be both augmented and focused on activities of interest to the persons and households involved. At this stage, instruction in the 3Rs might be more closely meshed in with traditional training for adulthood.

The majority of young Africans are still inducted into their adult roles and livelihoods by their relatives, friends or skilled people known to their families. Unlike their coevals entering the modern sector, their training attracts little attention from governments, let alone subvention. Might it not be possible for a 'median' African government to reallocate some of its resources so as to encourage these traditional processes both to become more effective in their own terms and to extend their repertoires into increasingly 'modern' versions? It should not be beyond human wit to devise patterns of inducement and subsidy which could marry the traditional transmission of skills with the acquisition of such literacy and numeracy as would give access to the knowledge to advance the skills themselves.

However earnestly I might advocate the potential of combining modern and traditional processes and institutions to achieve the overt official values of education in the countries of Africa; I

must stay aware of the values which would impede its realisation. The dominance of credentialism, the diploma disease or the paper qualification syndrome, has been named already. It would prevail in the median African country also, despite exceptions. It would mean that the median African government, or the bulk of the people running it, would have no real value for tradition. The conventional professional values and expectations of the body of teachers might well regard instruction in households and individual workshops as a devaluation of their own standing. Their well attested, though not universal and certainly not unreasonable, values for urban postings and sedentary duties would militate against duties which required not only rural stations, but peripatetic operations as well. The higher value they tend to place on motorised over pedal transport would afford a reinforcing obstruction. The public and private values accorded secondary and tertiary education would almost certainly block any reallocation of resources away from them towards more and better basic education. Finally, the loss of conifdence by the three traditional parties themselves conjoined with their own valuing of socioeconomic mobility for their children may prove stubborn to resolve. That is to say, from the apex to the grassroots there are values inimical to and often more powerful than the official values for education.

Yet, if the present impasse, engendered by hesitant economic and high population growth, is to be eased so as to permit a decent basic education to become accessible to all; some way of re-valuing

the traditional institutions and harnessing them to the modern may need to be sought.

Table 1: Growth Rates of Population, GNP and GNP per capita, 1970-1980.

Country	Population Growth Rate 1970-80.	GNP Growth Rate (Real) 1970-80.	GNP per capita Growth Rate (Real) 1970-80
(Keeping Abreast)			
Benin	2.7	3.9	1.2
Botswana	3.7	12.7	9.0
Burundi	2.2	3.7	1.5
Cameroon	2.2	5.5	3.3
Congo, People's Republic	2.9	3.4	0.5
Ethiopia	2.0	2.6	0.6
Gabon	1.2	4.4	3.2
Gambia, The	2.4	5.5	3.1
Guinea	2.9	3.3	0.4
Ivory Coast	5.1	6.6	1.5
Kenya	4.0	6.4	2.4
Malawi	2.9	5.7	2.8
Mali	2.6	4.9	2.3
Mauritius	1.4	6.4	5.0
Nigeria	2.5	5.5	3.0
Rwanda	3.4	5.1	1.7
Somalia	2.8	3.9	1.1
South Africa	2.8	3.5	0.7
Sudan	3.1	4.0	0.9
Tanzania	3.4	4.5	1.1

Table 1 (continued)

Country	Pop.Growth Rate	GNP Growth Rt.	GNP per cap.
Togo	2.5	3.4	0.9
Upper Volta	2.0	3.6	1.6
(22)			
(Slipping)			
Chad	2.0	-1.6	-3.6
Ghana	3.0	0.4	-2.6
Liberia	3.5	3.4	-0.1
Madagascar	2.5	0.9	-1.6
Mauritius	2.5	1.5	-1.0
Niger	3.3	2.5	-0.8
Senegal	2.7	2.3	-0.4
Sierra Leone	2.6	1.5	-1.1
Zaire	3.0	0.2	-2.8
Zambia	3.1	0.8	-2.3
Zimbabwe	3.2	1.7	-1.5
(11)			
(Unclear/Tentative)			
Angola	2.5	n.a.	n.a.
Cape Verde	0.9	6.4	5.5
Central African Republic	2.3	2.1	-0.2
Comoros	2.5	0.1	-2.4
Djibouti	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Equatorial Guinea	1.8	n.a.	n.a.
Guinea-Bissau	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Lesotho	2.4	11.0	8.6
Mozambique	4.1	n.a.	n.a.

Table 1 (continued)

Namibia	2.9	4.6	1.7
Reunion	1.8	1.1	-0.7
Sao Tome and Principe	1.8	1.6	0.2
Seychelles	2.7	6.4	3.7
Swaziland	3.2	6.8	3.6
Uganda	2.6	-1.5	-4.1
(15)			

Total Apparently Keeping Abreast - 27

Total Apparently Slipping - 21

Source: World Bank Atlas 1983, p.16.

Table 2. Changes in Infant Mortality, Child Death and Life Expectancy 1960-1981, in African Countries with Populations of Five Million or More.

Country	Infant Mortality % Decrease 1960-81	Child Death % Decrease 1960-81	Year	Life Expectancy % Increase 60-81
Angola	-26.9	-34.0	42	+27.2
Cameroon	-34.5	-44.4	50	+35.1
Ethiopia	-17.1	-22.5	46	n.a.
Ghana	-29.3	-38.7	54	+20.0
Guinea	-21.6	-28.0	43	n.a.
Ivory Coast	-27.7	-35.8	47	+27.0
Kenya	-38.4	-48.2	56	+36.5
Madagascar	-36.6	-47.6	48	+29.7
Malawi	-18.3	-22.4	44	+18.9
Mali	-22.1	-28.3	45	+21.6
Mozambique	-29.3	-38.8	n.a.	n.a.
Niger	-25.1	-31.1	45	+21.6
Nigeria	-27.3	-33.3	49	+25.6
Rwanda	- 6.8	- 9.3	46	+24.3
Senegal	-20.3	-26.1	44	+18.9
Sudan	-27.3	-47.5	47	+17.5
Tanzania	-33.5	-42.4	52	+23.8
Uganda	-30.9	-41.3	48	+17.0
Upper Volta	-17.4	-20.6	37	+18.9
Zaire	-26.6	-36.3	50	+25.0
Zambia	-31.1	-39.3	51	+27.5
Zimbabwe	-38.9	-52.1	55	+12.2
Least Progress	-6.8	- 9.3		+12.2
Most Progress	-38.9	-52.1		+36.5

Source: World Development Report 1983, Washington, World Bank, Table 23.

Table 3. Growth of Gross Enrolment Ratios in Africa (Sub Sahara)

a) Comparison of 1960:1980 Enrolment Ratios in Africa (Sub Sahara)

	% Enrolled of 6-11 year group			% Enrolled of 12-17 year group			% Enrolled of 18-23 year group		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1960	32.3	39.7	24.9	15.9	22.1	9.8	1.5	2.3	0.7
1980	62.7	67.9	57.6	35.8	42.1	29.6	5.6	8.0	3.2

b) Comparison of Growth Rates of Enrolments, 1965-70, 1970-81, Africa (Sub Sahara)

	First Level % of growth per annum	Second Level % of growth per annum	Third Level % of growth per annum
1965-70	5.0	10.0	9.0
1970-81	6.5	11.4	10.7

Source: UNESCO Yearbook of Statistics, 1983, Tables 2.10 and 2.2

Table 4. Current Educational Expenditures As Proportions of Current Government Expenditure in Africa, 1979 or later

Country	Year (latest available)	Current Educational Expenditure as % of Current Government Expenditure
Benin	1980	36.8
Botswana	1979	12.9
Burundi	1979	15.2
Central African Republic	1980	19.9 (minimum)
Congo, People's Republic	1981	25.8
Ethiopia	1981	13.8
Ivory Coast	1979	39.8
Kenya	1979	24.5
Liberia	1980	27.0
Malawi	1979	13.9
Mauritius	1980	15.5
Niger	1980	16.8
Nigeria	1979	32.8
Rwanda	1980	21.5
Seychelles	1980	14.0
Sierra Leone	1980	14.5
Sudan	1980	12.6
Swaziland	1981	23.0
Togo	1980	21.0
Uganda	1980	12.8
Cameroon	1979	22.9

Country	Year (latest available)	Current Educational Expenditure as % of Current Government Expenditure
Tanzania	1979	23.8
Upper Volta	1981	21.1
Zaire	1980	32.3
Zambia	1981	12.6
Zimbabwe	1979	13.0
		(26 or 48 states)

Number of states allocating 30% or more of total government current expenditure to education, 1979-1981 - 4

Number of states allocating 20-29% of total government current expenditures to education, 1979-1981 - 9

Number of states allocating 10-19% of total government current expenditure to education, 1979-1981 - 13

Source: UNESCO Yearbook of Statistics, 1983. Table 4.1.

Table 5. Recent Enrolment Ratios In Africa.
(T = Whole Age Group; M = Males; F = Females; g = gross; n = net)

Country	Year	First Level % Age-Group Enrolled			Second Level % Age-Group Enrolled			Third Level % Age-Group Enrolled		
		T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F
Benin	1981	g.65	88	42	g.18	26	10	-	-	-
Botswana	1981	n 84	77	92	n 17	13	20	-	-	-
Burundi	1981	n 18	22	14	n 1	2	1	-	-	-
Cameroon	1980	g107	117	97	n 16	20	11	g.1.8	-	-
Central Africa	1980	n 54	70	39	g 13	20	7	g 1.2	2.3	0.2
Republic Chad	1976	n 25	37	14	g 3	6	1	g 0.2	0.4	0.02
Comoros	1980	g103	120	85	g 25	33	17	-	-	-
Ethiopia	1981	g 46	60	33	g 12	16	8	g 0.5	0.9	0.1
Gambia	1981	n 49	63	35	g 14	19	8	-	-	-
Ghana	1979	g 69	77	60	g 36	44	27	g 1.0	1.8	0.3
Guinea	1980	g 33	44	22	g 16	23	9	-	-	-
Guinea-Bissau	1981	n 87	100	53	g 20	33	7	-	-	-
Ivory Coast	1979	g 76	92	60	g 17	25	9	g 2.2	3.5	0.8
Kenya	1979	g108	114	101	g 18	22	15	g 0.9	-	-
Lesotho	1979	n 67	54	81	n 12	9	16	-	-	-
Liberia	1980	g 66	82	50	g 20	29	11	-	-	-
Madagascar	1975	g 94	100	87	g 12	13	10	g 1.3	-	-
Malawi	1980	n 43	47	39	g 4	6	2	g 0.3	0.5	0.2
Mali	1979	g 27	-	-	-	-	-	g 0.9	1.6	0.2
Mauritania	1980	g 33	43	23	g 10	16	4	-	-	-
Mauritius	1981	n 89	89	89	n 51	52	49	n 0.8	1.2	0.5
Mozambique	1981	n 32	34	30	n 5	6	3	n 0.2	-	-

Country	Year	First Level % Age Group Enrolled T	M	F	Second Level % Age Group Enrolled T	M	F	Third Level % Age Group Enrolled T	M	F
Niger	1978	g 23	29	17	g 3	5	2	g 0.2	0.4	0.1
Nigeria	1979	g 98	-	-	g 16	-	-	g 1.8	-	-
Rwanda	1981	n 68	70	65	n 2	2	1	-	-	-
Senegal	1981	n 39	47	31	g 12	16	8	-	-	-
Sierra Leone	1979	g 39	-	-	g 12	-	-	-	-	-
Somalia	1980	n 22	28	16	n 6	9	4	-	-	-
Sudan	1981	g 52	61	43	g 18	20	15	g 2.0	-	-
Swaziland	1981	n 86	84	88	g 40	41	40	g 4.8	5.2	4.4
Tanzania	1981	n 72	73	72	g 3	4	2	-	-	(1980)
Togo	1981	n 74	89	59	g 31	46	16	g 1.9	3.3	0.5
Uganda	1981	g 54	62	46	g 5	7	3	-	-	-
Upper Volta	1981	n 17	21	12	g 3	4	2	-	-	-
Zaire	1978	g 90	104	75	g 23	33	13	g 1.2	-	-
Zambia	1980	g 96	102	90	g 16	21	11	-	-	-
Zimbabwe	1981	g115	118	113	g 15	18	13	g 0.4	-	-
					(37 of 48 states)					

	No. of States
Primary Total Gross Enrolment Ratios 90% +	12
Primary Total Gross Enrolment Ratios 75% - 89%	3
Primary Total Gross Enrolment Ratios 50% - 74%	9
Primary Total Gross Enrolment Ratios 33% - 49%	7
Primary Total Gross Enrolment Ratios 20% - 32%	5
Primary Total Gross Enrolment Ratios 19% or less	1

Source: UNESCO Yearbook of Statistics 1983 Table 3.

Table 6. Public Edpenditures On Education in Africa.

US$ per inhabitant spent on education

	Africa	U.S.A.
1965	5.00 $	187.00 $
1980	33.00	815.00

Source: UNESCO Yearbook of Statistics 1983, Table 2.12

Table 7. Percentage Distribution of Types of Secondary Education in Africa.

	General Secondary	Vocational/ Technical Secondary	Teacher Training	
	%	%	%	
1965	77.6	14.2	8.2	100
1981	88.1	5.6	6.3	100

Source: UNESCO Yearbook of Statistics 1983, Table 2.9

Table 8: Comparisons Of Incomes In Some African States.

a. The Gambia.

	Dalasi	Ratio
GNP per capita 1978	400.00	100
Rural per capita income 1977	280.00	70
Minimum wage		
Port Labourer 1978	1981.00	495
University Graduate starting civil service salary 1980	4428.00	1107

b. Ghana

	Cedis	Ratio
GNP per capita 1973	628	100
Average agricultural wage 1973	501	79.8
Average non-agricultural wage 1973	961	153
University graduate starting civil service salary 1974	2244	357

c. Kenya

	Shillings	Ratio
GNP per capita 1976	1600	100
Small farmer 5-person household per capita income 1976	330	20.6
Urban 5-person household on urban minimum wage p.c. income 1976	581	36.3
University graduate starting civil service salary	23,400	1,462.5

d. Liberia

	Dollars	Ratio
GNP per capita 1978	460.00	100
Rural income per capita 1978	194.00	42.2
Average Primary School teacher	1620.00	352
University graduate starting civil service salary	5391.00	1172

e) Sierra Leone	Average Incomes Leones p.a.	Ratio
Unskilled	425	100
Rural non-agricultural	522	123
Farmers	640	150
Clerical	1870	440
Professional, managerial	6500	1529
Entrepreneurs	9800	2306
University graduate civil service starting salary	2154	507

f) Somalia	Shillings	Ratio
GNP per capita 1978	870	100
Average industrial wage	7272	836
University Graduate civil service starting salary	7200	827

g) Tanzania	Shillings	Ratio
GNP per capita 1974	1200	100
Average Farm Family Income 1973-75	3917	326
Average Wage Family Income 1973-75	7160	597
University Graduate civil service starting salary	17040	1420

h) Zambia	Kwacha	Ratio
GNP per capita 1976	301	100
Rural per capita income 1976	146.56	48.7
Urban low cost housing per capita income 1976	264.00	87.7
Urban high cost housing per capita income 1976	1,440.00	478.00
University Graduate civil service starting salary	2604.00	1,197.00

Source: JASPA 1982, Table 1 pp. 9-12.