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EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING AFRICA: AN ASSESSMENT OF POST-INDEPENDENCE ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROBLEMS

by

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INTRODUCTION

In any analysis of the experience with modern education on the African continent, the year of independence for a given country is historically a critical watershed between two periods: between an era of a pre-Independence slow-moving, sometimes reluctant process of formal schooling guided and controlled by the colonial administration and, on the other hand, a highly fuelled, highly charged post-Independence process of education controlled, guided and often influenced if not actually driven by the national political machine.

The formal education systems in most African countries today have been in existence for more than two decades, a period long enough to warrant celebration of their maturity or their "coming of age", as has already happened in some countries; but, more important, the period is long enough to allow for a dispassionate introspection and self-criticism in an attempt to assess the achievements registered so far, the problems created in the process, and the possibilities open for the future.

Because of the loud and visible difference there was supposed to be shown between the pre-existing colonial situation and the new situation of

independence and nationhood, the system of education devised and fashioned in the 1960s and 1970s was consciously designed to be a vehicle in:

(i) creating and stamping an international image for the newly independent state through both construction of highly prestigeous institutional structures and expanded pupil and student enrolment in existing educational institutions;

(ii) reducing and eventually eradicating mass illiteracy;

(iii) producing well-educated and functional middle and high-level manpower to man the various sectors of the national economy; and

(iv) creating within the community a literate, innovative, productive and self-reliant cadre who would have gained and mastered skills of producing and boosting the national wealth in the years and decades after completion of their school education.

Have these four major goals in the post-Independence educational undertaking been achieved? to what extent? To some varying extents there have been achievements in connection with these original nationalist ambitions. They deserve a mention here before any entry into a more engaging, perhaps more provoking discussion of problems that have arisen.

Accordingly, this paper attempts three tasks, namely (a) to give an overview of the acclaimed achievements or successes in the education sector of the post-Independence period, (b) to highlight the major and critical problems faced today, and (c) to propose some possible alternatives or 'reforms' for the future.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Primary School Expansion

Perhaps the most conspicuous response for most African countries to the new stage of national independence was the sensitized need and action to send children to school in numbers thus far not permitted or engineered. While professionalism at that stage was at the base of the response and confidence in the undertaking, the actual drive towards the new need was more politically motivated than otherwise, ochestrated as it was by the desire to push the new state to the newly defined achelons of national importance and pride beyond the hitherto stigmatized associations with mass illiteracy and ignorance.

For most countries, this area of primary (elementary) education has since been given unprecedented emphasis and has occupied a special place in the concerns of the countries's development plans. A clear example is provided by Tanzania, whose policy developments and practices in the education sector have not only rhymed with the scheduled plan periods but have also had a pronounced score on primary education.

Following is a summary of Tanzania's plan periods:

1961/62 - 1963/64: First Post-Independence Development Plan.

- Primary education enrolment was expanded, from 486,470 places (1961) to 633,678 places in 1964.

- Expansion of secondary education was given special emphasis in view of posts left vacant by colonial officers and also of the need to produce many workers for other areas and fields.

1964/65 - 1968/69: First Five-Year Development Plan.

- The primary education cycle was shortened from eight to seven years while the primary school curriculum was revised by introducing new content such as modern mathematics and Afro-centric orientations.

- "General entrance examinations" at the end of primary education were replaced by "primary school leaving examinations" thereby de-emphasizing preparation for secondary education as the only route of advancement or sign of achievement.

- Secondary education was further expanded by extending existing schools and opening new ones, while plans for expanding technical education were underway and diversification of higher education was initiated.

- Education for self-reliance as a new philosophical ideal was from 1967 a keynote in the educational curriculum as a further ramification of the socio-economic concept of and policy of socialism and Self-reliance.

1969/70 - 1973/74: Second Five-Year Development Plan.

- Further consolidation of efforts initiated in the previous plan period, especially in implementing Education for Self-reliance (ESR).

- Concern with equity in provision of primary education and consequent efforts to provide primary education to all primary school-age children. While 1989 had been set by the government as the target date for the realization of universal primary education (UPE), the Party, TANU, decided in 1974 to bring the target date forward to 1977.

- At secondary school level, stress was put more on internal adjustments within the school system than on quantitative expansion in terms of enrolment. Adjustments included selection of pupils more for science-based streams than for arts-based ones; diversification and vocationalization of secondary education into four principal biases - agriculture, commerce, domestic science/home economics and technical subjects; as well as use of the quota system in allocating secondary school places on the basis of pupils' regional/district origins as a strategy to ensure equity.

1976/77 - 1980/81: Third Five-Year Development Plan.

- Massive efforts to realize UPE by 1977. This entailed use of unconventional methods to reach the target, e.g. village-based teacher training by using the distance teaching approach (DTA), construction and/or conversion of buildings into classrooms, often without due regard to standard specifications.

- Despite massive enrolment (about 98%) at primary education level, secondary education emphasized more vocationalization and diversification than expansion, with a resultant bottleneck.

- A bottleneck was to be observed further in advancement to technical education, with only 316 post-primary technical centres by 1981 (supposed to enrol a total of 50,560 pupils) against a total primary school output of more than 3.5 million. This number of post-primary technical centres had increased from a mere 293 opened in the previous five-year plan period.

- The commitment to provide mass adult education was upheld through follow-up radio literacy programmes, establishment of post-literacy projects such as folk development colleges (FDCs), village libraries and rural newspapers. The Institute of Adult Education, established in 1975, expanded the realm of adult education activities by running diploma courses in adult education and evening courses and organizing correspondence courses and radio classes.

1981-2000: Twenty-Year Perspective Plan.

The second long-term plan (1981 - 2000) was approved in June 1980 by the Party and Government. The plan set the goals for the next twenty years, including:

(i) increasing the gross national product (GNP) by 300% from shs. 42,000,000,000/= to shs.136,000,000,000/=.

(ii) continuing to change the structure of the economy to the better.

(iii) increasing the per capita income from shs.2,423/= per annum to shs.3,845/= p.a.

(iv) raising the average life expectancy from 47 years to 55 years.

(v) attaining self-sufficiency in manpower

(vi) furthering the policy of socialism and self-reliance.

In terms of education, the long-term plan points to greater attention to pre-school education activities; greater emphasis on vocational training,technology and education for self-employment; more formalized and prductive adult education activities of "open university" type; an increase in the number of universities to at least four by the year 2 000, and these reflecting the development needs of the country (agriculture, technology, mining and the professions). A report of the Presidential Commission on Education set up in 1981 has been discussed at various levels and the Commission's recommendations (1984) reflect the emphasis placed in the second long-tern plan 1981 - 2000.

Although developments can be recorded at all levels of education - primary, secondary and higher (tertiary and university) - and although other sectors have been given attention, particularly in the field of adult education and women's education, the trend of primary education expansion has been specially spectacular.

Expansion of primary education is evidenced both in terms of construction of new schools and/or extension of existing ones and in terms of accelerated pupil enrolment, from a mere 486,470 children at Indpendence in 1961 to 3,530, 622 in 1981, 3,561,410 in 1983 and more than 7.3 million in 1984. Table 1 documents the trend of pupil enrolment for Stds (grades) I and VII in Tanzania.

A similar, or perhaps more dramatic, rise in primary school expansion is to be seen several other developing countries such as Kenya (see Table 2) and others in Africa south of the Sahara,particularly Madagascar, Zambia, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Lesotho, Mauritius, Swaziland and Togo (see Table 3).

In quantitative terms, this has no doubt been a tremendous and unique achievement which can only be explained by the political push given by the ruling parties in conjuction with the administrative will and tenor on the part of the governments in the respective countries. For instance, the education sector in Tanzania has over the years enjoyed about 15 percent of the total national budget, while in Kenya it has been even more, as much as 20 percent. This proves the evident priority countries in the African region have consciously given to education since their years of independence, in the

Table 1. primary School Enrolment trend in Tanzania, 1961 - 1984.

LEVEL	1961	1964	1969	1974	1976	1981	1984
Standard 1	121,386	140,340	157,986	247,627	506,497	576,347	565,929
Standard 7	11,732 (Std 8)	20,348 (Std 8)	60,518	120,366	155,950	357,816	653,509
Total Primary	486,470	633,678	676,109	1,228,886	1,874,357	3,530,622	7,320,940+

Source: Statistics Section, Ministry of Education, Dar es Salaam.

Table 2. Primary School Enrolment trend in Kenya 1973 - 1977

LEVELS	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
Standard 1	379,370	956,844	668,166	571,872	603,259
Standard 7	194,875	214,272	227,439	243,214	237,140

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Nairobi.

Table 3: Primary School Enrolment rates reached among 35 African Countries* by 1977

Enrolment Ratio	Countries	% of Region's primary school age population
Below 40%	Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sierra Leone, Upper Volta	22.6
40 - 49%	Senegal, Somalia, Sudan	7.8
50 - 59%	Benin, Liberia, Malawi, Uganda	8.6
60 - 69%	Rwanda	1.4
70 - 79%	Central African Repbulic, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria Tanzania	35.9
80-89%	Botswana, Zaire	8.6
90 - 99%	Kenya, Madagascar, Zambia	10.5
100% and above	Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Lesotho, Mauritius, Swaziland, Togo	4.6
		100%

*These represent the thirty-five African states that attended the original conference and drew up the "Addis Ababa Plan."

Source: Birger Fredriksen "Progress Towards Regional Targets for Universal Primary Education: A Statistical Review." International Journal of Educational Development. Vol.1, No.1, 1981

belief that this strategy would have a frontal effect of wiping out mass illiteracy (estimated at 85 or more percent at Independence), realizing self-sufficiency in indigenous trained and skilled manpower, and at the same time obliterating intra-country regional inequalities and disparties thereby promoting equity and balanced community development at a national level.

These trends in primary education expansion are likely to continue for some time. This is particularly true as expansion, through an accelerated Universal Primary Education (UPE) enrolment programme, seems to be a consciously ambitious plan African governments have set for themselves and would want to achieve at all costs, given the initial ignition of the idea back in 1961 at the Conference of African Ministers of Education in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The expansion trend is clearly reflected in Tanzania's plan for the years 1979 - 1990 (see Table 4).

Adult Education

Apart from a visibly evident quantitative achievement in school pupil enrolment for primary education, there have also been efforts at enrolling and educating adults. In many African countries, over the last two decades, adult education has overcome its former marginality and invisibility in the overall education system. Basic literacy work, complemented with functional (work-oriented) adult education, has gained ground and status through efforts in increasing the number and range of adult education programmes, initiation and further development of professional preparation of adult trainers and organizers at various levels including university level as well as through increased allocation of funds to adult education from both government and non-governmental bodies.

Table 4: Tanzania's projected Std. I Enrolment 1979-1990

YEAR	PROJECTED ENROLMENT	(ACTUAL ENROLMENT)
1979	597,800	(540,558)
1980	568,900	(486,865)
1981	585,200	(498,023)
1982	602,000	(497,481)
1983	619,300	(542,557)
1984	637,100	(565,929)
1985	655,400	
1986	674,200	
1987	693,600	
1988	713,600	
1989	724,000	
1990	755,100	

Source: 1978 Population Census, Projected estimate figures based on Karup-King Multipliers used to extract the 7 year population from the 5 - 9 year age group assuming a 2.9% growth rate.

The changing shift in adult education is accounted for by several factors including a heightened awareness, in some cases conviction, about the need for and the fundamental importance of adult education as not only a means but also as part of national and community development, thanks to the spread and influence of the writings and crusades of professionals like Philip Coombs (1968; 1973), Paulo Freire (1972) and Ross Kidd (1980). Official recognition of the importance of adult education not only as a human right but also as a "cheaper, shorter-term" investment in human resources for wider community development has spurred a number of African countries onto various educational programmes and projects for the adult population.

Literacy programmes in Ethiopia, whose rural population was almost totally illiterate as late as the 1970s, are reported to have made a big difference today (Gumbel, Nystrom & Samuelsson, n.d). Similar achievements have been reported of Mozambique, Angola and Botswana (Johnston, n.d; Gorham, 1981; Agrell, Fagerlind & Gustafsson, n.d.) in Southern Africa and Guinea-Bissau (Carr-Hill & Rosengart, 1982) in Western Africa. In Tanzania, the high-spirited "functional literacy" drive has seen enrolment of adult learners jump from 908,351 in 1971 to 1.5 million in 1972, to 2.9 million in 1973 to 3.3 million in 1974 to 5.1 million in 1975, and the mass illiteracy rate fall from an astronomical 90 percent in the early 1960s down to 39 percent in 1975, to 27 percent in 1977, 21 percent in 1981 and 15 percent in 1983.

These achievements in adult education will for the future require qualitative back-ups for, most of what is registered and publicized is formal

enrolment at adult education centres, which is not necessarily the same as the act of attending classes seriously and regularly (see, for instance, Ishumi, 1984a:104-107; Kirega, 1986). Such qualitative back-ups would entail procurement and distribution of relevant teaching-learning materials and instructional equipment, professional training and motivation of adult teachers and tutors, and improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the community in general so as to remove the many distractions that affect the adult's choice between attending and not attending.

Higher Education

Although in terms of mass involvement not as much as the primary education sector, higher education has benefited from both internal and external resource inputs spread over the last two decades. It has witnessed the establishment and diversification of university institutions, leading to a multi-university development in a single state such as in Nigeria, Ghana and lately Ethiopia and Kenya and diversification of campuses or programmes for single universities such as in Zambia, Tanzania and Swaziland. These developments are contingent upon a very first Independence-charged drive for the new states to erect elegant university institutions as national status symbols of a "victorious" post-colonial situation.

While for most of the 1970s internal resource inputs concentrated on primary and adult education, much of the external aid (bilateral as well as multilateral) was geared towards higher education largely in terms of technical assistance - teachers, advisers, study fellowships and training awards, accounting for a 13 percent

growth between 1970 and 1975 (World Bank, 1980:74). It is partly because of this that the need for technical assistance in the developing countries after 1975 has somewhat declined for the increase in the number of students and trainees must have at least partially offset the number of advisers and teachers for tertiary (including university) education institutions. Table 5 and 6 indicate this positive post-Independence development in Africa.

Notwithstanding the detected shortcomings in terms of effective manpower allocation, deployment and utilization of, and productivity by, those many individuals who have reached higher education levels (see, for instance, Maliyamkono, Ishumi & Wells, 1982: 206-217; Ishumi, 1982:14-35), the data presented in the two tables (5 and 6) does give an indication of some success in the area of higher education for a number of African countries. The underlying assumption is that for those who have been allocated appropriate jobs commensurate to their professional training and who have therefore not been frustrated to the point of quitting their places of work, and for those who inspite of possible job-labour mismatches have stayed in their country to work in various capacities, there has been a "trickle-down" affect of their occupational performance and probably also an impact of their work habits and professional ethics for the upcoming generations to adopt.

On the strength of this assumption, this area of higher education can be described, for most African countries, as an achievement of the last two to two and a half decades of African independence.

Table 5: OECD/DAC Countries' Official Aid to Education in Developing Countries in Form of Technical Assistance, 1969 and 1975

TYPES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	NUMBER OF PERSONS	
	1969	1975
Teachers	59,400	35,700
Technical Advisers and Experts	6,700	2,400
Students assisted	39,700	43,700
Trainees assisted	33,300	34,600

Source: H.M. Philips,Educational Cooperation between Developed and Developing Countries. New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 1977.

NB: OECD = Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

DAC = Development Assistance Committee, comprising 17 member countries of the OECD in addition to the Commission of European Communities.

Table 6: Universities and Other Tertiary Training Institutions in Eastern and Southern African Countries and Their Current Total Enrolment (1984/85)

COUNTRY	UNIVERSITIES		OTHER TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS		TOTAL NO. OF INSTI-TUTIONS	TOTAL ENROLMENT
	No.	Enrolment	No.	Enrolment		
1. Botswana Popn:1,042,000	1	1,206	9	3,897	10	5,103
2. Ethiopia Popn:35,420,000	2	13,446	10	5,964	12	19,410
3. Kenya Popn:19,761,000	3 (excl. 2 pri-vate unive-sities)	6,300	12	5,472	15	11,772
4. Lesotho Popn:1,481,000	1	1,128	4	1,608	5	2,736
5. Malawi Popn:6,788,000	1	1,964	5	1,809	6	3,773
6. Mauritius Popn:1,031,000	1	500	1	N.a.	2	500+

7. Mozambique Popn:13,693,000	1	1,233	1	50	2	1,283
8. Somalia Popn: 5,423,000	1	3,101	3	1,080	4	4,181
9. Sudan Popn: 20,945,000	6	13,799 +	5	807	10	14,606 +
10. Swaziland Popn:630,000	1	1,264	9	1,796	10	3,060
11. Tanzania Popn:21,710,000	2	3,479	40	13,676	42	17,155
12. Uganda Popn:15,150,000	1	5,000	6	1,879	7	6,879
13. Zambia Popn:6,445,000 (7,670,000)	1	3,651	23	3,381	24	7,032
14. Zimbabwe Popn:8,461,000	1	4,130	18	3,743	19	7,873

Source: Eastern and Southern African Universities Research Programme (ESAURP), Dar es Salaam.

NB: (1) University and tertiary institution data for Botswana, Ethiopia, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe up-dated to 1984/85 academic year. For the rest of the countries data is based on ESAURP's 1983 Inventory.

(2) Institutonal figures for Tanzania have been adjusted to include 2 tertiary institutions in Zanzibar and their estimated student enrolment.

(3) N.A. = Figure not available.

(4) National population for the countries in accordance with the World Population Wall Chart (UNFPA, 1984, based on 1982 UN figures). The higher figure for Zambia is as given in Africa Now, No.15, July 1982, p.29.

PROBLEMATICS

Along with the successes and achievements outlined above, there have been problems and failures as well. Three key problematics have been identified, namely; (1) The dilemma of inflated primary school enrolment and the associated issue of internal inefficieny; (2) the primary school leaver problem, or, output wastage in the system; and (3) the problem with the medium of instruction and the language policy as a factor in cognitive achievement and task performance levels.

(1) Primary School Expansion

The problematic posed by primary school expansion consists of two twin problems namely (a) the mere but overwhelming explosion of enrolment numbers and (b) a partially parallel, partially resultant situation of internal inefficiency within the system. With regard to the numerical explosion, the unexpected nature of a dramatic expansion of enrolment for some African countries such as Nigeria and Tanzania is intimately connected with the planning and timing of the universalization of primary education. (Kenya and Zambia provide two other examples of numerical explosion although UPE has not been declared officially). While the 1961 Addis Ababa Conference of African Ministers of Education had adopted 1980 as the target year for operationalization of universal primary education (UPE), the timing for these countries was drawn forward - by four years to 1976 in the case of Nigeria, and by three years to 1977 in the case of Tanzania. And this was notwithstanding the progressively diminishing prospects of financial, material and human resources from the economy, for which reason educational planners in Tanzania had expressed misgivings even about the 1980 target and had thus pushed it to 1989.

The result of the explosion in the UPE countries in general has been a disconcerting situation where fixed-sized classrooms have been forced to absorb dilating numbers of children to the extent of doubling, sometimes trebbling the originally planned ideal class size of 40 to 45. This situation has definitely affected a string of other educational/pedagogical standards designed to enhance and maintain quality of teaching and learning. It is a situation which, unfortunately, political leaders have not wanted to admit too easily too quickly on account of a one-sided concern with equity combined with populist preference for measures that would put on record quantitative (or numerically visible) changes in public policy. Yet quantitative expansion can only be a part and possibly a minor part of the total story of an education industry. For enrolment of children is one thing and providing the right and adequate kind of education that accounts for the internal efficiency of a system is just another thing.

Internal inefficiency in the current primary schooling system, particularly in those African countries that have "prematurely" adopted full-scale compulsory universal primary education, reflects itself in four major factors:

(a) Inadequate educational material provision in terms of essential textbooks, supplementary readers and support teaching-learning aids and facilities ranging in some cases from chalk, exercise books, charts and illustration maps to major items such as classroom desks to enable pupils to sit properly and comfortably and to write aesthetically (Freyhold 1977:15; Omari et al 1983: 65-66; Carr-Hill 1984: 32-35; Jiboku 1984: 144-145).

(b) A defective delivery and distributive system for an already grossly inadequate range and number of educational and instructional materials. Nigeria and Tanzania are clear cases in point (Jiboku, 1984; Mahenge, 1981), but the problem has been reported in connection with other countries such as Zambia and Zaire.

(c) An inadequate teacher supply for progressively expanding yearly enrolments, with a resulting critically inoptimal pupil-teacher ratio reaching, in the case of Tanzania, as high (and bad) as 70:1 (Ministry of Education, 1984:43; Ishumi, 1985a:33). Such a pupil-teacher ratio clearly outrages all professional expectations of teachers in relation to their pupils as it physically as well as psychologically divorces the teacher from the pupil in terms of close attention and individualized assistance, supervision of child conduct and monitoring of pupil progress. It also clearly fatigues the teacher .

(d) An inadequately prepared teaching force. This is further related to the haste with which the states have had to look for and train individuals for the many children enrolled. In Nigeria, for example, the massive UPE programme launched in 1976 demanded, in addition to the normal preparations, contingency measures such as re-deployment of retired teachers, withdrawal of regular teacher trainees in their third year for a year in order to teach children, re-deployment of untrained teachers previously terminated,and employment of auxiliary teachers, including Primary Grade VII leavers. In Tanzania, the 35,000 persons contracted into a crash training programme within a period of three years (1978-80) were actually

Primary Std.VII school leavers who after failing absorption into secondary education and elsewhere, were committed into a village-based teacher training programme known as the "Distance-Teaching Approach". These frantic methods of identifying and training teachers clearly had loopholes and shortcomings. They could not produce professionally qualified teachers with a firm mastery of their subjects and the confidence of an academically and professionally accomplished teacher (except for the very small proportion of re-deployed retired teachers).

Jiboku (1984:145-146) has amply summed up the unhappy situation as it now obtains in Nigeria but as it applies elsewhere in a number of African countries as well:

> ... When one considers the hordes of half-illiterates being produced by unmotivated, undedicated teachers who are without basic salaries ... I accept ... that Nigerians are the first to admit that shortcomings remain. Young 10-, 11-, 12-year olds who cannot write their own names or read their mother tongue, let alone multiply or do some basic shopping accounts, abound in our schools today... The Inspectorates are almost totally ineffective in supervising teachers at the work-place. It is true refresher courses are available. But these only perpetuate the traditional model of more paper qualification for the teachers rather than some truly refreshing learning experience which one can take back to the classroom...

Omari et al (1983:7), in a survey of the state of the art in Tanzania, have given a pertinent warning about the whole process,a warning which is relevant to all African states undertaking the programme:

> The most important lesson is that,ultimately, universal primary education, no matter how defined, is a political issue in all societies, and, because politics rule, politicians should be made aware of [the] quality issues [at stake] so that appropriate resources can be set aside for educational purposes. Otherwise, universal primary education becomes what Goodman (1973) called compulsory miseducation.

(2) The Primary School Leavers.

The common assumption in African states in undertaking and operating a massive primary education system was that by the end of the primary school cycle, the youths would have gained basic education in the sense of (a) a definite mastery of the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic), (b) a demonstrable development in an enquiring mind leading to creativity and innovativeness, (c) acquired attitudes of cooperative and industrious life in the community, (d) a definite mastery of practical skills that in conjuction with an acquired knowledge scope would enable the youth to apply them in their everyday life in order to produce goods and services, to solve common environmental problems and/or to engage in gainful employment in productive ventures or elsewhere. The youths would have thereby been transformed into useful self-reliant citizens of today and tomorrow.

Has this underlying assumption and the associated hopes been fulfilled? The answer is only slightly in the affirmative. For the most part, the hopes have not come true.

A continuously growing army of primary school leavers began to reach unprecedented proportions in the early 1970s, although the actual drama began in earnest after the mid-1970s. And since then in practically every year the proportion of those who cannot be absorbed either into secondary schools or some other forms of post-primary regular institution gets larger. Table 7, drawing on the situation in Tanzania, illustrates this alarming trend. In the case of Zambia, the concern about the magnitude and dim prospects of the primary school outputs was registered as early as 1976:

> Every year, at this time of the year [January], a great number of Zambians undergo a traumatic experience that affects their individual lives. It is at this time of the year that we witness a great mass of the leaders of tomorrow, the youths, suddenly becoming the paupers of tomorrow: they are so-called drop-outs.
>
> ... The tragedy of the whole situation is that this year [1976] alone, 97,907 children who are still at the tender age of around 13, are suddenly thrown out in the cold vicious world to fend for themselves.
>
> ... The school system as it is at the present turns out every year youths who can only read and write English, but are unproductive. As thousands of children find themselves in the street every year with no hope of ever getting a good livelihood, the social problems also increase. What the present system is producing are gangs of half-educated savages and thieves, not because they want it that way, but because they have no other means of survival in this cruel world.
> (Sunday Times of Zambia, January 25,1976; quoted in Hoppers 1981:9).

Table 7. Primary school ouput and corresponding secondary school input in Tanzania, 1961 - 1984.

LEVEL	1961	1964	1969	1974	1976	1981	1982	1983	1984
Primary Std 7	11,732	20,348	60,545	119,350	156,114	212,446	419,331	454,604	653,509
To Seoondary Form I	4,196	5,302	7,149	8,165	8,620	8,907	8,843	9,285	10,077
Not Placed	7,536	15,046	53,396	111,185	147,494	203,539	410,488	445,319	643,432
% Not Placed	64%	74%	88%	93%	94%	96%	97.9%	97.9%	98.5%

Source: Statistics Section, Ministry of Education, Dar es Salaam.

A recent report of a four-year research study conducted in 1978-81 on the unemployed population in urban areas in Eastern Africa throws light on the nature and character of the primary school leaver problem. The report (Ishumi, 1984b:esp.Chaps III-V) points to a growing trend of rural-urban migration among youths and youngsters, a movement that since it began to intensify in the early 1970s has not shown any significant indications of either a slow-down or an urban-rural reversal among the cohorts. The study further reveals the following features and tendencies among the subjects surveyed:

(a) They were distinctively young, with 78% between 10 and 35 years of age, the majority falling between 10 and 25;

(b) They were predominantly male (75%), although the female proportion of 25% is not an insignificant consideration;

(c) They ranged from definitely poor to relatively poor by parentage;

(d) They were of non-professional, predominantly peasant-farming backgrounds; and

(e) They were themselves largely primary school leavers or dropouts (71.4%), with another 10% secondary school leavers (only 18.6% having no schooling at all). Almost all of them confessed having under-achieved in the school system—having mastered little, gained little or no skill for independent life after school and seeing little prospect for further learnings outside the school system.

With regard to why they moved to town, the responses converged on the following motives:

(a) To seek paid employment (47%)

(b) To "run" away from boredom in the village, strict parents and rewardless labour on parent's holding (21%);

(c) To seek urban leisure, freedom and fun in anonymity (9%);

(d) To seek business opportunities (7%); and

(e) To seek educational or training opportunities for a confident start of adult life (7%).

As to what they were actually doing, through on-spot observation, interview and public reports, the following is the range of activities:

(a) Apparent idling and anchorless movements;

(b) Occasional, casual or temporary engagements in the transport and building industries;

(c) Petty vending;

(d) Solicitation and prostitution;

(e) Pocket picking;

(f) Illicit activity - contraband, brewing, spirituous herb smoking, illicit agency, etc; and

(g) Criminal engagements, ranging from smaller dimensions of house breaking and shoplifting to higher-scale acts of ambushing and highway jacking of cars, buses and goods trucks.

These overt and covert observations and behaviour patterns on the output side of the primary education equation, measured against the stated and intended goals of primary education and of UPE as summarized in the assumptions and hopes, do not give much encouragement regarding the manner and pace of primary education provision in many African states today. In fact, on account of the trend of ever-increasing numbers of unplaced primary school leaving children and on the basis of the research-based evidence of the vulnerability of these youths who sooner or later migrate into the anonymity, languour and vices of urban life(in search of livelihood)and in the process relapse in total illiteracy, one may claim with a degree of confidence that much of the output of African primary school systems has become wastage.

(3) Language and Language Policy in Education

Without any doubt, language is a critical factor in communication and learning. As a form of conventional codes or symbols established and used in communication among members of a given group , language is a powerful instrument in the formation of concepts and in the acquisition of particular perceptive abilities, in the transfer or communication of such concepts and interpretative perspectives from one source (say a teacher) to the prospective learner. It is also a powerful instrument in socialization and acculturation whereby attitudes, values and conventional understandings in a particular social setting are developed, acquired and transmitted to others within the setting.

If this basic fact about language in society is true, then it is also true that language is a critical factor in formal education and that language mastery or communication skill is a key condition in the efficiency and eventual effectiveness of the teaching-learning process in school education. It can thus be safely assumed that once one has mastered a given language, one is able to benefit from it interms of acquiring and internalizing requisite concepts, attitudes, expressions, information and skills necessary for continued performance in the future within the school system and outside it. Once there is conflict in languages or dilemma in language usage options, there is bound to be a serious stifling of one's learning process and a resulting attenuation of learning capacities and cognitive abilities.

This point introduces the third of the critical problem areas in African education as has been experienced in the last two or so decades since Independence.

The origins of conflicts and dilemmas of language option and language usage in education in African countries (as in several other countries of the Third World) are rooted back in the colonial interlude which had by the late 1950s/early 1960s claimed a century or more of the history of the continent. Thus, the post-colonial efforts in decolonization in economic and cultural fields as well had necessarily to bring to the fore the dilemma of options between continuation of the "language of the colonizer" and adoption of "the language of the new nation".

For some states such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Uganda and Zimbabwe, despite initial contentions about which one of the local languages to adopt as the national or official language, there seems to have been a settlement reached about continued use of the " old colonial" language - English in Anglophone Africa, French in Francophone Africa, Portuguese in ex-Portuguese colonies. This was not so much out of nostalgic or idiosyncratic wishes for the status quo as out of functional dictates of crucial economic and trade patterns as well as considerations of the much desired higher cognitive and pscho-socio-motor skill levels achievable at less cost through continuity with the pre-existing medium of instruction.

The argument - and assumption - here was that use of the "language of the ex-colonizer" does not return the users to the old colonial slave-master relationships nor does it necessarily affect acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for science and technology needed even more urgently in post-colonial Africa. The option was to be dictated by considerations of a linguistic vehicle readily available with conveyance tools in form of well-developed vocabulary, books and journals, audio-visual aids, scientific manuals and teachers well-grounded in the language. An accompanying argument underlying the compromise is that the old familiar and well-developed language could be an even more effective tool in decolonization in other aspects of national life as well as in tackling new and complex situations of national development.

Other countries, however, have not yet come to a clear-cut settlement on the language issue, and actually have avoided taking open sides on the question

of the medium of instruction - even though they have at various times ignited talk and debate on the issue. Tanzania is such country.

One of the most politically charged educational issues since Tanzania's independence in 1961 has been the relative importance of English and Swahili in the country's education system. Nationalist motives have prompted many politicians and educators favour the advancement of Kiswahili as the medium of instruction, and until recently it was official policy to replace English at both the secondary and the higher levels. The cost and complexity of the task, particularly at the secondary and post-secondary levels, and the anticipated consequences in terms of isolating the country from the English-speaking world have led to a reversal of the Swahili-switching proposals, at least for the time being.

At the primary school level, Kiswahili replaced English as the medium of instruction in 1967. English is taught as a major subject from Standard (Grade) III. It is worth noting, however, that inspite of this early teaching of the language as a subject the cognitive achievement by the end of the primary education cycle (that is five years after formal introduction) is at a depressingly minimal level. In a recent survey on the problem (Criper and Dodd, 1984:14), two-thirds of Std VII pupils were unable "to read and understand any connected text", the report noting further that: "ninety-five percent at least of primary school children have not yet started [to master any English] notwithstanding the five years that they have been learning English in school".

By the second term of Form I - the first year of secondary education, according to the Criper-Dodd survey:

> Sixty percent are still at the level where they could read only 500 word picture books. There is no way that such pupils could follow instruction in other subjects through English (ibid.).

Half-way through Form IV - the last year of junior secondary school:

> ... the number getting within reach of being able to read easy unsimplified texts is less than 10 percent. It is extremely worrying to find that nearly one-third of all pupils are still at the picture book level after four years of official English medium education. These results are a clear indication that throughout their secondary school career little or no subject information is getting across to about fifty percent of pupils in our sample. Only about ten percent of Form IVs are at a level at which one might expect English medium education to begin (ibid.).

There is no better telling a case than a reproduction of the job application letter made by an ex-secondary Form IV "graduate" which, amid even more recent heated debates and controversies about the subject, an employer decided to publish in apparent exasperation with the current situation:

[Dear Sir,]

With our regarding to the heading above I have honour to submit my application tittle as to be employed due to our long service which I have been working from 1 June 1984 up to know. I have getting march experience of our servising into our company.

Sir I have been oredirly to explain a short store of am I have been born in 1959 with holding twenty six years old. I have been completed my O level studies on 1979 at Lomwe Sec. School and I receiving a certificate; after completion my secondary formal education I Ill joined at [name of organization withheld] on year 1980 as a junior clerk as a dealing with issuing goods and keeping our records for his goods manufactured. I have been working for three years experience of clerks duties.

I hope that my application will met in a good consideration.

(Sunday News, Tanzania, March 16,1986. "English must be revived" in PEOPLE'S FORUM.)

It is generally accepted that the scholastic and general academic performance of a student is at least in part a reflection of the performance of his or her teacher. But in the case of language teaching and learning, the performance and achievement level of the pupil has a strong correspondence with the level or limit of academic achievement and teaching ability of the

teacher. The seriously limited cognitive and linguistic levels of pupils in primary well into secondary schools in Tanzania reflect the seriously attenuated abilities of the teachers as well. In their survey, Criper and Dodd note that "Most primary [school] teachers now qualifying do not even approach the level of fluency and accuracy needed to teach even primary [school] children" (1984:15). The same would similarly be said of a now growing number of secondary school teachers in relation to their secondary-level pupils. (These teachers would have been college diplomates and university graduates who in turn would have passed through a faulty secondary school system!). The whole vicious circle has been a result of the

> ... prolonged period of ambivalence and even confusion about the respective roles of Kiswahili and English in education, a period in which the status of English, the quality of its teaching and its effectiveness as a medium all declined (ibid:4).

POSSIBLE REFORM ALTERNATIVES

There are several other problems one could discuss in relation to the educational enterprise in modern Africa (South of the Sahara), such issues as increasing numbers of illiterates (World Bank, 1980:21) and decreased/decreasing levels of productivity and production of goods and services in the public sector (Ishumi, 1983:344-345), but these do at least show positive sides of achievement as well, as has already been observed, and could be

ignored at the moment as their solution seems to depend on other basic policy reforms.

The three problematics discussed in this paper, on the other hand, seem to be too critical to be ignored. They do require immediate state intervention now by way of reforms towards the direction of preventing greater crises and chasms in the future. The following are possible reform options corresponding to the three problematics.

(1) With regard to expanded formal primary schooling and the trend to universalization of primary education (UPE), the African states should now focus more on qualitative improvements and backups (such details as production and procurement, efficient distribution and proper use of teaching-learning materials and school equipment, redressing the current grossly inoptimal pupil-teacher ratio, etc) than about mere quantitative expansion that leads to another undesirable vice of publicised access to inadequate and visibly frustrating educational facilities. Without a proper balance, the oft-publicised quantitative achievement could soon turn out to be sheer political propaganda that is self-deceptive and intellectually self-defeating.

This subsmission is based on the truth, as has been stated elsewhere, that:

> A UPE without (classroom) desks to sit on, books to read, chalk for blackboard work; a UPE without articulately trained teachers; a UPE without the necessary professional and pedagogical supports may - indeed does - fall short of basic functional education it was meant to be ... (Ishumi, 1985b).

(2) With regard to the problem of primary school leavers, there are pertinent possibilities as seem to be suggested from relevant research (Ishumi, 1984b: 91-105; Ishumi, Malekela, et al 1985:89-114):

(i) More attention now should be paid to the establishment and institutionalization of technical schools and vocational training centres in order to equip primary school leaving youths with more relevant practical skills in important areas of active adult life. Necessary tools for the trades they prepare for should be made available upon graduation and at reasonably affordable prices.

(ii) The current primary school cycle of seven years or less (in many countries) is very inadequate, considering the theoretical knowledge scope important for basic education and the complementary practical/ vocational aspect necessary to prepare the youths for self-reliant life in their village communities. Two more years could be considered in order to provide at least nine full years of primary education that would provide a basic functional foundation for "education with work".

(iii) Alongside these renovations, the public secondary school sector could be expanded only to the extent the state could meet the expense for more places than are currently available. For the most part, however, the state ought to willingly transfer the burden of the secondary (and higher) education industry to the shoulders of the private sector, namely the parent associations, the local communities

and voluntary organizations who would have or would mobilize sufficient resources and run the schools more efficiently. These different groups in the private sector could (and indeed should) be challenged and encouraged to think of various productive and employment-generating ventures that could in the end serve to absorb school leaver youths.

It is a pity that so far in most African countries, the state has been the biggest single employer and yet, unfortunately, the slowest employment generator. Considering the many civil tasks governments should do , the trend of thinking now is that there should be deliberate efforts to activate and encourage cooperative organizations and the private sector in the areas of production of goods and services and in the generation of gainful employment for the youths coming out of the school system.

(3) As for the language policy in education, the question "what medium of instruction?" remains as sensitive and controversial as there are different contending political and professional groups and views. But where the question has not yet come even nearer to settlement, a compromise on the older (ex-colonial) language could be struck. This is guided by the realistic, hence scientific observation that at the post-formative (in this case at the post-primary) level, the learning and performance capacity ~~the learning and performance capacity~~ of an individual will greatly be enhanced by the language type which is not only familiar in vocabulary but also has had tested years of experience in grammatical and structural development and

stability. The process is made faster and more effective by the prevalence in the same language medium of the necessary textbooks and follow-up reading material in the various content subjects.

Realism in this can be verified by India's experience. In 1938 Shri E.W. Aryanayakam, President of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh (cultural society) in Sevagram and a contemporary of Mohandas Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave, had scathing criticism of the colonial English language:

> ... Up to the age of twelve all the knowledge I gained was through Gujarati, my mother-tongue. I knew then something of arithmetic, history and geography. Then I entered a high school. For the first three years the mother-tongue was still the medium. But the schoolmaster's business was to drive English into the pupil's head. Therefore more than half of our time was given to learning English and mastering its arbitrary spelling and pronunciation. It was a painful discovery to have to learn a language that was not pronounced as it was written ... to have to learn the spelling by heart ...
>
> ... The pillory began with the fourth year. Everything had to be learnt through English - geometry, algebra, chemistry, astronomy, history, geography... I now know that what I took four years to learn of arithmetic, geometry ... I should have learnt easily in one year, if I had had to learn them not through English but Gujarati ...

> ... I must not be understood to decry English
> or its noble literature ... but the nobility
> of its literature cannot avail the Indian nation
> any more than the temperate climate or the scenery
> of England can avail her ... (Aryanayakam
> 1938:2-4)

His criticism and argument most likely had the political push and support of nationalists and must have been championed by his contemporaries. But one may stop to wonder why for about fifty years since then India's official language and the medium in higher education has not gone local, Indian? Why has English persisted? It is precisely the same factors - of ethnic diversity, of the convenience and efficacy of a pre-existing language of formal education and of its ability to place the subcontinent into the web of international relations - that, among other reasons, lie behind the situation African countries face today. Yet India is now far ahead of many Third World countries in scientific inventions, in technology and in self-reliance in a number of ways.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted a survey of the developments and issues in the formal educational enterprise in African countries in the last two decades or so. It has touched upon a few points of achievements such as increased access to educational opportunities and increased higher-level training opportunities for expanded economies. It has, however, pointed out some of

the most critical areas and bottlenecks that, if unattended to, may soon frustrate balanced national development in the future. Such problematics include uncontrolled and quality-unconscious universalized primary education, an unemployed and intellectually stunted mass of primary school leavers, and an underestimated and politically confused role of the medium of instruction.

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