



## **Towards a Revolutionary Education and Teacher Development in Some Selected African Countries**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Many Africa nations face myriads of problems and challenges especially in their educational systems at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The fact that Africa is at the bottom of education for all (EFA) and is fraught with the highest level of illiteracy globally, poverty, squalor, corruption, bad governance, political instability, socio-economic inequalities and segregation, ethnic violence etc point to the fact that the educational system is in shambles. The problems education has solved in other countries of the world are still plaguing Africa. The role of quality education and teachers in promoting literacy and raising a high class of intellectuals and work force, who tackle problems, cannot be overemphasised. The study highlights the fact that nations devoid of effective teachers with inadequate degree of intellectual and professional background required for teachers' assignment, poor level of commitment to teaching, lack of job satisfaction etc are bound to lag behind. Education is the key to modernisation but teachers hold the key to the door. No nation can be great or rise above the quality of its educational system and no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The study looked at the situation in Tanzania, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda. Teaching is perceived as a profession for non-performers. Teachers are down-trodden and despised. It is therefore not surprising the picture that Africa paints. There is urgent need for a great change in education and teacher development in Africa. The study recommends a revolution of the profession, by breaking all barriers to professionalism.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The rationale for this study is that if Africa would experience a better education to be able to grapple with the challenges of the 21st century, then educational development of teachers is a task that must be tackled and sustained with all seriousness and great determination. However, Africa's greatest problem is poverty. The present problem in Africa's educational system dates back to her historical past. Okonkwo (1988), Obanya (2004),

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Alexander (2001) and Nunn (2007) concluded that Africa's present predicament has a lot to do with her past. The study looks at sources of Africa's persistent poverty situation which affected and still affects intellectual, technological and in particular teacher education and development. The aftermath of colonial educational experience, the political, economic and social events in the post independence era and the present forces of globalization that dealt devastating blow to teacher education and development in Africa are explored as exemplified by Tanzania, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda. The study recommends a radical change in the admission criteria for teachers at all levels of education. A great change that would expose teachers to practical, creative and technological experience and application that promotes, dignity of labour, merit and job satisfaction and a revolution of an aspect of African culture to enable teachers and the government tackle the issue of illiteracy and poverty to the grass-root, in the entire continent.

### **COLONIAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA**

Proper and quality education has been proved to be contributory to reducing poverty. The impact of proper education on the individual cannot be over emphasised. African traditional education, though informal, took place everywhere, anywhere and any time, yet the objectives met and provided facilities for all and sundry to benefit from it. Teachers were available and knowledgeable in the cultural practices of the society. These teachers ranged from parents, all adults, older siblings, age grade to peer group. The hallmark of the African traditional education was functionalism, the work force was strong, and all embracing, no wonder all were gainfully employed.

The missionaries initiated Western education in Africa. They were the forerunners of the colonial administration that eventually dictated educational policies in the various domains. Colonial education was characterised by racial superiority that translated into clash of culture which alienated the Africans from their immediate culture. This whole clash radically changed the objectives of African education. The primary aim of missionary education was to produce devout Christians while that of the government was to produce serviceable subordinates. The curriculum had a commercial tone to attract the Africans. Nduka (1975:37) pointed out, 'the curriculum had commercial and literary bias, shorthand and typing were introduced and made compulsory, since they enhanced the prestige of school.' Thus there was no attempt to train qualified teachers because the missionaries needed catechists, interpreters, assistants etc. The issue of non-quality trained teachers therefore dates back to the colonial era. Colonial education was fee-paying all through and so many were unable to go to school. There was significant rate of drop-outs at the two available levels of education in Tanzania. Okonkwo (1988:119) noted that the illiteracy rate among the Africans in Mozambique was 95-98% and Nigeria at this period

has achieved a 37% enrolment in primary education. No wonder majority of Africans were illiterates at this period.

The aftermath of the Second World War signalled hope for the Africans for the dawn of active decolonization, devolution of political and administrative powers to the Africans and a new direction, scope and pace in education. The colonialists reacted in several ways. There was acute shortage of imported goods while prices of exported goods from Africa dropped drastically. This situation led to hardship and suffering in the colonies because the cost of living rose astronomically without corresponding increase in wage earnings and incomes. This poverty situation made education practically impossible at that period.

The colonial African teacher had no adequate training. The curriculum was shallow, bookish and lacked prospects of intellectualism. Despite the fact that the teacher constitutes a major or foremost component of pedagogy there was no plan for teacher training. Colonial administration forgot that having teachers did not mean having just anybody standing before a group of pupils. Colonial education was devoid of the right type of teachers who could perform through sound education and professional experience. It was ill-staffed, ill-equipped and ill-organised. There was no foundation for professionalism and quality teachers. The colonial educational scene from 1900-1945 showed that education, that is (school) was mainly in the hands of the missionaries. Educational opportunities for secondary and tertiary were non-existent or few and Africans were not to be trained for any high positions. It was not surprising that Africa today is at the bottom of the Education For All (EFA) and has the highest proportion of illiterates (183million) globally for lack of or non-existence of real foundation for teacher education and development. Obanya (2004) noted that there were regional institutions - William Ponty in Dakar, Achimota in Ghana, Makerere in Uganda and Fourah Bay in Sierra Leone where students from other African countries went for higher education. Few Africans were employed to teach in the primary schools while the secondary and the post secondary institutions were dominated by European staff. There was really no consideration for Africans to be appropriately prepared for the task ahead.

The colonial teachers were educated in the sense that they had been taught (rote learning) how to learn and so could learn whatever they needed to learn ( very shallow curriculum). Many of them stayed in the same school and taught the same classes and subjects and so with time had learnt what to teach and how to teach. Teachers then were disciplined and could live up with any treatments. They were paid little or no money and they lived on the proceeds from their farms or gardens. The teaching job then was highly selective and rigorous, only those who had been 'trained' were employed. Moreover teachers then were under the strict control of inspectors and were forced to keep high standards. It is no wonder that the teacher had some respect in the colonial era. Teaching then had attraction because it was everybody's first choice of employment.

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By the end of the second world war African countries were still under colonial rule and so could not attend the Bretton Woods conference at New Hampshire in the U.S.A. The support that Africa received from Bretton Woods institutions were solely aimed at sustaining the colonial governments and their limited social, economic and political programmes. This was glaring in the Franco-phone countries where according to Nabakwe(2002) France through the 'Franc des colonies Francaise d' Afrique (FCFA) or Franc of French/Africa colonies,' was able to economically re-colonise its African colonies, appropriated to itself the raw materials needed to rebuild Western European industries from Africa colonies at end of the war. Thus Franco-phone countries were tied hand and foot to serve metro France as others closed their doors to their export products. Thus Africa was impoverished. Moreover, the other African countries emerging from colonial rule were rudely shocked at the realisation that political independence was meaningless without economic and financial independence. This poor foundation at this early period set the tone and pace for all activities in Africa even at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Nationalist struggle and political activities were intensified and legislative assemblies were handed over to Africans. With continuous march towards independence in Senegal and Morocco 1954, Ghana 1957 and most African countries about mid 1960s, political changes brought about educational development. Primary and secondary education were expanded. Universities Colleges were established in Khartoum, Ghana, Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria. Government activities were on the increase and various departments were established providing employment opportunities in various areas and the private and government sectors offered high salaries. Teaching ceased to be everybody's first choice of appointment. Tested and good teachers began to leave teaching to go into private and government jobs for higher pay and better conditions of service.

Political activities during the colonial era brought drastic changes in the educational development in Africa. There were expansions in various segments of the society- government activities- ministerial and public corporations departments were established and there were industries and activities in banking, insurance, marketing. These changes created job opportunities with better salaries and conditions of service for African Youths. From then on teaching ceased to hold attractions for the educated class. The first generation of post independence politicians were teachers. Nigeria's first post-independence Prime-Minister and Tanzania's long ruling president were Grade II teachers. At independence former teachers left en mass for political posts and since conditions were far more better out there, those who left never came back.

With the emergence of convectional types of secondary education, teacher training institutions lost their attraction as more promising and brilliant youths opted out of teaching. Teacher education curricula suffered and were watered down. Arithmetic replaced mathematics and in place of science was rural science . Thus the political career opportunities and

secondary schools held more attractions for promising Africans. There was a dramatic negative change in the calibre of teachers and so the teaching profession became an anathema, without any respect.

### **TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT AT INDEPENDENCE**

With the weak foundation of teacher education and development at the colonial period and the effect of political changes it was hoped that the post independence efforts would promote a better teacher education and development but this was far from it. African states made frantic effort to improve education but the results gave much concern to the citizenry. There was expansion in enrollment at all levels of education. Schools were opened but only a minimal percentage of the population had access to education. Illiteracy loomed as a result of poverty. African heads of state at Addis Ababa in 1961 advocated for EFA by 1980 for all African children of primary school age. Obanya (2002) noted that by 1990, 42% of African children of primary school age were still out of school. He further noted at the turn of the new millennium, 2000, 39% of children were still out of school. Many more schools were opened. Thus there was and has been astronomical expansion in quantity of education but not in quality. What it takes to provide quality education were conspicuously absent. There was inadequate number of well educated and trained teachers to tackle the number of children that went to school. Although Tanzania introduced the policy of education for self reliance, and free education at all levels, in the effort of the government to achieve a greater percentage of literate population, it was plunged into financial problems.

There were no policies as such for education and development of the teacher. The profession was terribly neglected. Teachers were not and are not still well paid. The meagre salaries they were being paid were not paid with despatch and as when due. All over Africa the poor conditions of service of teachers at all levels has been a constant topic of debate. In Nigeria teaching is unpopular as a profession. People only go into teaching as a last resort, The poor treatment of teachers cuts across the three levels of education, federal and state governments are responsible for teacher education. Teachers are underpaid and are not paid as when due. This is also the situation in Uganda and Mozambique and many other African nations.

Consequently, strike actions have become a regular feature in African educational system at all levels, with damaging effects on quality of education. Nigerian Universities just emerged from a three months' strike action just before the close of 2009 as a result of poor conditions of service. The agreement signed with government is yet to be implemented even after the universities had called off the strike.

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In relation to strike action by teachers in Zimbabwe, the *allafrica.com* (2006:1) reported that the immediate reaction of the minister of education to the secondary school teachers' strike action is not surprising. He decided to issue threats declaring strike illegal, instead of addressing the problem. In Tanzania, the *Citizen* (2008:1) noted that one of the striking teachers pointed out 'teachers in the country have been marginalised, insulted and exploited for many years and we are now fed up', enough is enough'. In South Africa, Mohlala (2009) pointed out that teachers' strike came at a critical time and disrupted mid-year examinations. Wadiri (2004) lamented that the future of Uganda is in a vicious circle and that the economic underdevelopment of government as a result of IMF causes many youths to remain uneducated. Schools have traditionally been under-funded, teachers making less than \$100 per month. This is the trend all over Africa.

The teaching force has seriously been abused in African countries in Africa. There has been a decline in teaching and educational standards since independence and this is traced to the standard of teachers. There can be no genuine change educationally if teachers are not recognised, respected, motivated and given adequate professional training to equip them to carry on their duties well. The challenge for the continent to do something drastic about the teacher question is an emergency. Teachers hold the key to sustainable development and no development would come if teachers and their education and welfare are being neglected. After independence the most brilliant graduates came back to the universities for teaching appointment. Today, the mediocre are coming to teach while the most brilliant ones are grabbed by the private sectors for higher pay and conditions of service. The universities are lowering admission criteria to accommodate marginal students. Government policies make matters worse. The quota system is a mockery to merit and academic excellence. Even presently some other processes chief among which is globalisation has triggered off borrowing and debt repayment and this has affected teacher education and development in Africa.

### **Globalisation, Teacher Education and Development**

Globalisation despite its positive effects has divided the world into the super rich and absolutely poor. Africa is the poorest of the poor. Singh(2001) The forces, pressures and rifts of globalisation left a negative impact on the African economy. African nations are among the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCS) and they have been facing extreme poverty, highly foreign indebtedness, lack of technology and finance. More than a billion people are struggling to survive on less than a dollar per day. One child out of five does not complete primary school etc. Karky(2009)noted that the least developed countries' share of world trade fell from 1.9% in 1970 to some 0.4% today. This level of poverty make it impossible for parents to send their children to school. Only the rich send their children to private schools and abroad. This situation promotes inequality and segregation in the society.

Okoli (2009) pointed out that global cultural scapes embrace the flows of people and that globalisation has permeated the phenomenal world of individuals, creating rifts in various segments of Africa. She pointed out that flows of people (brain drain) have debilitating effect on Africa. Many African PhD holders are working overseas while some other millions are studying abroad because of the outcomes of the flows. Moreover, Tebeje's (2004) alarm that Africa would be empty of brains in 25 years reflects the growing alarm over Africa's increasing exodus of human capital. Within 20 years 127,000 highly qualified African professionals left the continent. International Organisation for Migration (IOM) pointed out that Africa is losing 20,000 professionals each year since 1990. This trend has sparked claims that Africa is dying a slow death from brain drain. This continuous outflow of skilled labour contributes to the widening gap in science and technology between Africa and other continents. The teachers (especially at the tertiary level) are among the group of professionals who migrate.

Thus, if Africa will join the global knowledge economy then there must be a positive focus on teacher education and development all over the continent. Africa is nowhere in the global knowledge economy. Singh in Oduaran and Bhola (2006:85) reported that 183 million African adults are illiterates. New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD 2002) reported that it is a tragedy for more than 50% of African population to be illiterate at the turn of the century when knowledge is of utmost importance. World Bank(2003) pointed out that education is development, it creates choice and opportunities for people, reduces stress, the burden of poverty and disease and gives strong voice to society. For nations it creates a dynamic workforce and well-informed citizens able to compete and cooperate globally, opening doors to economic and social prosperity. The bottom line to these is the teacher. Without strong and highly motivated conscious and effective teachers who have the spirit of inquiry (research and productivity) adequate degree of intellectual professional back-ground, nothing can be accomplished in the educational system. For teacher assignment, high level of commitment to teaching, can only be achieved through those that have job satisfaction.. Africa may never pull through or find its place in the global knowledge economy.

Poverty breeds illiteracy and backwardness and vice versa. Africa is the poorest of the poor. Of all the problems facing Africa the global knowledge economy is outstanding. The forces, pressures and rifts of globalisation have destabilised African nations and beaten them into submission. All that globalisation has brought to African nations is the debt burden. The weight of the debt burden on African countries has become so unbearable as a result of overriding increase of the debt. (Karky in Nweze2009:109) noted that in 1970, the total debt of Sub-Saharan African countries was \$3.7 billion. Thirteen years later, in 1983, it had risen to \$38.7 billion. By 1990 it had reached the staggering amount of \$161 billion. According to Karky, the cost of servicing debt takes a great deal of toll on the ability of governments to

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provide the basic human and social services necessary for survival and development. According to United Nations Human Development Report of 1997, Africa alone could have saved the lives of 21million children by the year 2000 if the countries had kept the money devoted to servicing foreign debts. Tanzania, for example, spent \$189.2 million between 1997-1998, in contrast to \$65.8 million spent on health care. Mauritania , spent \$87.8 million in 1998 on debt servicing which amounted to five times more than the \$17.4 million spent on health care. In the same 1998 Mozambique spent \$159 million on debts servicing compared to \$40 million spent on health care. Although debt burden could be traced to colonial period but it sky-rocketed during the post colonial era. Leaders of the developing countries including Africa, borrowed massively from the International Financial Institutions (IFIS) in their haste to justify their political mandates in the provision of basic amenities, or to protect their national security in the face of domestic strife and conflicts or in stolen funds and other corrupt practices of the ruling elite.

The post colonial period witnessed the acceleration of sovereign debt by African countries in various ways like, indebted industrialisation, neglect of agriculture, failure to diversify exports, debt-inducing social reforms, kleptocracy, developmental gigantomania and indebted militarisation. It could thus be seen that in an attempt to borrow money, they threaded in social amenities like education, health, agriculture etc. In fact the IMF had as one of the conditions the rationalisation of government staff strength. Thus all over Africa, government workers were retrenched including the teachers. It is shocking that out of the already reduced number of teachers, more were retrenched to enable governments take IMF loan. Thus Africa has the largest percentage of poor people, the largest number of low income countries, the least developed economies, the lowest life expectancy, the most fragile political systems, and the most vulnerable continent to HIV/AIDS which has taken a toll on teachers in Africa, and so the question of adequate number, quality, education and development of teachers were and are never discussed or given the deserving attention that they call for.

### **CHALLENGES FOR A BETTER TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (PROFESSIONALISM) AND THE WAY FORWARD**

For Africa to participate in the global knowledge economy she has to grapple with many challenges to raise a teaching force that would match the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in education and training. This will mean a turn around and sustainability in the education and training of teachers, that is, teachers (at all levels of education)who are of course in the fore front of the educational pursuits much is required of them in relation to their personal qualities , professional training and self concept. The way they teach will have to undergo radical revolution. First there should be concerted effort on



the part of the government for capacity building for teachers. Economists agree that it is the human resource of a nation not its capital nor its material resources that ultimately determine the character and pace of development. Pascharopopoulos and Woodhall (1997:102) noted that human resources constitute the ultimate basis of the wealth of nations, human beings are the active agencies who accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic and political organisation and carry forward national development. The teacher is the most crucial human resource. The teacher makes, produces and nurtures the politician, the economist, health personnel and all human resource necessary for all national endeavour. Human capacity building for teacher is a must for African nations. This will enable them get all the training necessary for this special task of building human beings. Developing teachers for professionalism means that training does not end with graduation from institution but there should be a plan for in-service training to acquaint teachers with the latest trends in teaching. Revolving vote should be opened to enable teachers in the tertiary institutions attend regular conferences nationally and internationally. Only those who demonstrate keen interest for teaching should be admitted. Tertiary institutions should have viable and suitable curricula for teacher education such that each teacher exhibits some level of knowledge and intellectualism in their areas of specialisation and some general knowledge that make them current. All lecturers in tertiary institutions should acquire at least the post-graduate diploma in education (PGDE). The professionalism of the teaching profession should be consolidated. Any body who wishes to be a teacher should obtain a certain level of teaching qualification (professional training) in order to qualify. Teachers to be must be trained to be creative and raise people with skills and who will use that ability to create opportunities for flexibilities. The design of a training programme should be based on the identification of change that is required and how that change could be evoked. Mentoring, coaching and peer-to-peer development exercises are good in teacher development.

Dyer *et al.* (2004) recommend that it is much more effective to support teachers in doing what they already do in a better way, than to change to a radically different concept of education. They argue that good quality programmes that are practical and focus on the methods that are understandable by teachers can be used in their classrooms. They pointed out that trainers should follow teachers into the school and the need to balance pedagogy and subject knowledge training, ensuring that training, matches with existing curriculum and helping teachers engage in curriculum development.

The only problem in this suggestion is that the question of change is inevitable, thus there could be real need for radical change. Some African nations (Tanzania, Benin Guinea, Congo Brazzaville and Ethiopia) opted for radical-revolutionary approach at independence for a departure from their colonial experience. There should be provision for challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, every teacher and student or pupil in Africa should be

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computer literate whether one specialises in visual arts, mathematics or whatever.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher's respect and morale have to be restored and preserved. Teachers are the makers or moulders of engineers, doctors, accountants and people in all walks of life. They therefore deserve to be appreciated, recognised and held in high esteem. Conducive environment, resources, equipment, infrastructural etc, should be provided for teachers. The challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for the class-room teachers must be put into consideration. For teachers in Africa, population explosion is inevitable. More people will be demanding for education and so there is need for adequate training of more and capable teachers. A package of good conditions of service should be put in place for teachers. A revolution of our values is imperative too as it was done in Japan. The Japanese mustered all that was within their reach to bring education at the door step of their large population, especially by use of indigenous language and dint of hard work. Japan produced educated skilled work-force that transformed their society. There is need for a revolution of in the indigenous language as is the case of Kiswahili in East Africa. This will facilitate communication and education would be taken to the remotest rural areas by teachers who have adequately been trained and maintained.

### **CONCLUSION**

The role of the teacher in moulding human lives, producing intellectuals, leaders of governments and strong workforce for the society, is too important for him to be neglected. His role has even become more important at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century than ever before. The educated class in Africa especially women, leave their children to the care of the teachers, while working for long hours. Parents of adolescents would rather leave their delinquent undergraduates to the care of the lecturers at the tertiary institutions than to have them at home. Given this situation, the teacher deserves serious attention to his education, training and welfare. A nation that appreciates and builds her teacher is paving the way for the raising of effective future leaders.

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