Political Influence and the Dynamic Nature of Education in Kenya

[1]Nickson Moseti Ongaki ; [2]Faith Wavinya Musa

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology P.O Box 62013 Nairobi, Kenya
E-mail: nickson.moseti@gmail.com

Abstract

Kenya attained independence in 1963. Since then, the government has established numerous committees and task forces to review the education system and tackle the emerging issues with a view to improving the quality and delivery of education services. Recommendations arising from these sittings have guided policy formulation in enhancing the growth and development of education in the country. This in itself is a clear indication that the government is sensitive to the changing times, committed to reforming the education system in order to satisfy the changing needs of society and willing to meet the challenges of the new millennium. As a result, the country has encountered an unprecedented growth both in terms of numbers of educational institutions and learner enrolment in the recent past.

Evidently, schools are experiencing a number of challenges such as overstretched facilities, overcrowding in schools - especially those in urban slums, high pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs) in densely populated areas, high pupil to textbook ratios and the high cost of special equipment for children with special needs. Support by communities is also low due to misconstrued understanding of their role *vis-à-vis* that of the government under FPE initiative and gender and regional disparities, increased number of orphans in and out of school and disease, poor management and internal inefficiency are all influencing access to, equity and quality of education in a negatively way.

This paper defines education, its purposes and functions and discuses its relationship with political ideology. It gives the historical account of how the two have affected one another in Kenya and other parts of Africa the world and thereafter attempts to answer a very fundamental question: whether educational systems world over can operate normally without political influence and vice versa. Later, it highlights the initiative taken by Kenya and other African countries in improving their education sectors. Other

than evaluating the need for, the nature and extent of change experienced within our systems, the paper analyses the contributions offered by schools and teachers in particular, to facilitate political and socio-economic development.

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

The government of Kenya introduced the Free Primary Education (FPE in t5he country soon after the 2003 national elections, which saw primary school enrollments soaring from 1.2 million in 1997 to 3.0 million in 2002. This rapid increase in enrollment brought about an unprecedented stress on the existing resources in the sector as pupil-teacher ratios, pupil-classroom ratios, pupil-text book ratios and most other educational indicators reached unacceptable levels. As a result, the quality of education plummeted to very low levels prompting development partners (GTZ, CIDA, DFID and others) to step in and provide money to direct the attainment of Education for All (EFA) goals.

Six years later in 2010, gains such as a decrease in the number of untrained teachers, disparity between boys and girls and increased access and provision of textbooks are noteworthy. However, dropout rates, completion rates, attendance rates and pass rates seem remains at unacceptably low levels (Ministry of Education: 2005). This is vivid evidence that the current system is little able to keep children in school and their literacy and numeracy levels remains low even when they do not leave. Ojoawo: 1989 and Okore (1998) suggest that the poor funding of education in most developing countries make it possible for the school system to have manageable class sizes, adequate classroom space and appropriate class utilization rates and learner achievement remains low. It is therefore imperative that these initiatives are directed in a manner that will propel positive changes to improve the quality of and access to education, which requires deep insights into how various learning variables affect learner achievement.

2.0   THE MEANING AND AIMS OF EDUCATION

2.1   The Meaning of Education

Educational theorists have over the centuries given many definitions to the word "education". Although it is difficult to find one definition that is universally acceptable for this term, the ones cited below provide some general idea on what the term really stands for. According to John Dewey (1859-1952), education is the development of all those capabilities in the

individual that will enable him to control his environment and fulfill his responsibilities (Bhatia 1985: 9). On his part, Gutek (1997: 4-5) refers to it broadly as "social processes that bring a person into cultural life" and cites family, peer groups, community, media, religious organizations and state as social agencies involved in the process. Similarly, Sifuna (1990: 3-4) defines it as a whole process by which one generation transmits its culture to the succeeding one, or a process by which people are prepared to live effectively and efficiently in their environment. Technikon SA (2000: 6) defines it simply as "*a child-rearing practice … offered in educational institutions and … dealing specifically with the formation of moral values …*"

Education is therefore a continuous process that involves the learner and the agency, in this case – school, which is a social institution created and maintained by the society to perpetuate cultural values through purposeful teaching and learning (Ondiek 1986: 26). As a result of it, society reproduces itself by passing its main characteristics to the next generation through a process influenced by philosophical, political,

economic and social forces and each succeeding generation becomes more developed compared to the one that preceded it (Farrant 1984: 19).

## 2.2 The Goals, Aims and Objectives of Education

According to (Farrant 1980: 18-22), two different terms, goals and objectives are commonly used, albeit erroneously, as alternative terms in the discussion about the aims of education. However, the correct view is that educational goals are the ends set by society for the system it operates and defined in broad political, cultural and economic terms such as citizenship, democracy and national unity. They are also used to refer to more specific aspects of learning such as life-long learning and equal opportunity. On the other hand, education aims are more like targets. They indicate the precise direction that the educational planners want educators and to follow either wholly or as a part of the educational system and are expressed in narrower but more specific terms. Similarly, Farrant (1964: 18-22) define educational objectives as the intended outcomes of the process of education and may be expressed in terms of what the learner will individually be

able to achieve as a result of the teaching. Although they may be more general at the onset, they tend to spell out in specific details what the policy makers actually intend. Players in the field of education should carefully study its goals, aims and objectives to avoid swaying from what is expected of them.

2.3   The Role of Education Agencies

Bhatia (1989: 50) describes agencies of education as "those sources, places or institutions, which exercise an educational influence on the child" that may be formal or informal. Formal agencies are developed with the specific and exclusive objective of imparting education and may include school, college and university. Informal agencies are such other agencies whose specific and exclusive function is not education, but whose educative influence on the child cannot be ignored. They include the neighborhood, home, community, state, religious organization and the mass media as illustrated in the diagram below adapted from Bhatia (1989: 51).

Agencies of Education

Formal

Informal

Neighbourhood   Home   State   Religious Organization   Mass Media
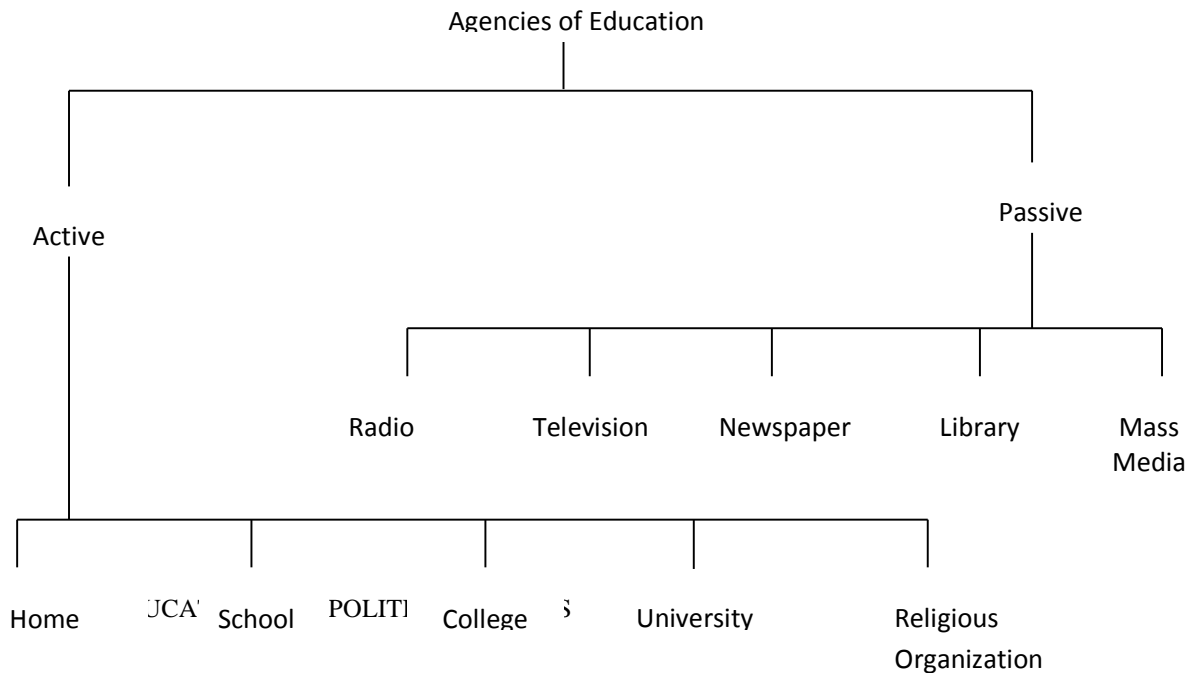
School   College   University
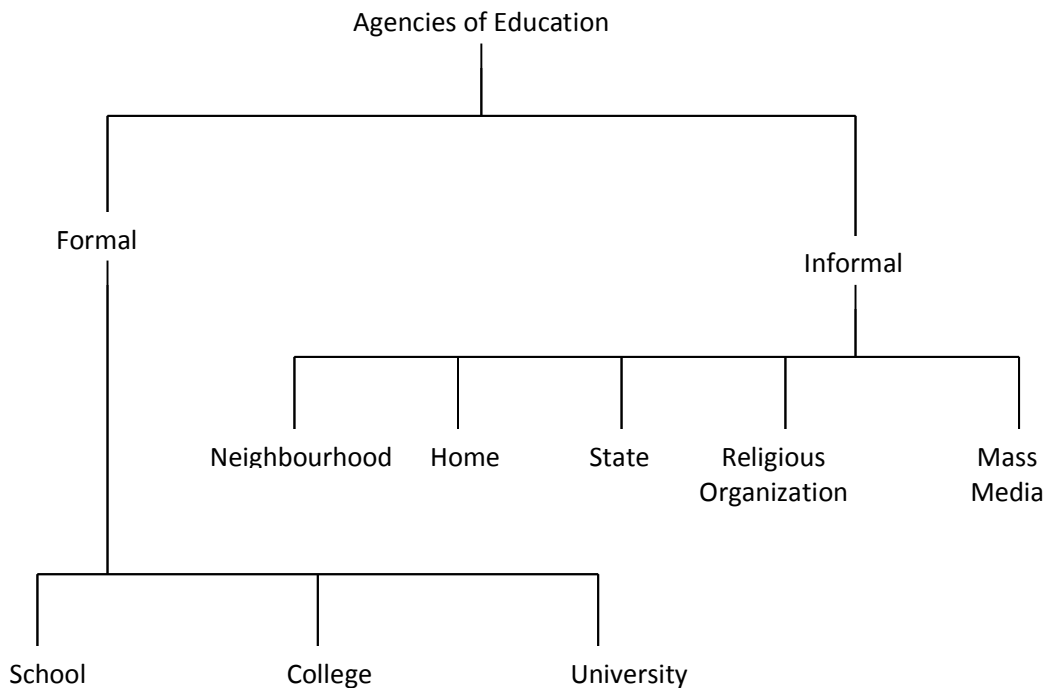
Agencies of education may also be active or passive. Active agencies are "active" in the sense that they play a prominent role in imparting learning through the interaction of persons involved in the process of learning. They include home, school (including

college and university) and religious organizations. Passive agencies are such other agencies that influence the learning processes without being influenced in return.

They include radio, television, newspapers, library and the mass media as illustrated in the diagram below adapted from Bhatia (1989: 51).

Agencies of Education

Active

Passive

Radio   Television   Newspaper   Library   Mass Media

Home   JCA School POLITI College 5 University   Religious Organization

African countries are infested by many kinds of economic and psychosocial evils. Chief among them is ignorance, disease poverty and war. Although high place corruption and bad leadership are to blame for most of these problems, many others are traceable to our colonial masters who formulated educational systems aimed at creating an inferior mentality in Africans in various ways including religious indoctrination. Educational systems in Africa therefore have a definite responsibility to challenge the negative social values and should use

education as an agent of change where societal needs and problems are concerned. Ondiek (1986: 27) is not far from the point when he adds that the roles played by an individual in the society are influenced by the changes that education created in him. Bigala (1978: 19) supports and stresses upon the strength of early childhood learning in shaping adult political beliefs and behaviour. He suggests that the school curriculum should essentially emphasise the right and obligation of citizens to participate in government by recognising the changing needs of the society and incorporating vital

emerging issues. The Kenya Institute of Education (2002: 7) lists the emergent concerns as industrial transformation and development, environmental education and health issues including HIV/AIDS and drugs. Democracy and human rights, child rights, moral values and social stability are other important issues that should comprise the integrated course of academic studies.

The school curriculum therefore forms a positive step towards a democratic and citizenship education enables learners to acquire positive influences to shape their views about the citizenship roles they will play as adults. It also helps them to understand the national ideals and processes of self-governance and to appreciate ethnicity as strength rather than a weakness. Learners can also appreciate the meaning of freedom internally within the country and internationally throughout the world. Most important, they get to know the power that citizens have in the ballot box as a means of determining political leadership. As Pye (1963: 121) amply concludes, an individual first becomes a member of the society and then the polity.

3.1   The African Task of Nationalism

Since attaining independence in the nineteen fifties and in the sixties, African political leaders have gripped with the dilemma of unifying the citizenry (Bigala 1978: 2). Unlike Europeans in the nineteenth century, we are a people greatly divided by political, social and economic conditions stemming out of our diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. While their national aim was to fit people who shared the same language and culture into a nation, the "African task of nationalism" is to weld people speaking different languages and practicing different traditional cultures into a nation-state (Ajayi 1961: 206). Unfortunately, this is an enormous task considering that ethnicity is so pronounced that even among the elite, loyalty remains in the clan, tribe and to tribal leaders (Bigala 1978: 7-8) and political strength is secured through tribal alliances. Similarly, the tribe remains too small to handle the challenges of a modern state as a unitary sub-system. Therein lies the political leadership's quandary.

It is perhaps upon this realisation that the "fathers" of our two nations, Kenya and Tanzania formulated certain coherent and operational ideas such as Mzee Jomo Kenyatta's call of "Harambee" (Kiswahili for; Unity) in Kenya or Mwalimu Julius

Kambarage Nyerere's "Ujamaa" (Kiswahili for; Communality) in Tanzania to bring together the population. Although nationalistic in nature, those ideologies were related to the traditional thinking of the people as they embraced African socialism, self-reliance and one-party democracy considered very important ingredients for the development of both nations (Prewitt 1971: 39). Tanzania went a step further by declaring Kiswahili the language of the government and use in schools. This played a powerful influence in national cohesion because it created linguistic uniformity and harmony between her 138 or so tribes. Henceforth, it has become the basic medium of instruction in the primary schools (Hameso 1997: 72. Hence the question, what is political ideology?

3.2   Political Ideology and its Effects on Education

Gutek (1997: 139-140) describes ideology as *"the belief system of a group … based on a rendition on its past … which carries prescriptions for policy"*. Reid (1978: 24) defines it as a body of ideas forming the basis for political, economic or social systems or perspectives and pass judgment on matters that are of political, economic or social interest. Since time immemorial, politicians have used ideologies to shape and express social, political, economic and educational ideas. The American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the Chinese Community Revolution of 1949 all stemmed out of political ideologies. Thus, "Ujamaa na Kujitegemea" was Nyerere's ideological impute as reflected in the Arusha declaration of 1967 (Hameso 1997: 72).

According to Gutek 1997: 245), education in both its formal and informal sense is influenced significantly by ideology. The ideologist is usually determined to create an individual who fits his ideology and relies heavily on such informal agencies of education as the print and electronic media and motion pictures, which he most probably controls. These he uses to indoctrinate his subjects through a process of "systematic psychological manipulation as witnessed in Italy and Germany during the rules of Benito Mussolini; who the Italian Fascists called II Duce, and Adolph Hitler, the Fuhrer of the Nazi Germany. The ideologist also uses the school and other formal agencies of education to create the prototype through a process of brainwashing and propaganda to reinforce his ideologies

and build the loyalty of the political leader in the youngsters exactly as the ideologist had planned (Gutek 1997: 246). In Hitler's Germany for example, Nazi educational theory and practice was used to mould a totalitarian society in which there was only one ruler; Hitler, one political party; the National Socialist Party, and one country; Germany based on an ideology created by Hitler and his lieutenants. It was more of a political theory transferred to the school rather than a system of education guided by pedagogical thought and practice (Kneller 1941: 4).

The ideology of the people who hold power in a country usually determines the goals of formal education in a country. When inhuman individuals hold power, the educational programmes they formulate will be equally dehumanizing, coercive and debasing of human freedom (Gutek 1997: 244). Fascism in Mussolini's Italy (1923-1944), Nazism in Hitler's Germany (1933-1945) and Stalinism in the Soviet Union (1928-1953) were all totalitarian regimes in Europe that emerged from some forms of ideology. In those states, there was only one way of thinking - the official way. The agents of informal education played a very powerful role in brainwashing the citizenry

to conform to the official ideological line with the whole process of indoctrination and perfected in learning institutions where young minds were moulded in a controlled environment. A case in point is in the Soviet Union during the Stalinist rule where national rulers even instructed teachers to influence the political and moral development of their students by glorifying the qualities of their leader, Stalin. Closer home in the Republic of South Africa, the Bantu Education was introduced by the National Party during the Apartheid era through the Christian National Education Policy Act 39 of 1967 (Nieuwenhuis and George 2000: 16-26). The purpose of the Act was to indoctrinate white supremacy over non-whites in such a way that non-whites would question neither the supremacy nor the discriminatory policies imposed by the totalitarian regime.

4.0   Should Politics And Education Be Separated?

4.1   Political Mobilization in Education

African nations including Kenya inherited from the British rulers an educational system that was largely based on European practice (Bigala 1978: 1), which neither addressed

our unique African problem perpetuated in our diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Five decades down the line, we are still faced with the same old ethnicity, which adversely affect the continued stability of our political and educational establishments. These problems associated with ethnic intolerance, over-population, mounting poverty, unemployment, bad governance, corruption, disease and economic and moral decay (Vitta as quoted by Ngure 1995: 101) which our systems are ill equipped to deal with.

Education in Africa is generally regarded as a vehicle for development a means of providing learners with ample employment opportunities when schooling is eventually over (Kabir 1961: 5 and this has led to its high demand and great expansion. In Kenya, when the central government had difficulty providing enough secondary schools to meet the ever growing number of children leaving the primary school, local pressure groups led by politicians, mobilized the community into voluntary self-help schemes to build schools (Sifuna 1990: 165). Farrant (1964: 280) acknowledges this as vivid evidence that educational development must be responsive to national goals as well as community.

4.2 The African initiative in Pre-Independence Kenya

Earlier, towards the end of the Second World War, Kenya witnessed an increased African sensitivity culminating from aspirations brought about by the return of African ex-servicemen who had acquired a high economic and political awareness while abroad. As a result, there was a steady expansion of secondary and higher education, which saw an emergence of educated African elites at local and national levels. Many of them were products of a number of independent African schools, which had mushroomed in many parts of the country following an initiative by Africans to use literacy as a tool for developing social leaders desperately needed by Africans. However, those schools were faced with numerous problems, and most significantly, lack of teaching and learning materials, qualified teachers and growing apathy and indifference of the colonial government's.

Despite all these, the initiative gathered momentum and the colonial government began to take interest in it as a possible channel for influencing public opinion and countering opposition to their rule (Sifuna 1990: 154). Eventually, the African

initiative culminated in the famous 1959 and 1960 airlift of Kenyan students to the United States and Eastern Europe. The airlifts were organized by indigenous politicians Dr. Julius Gikonyo Kiano and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga under the stewardship of trade unionist cum politician, Thomas Joseph Mboya. Funds to meet its costs were raised privately in America by sympathizers including Senator John F Kennedy, but Kenyans also raised a small portion of it locally "through a variety of methods" (Goldsworthy 1982: 162-69).

In response to this, the colonial government questioned in parliament the appropriateness of "diverting" good students away from the more relevant education available in Kenya and Britain. They accused the organizers of being "amateurish, nepotistic and politically inspired". Nevertheless, Mr. Mboya replied that the airlifts had actually come as an African effort to meet their own educational needs and to fill the vacuum left by the limited vacancies available to Africans locally in Kenya and in Britain. This sudden rush for university degrees, said Mboya, was the outcome of the gradual policies in African higher education caused by the same colonial administration now complaining (Sifuna 1990: 157). Somebody had to do something to fill the existing educational vacuum.

First, it should be noted here that upon their return, many of the airlift graduates filled important positions in both the private and public sector and contributed enormously to the development of the post-independence Kenya. One of the first students airlifted to America was the elder Barrack Obama, who married a white Kansas native named Ann Dunham during his US studies. Their son, born in 1961 and named after his father is currently the [first black] President of the United States of America, and is hailed as one of the great results of the airlifts (Schor: 2010). Second, the "airlift" so to speak, continues somewhat to this day as many Kenyans who cannot proceed with higher education locally because of shortage of space in our universities travel abroad to the Americas, India, and Europe and lately to Uganda and the Republic of South Africa in pursuit of the same.

Political independence may not have provided a lasting solution to the problem of educational vacuum, which we inherited from our colonial masters. This is partly so because we have ourselves come up with very few reform programmes geared

towards making education meaningful to our own needs. It is also evident from this discussion that Kenyans as a people place considerable importance on the role of education in promoting economic and social development and providing qualified personnel for the growing economic and administrative institutions and other spheres of the society. This has resulted in the heightened demand and rapid expansion of education mentioned above.

Political pressure also motivated the expansion and reforms in the education system. Today, every politician and his political party will for adequate opportunities for education in their party manifestoes. That is why we hear so much talk about cheap or free education coming from our political leaders. In their quest for cheaper options, Kenyans have built self-help secondary schools and tertiary institutions with the same spirit they had built independent school in the pre-independence era. Churches, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament and other political and public office aspirants have joined the bandwagon and helped locals to build schools in their respective rural backgrounds. The Government of Kenya has not been left behind either and has undertaken to offer free primary and subsidized secondary education and provide at least one teacher for each classroom erected.

4.3 Outcomes of the Universal Primary Education

Kenya eliminated primary school fees in the 1990s to provide learners with free primary education. The results of this reduction in direct costs to households saw the country increasing enrolments in primary schools by sizable margins. The country now faces the challenge of reforming its educational systems to accommodate the increases enrolments so that schools can provide good quality primary education to all learners. Although some movement towards Universal Primary Education (UPE) occurred before 1990, the UNESCO-sponsored Education for All (EFA) conference held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 was the impetus for spurring policy development and implementation on a wider scale. Policymakers attending the conference reached the conclusion that the goals of UPE could be reached only by eliminating compulsory school fees and making primary education free.

The Jomtien conference on EFA in 1990 also confirmed that UPE is one of the most beneficial interventions for reducing poverty. By providing pupils with literacy and numeracy, life skills, and a basic general knowledge of health, nutrition, and society, UPE lays a foundation for skills training and further education. By increasing knowledge of health and family life, UPE empowers women to reduce the burden of childcare provision thereby improving their employment chances. Primary education also empowers children who would otherwise end up as child labourers or end up as social misfits. Most important, UPE helps break the cycle of poverty by creating a generation that is functionally literate and numerate. In the wake of the Jomtien conference, it became evident that a major constraint to UPE in Sub-Saharan Africa countries was the cost of schooling, which poor families could not afford. Its direct costs include school fees, parent-paid supplements to teacher salaries, textbooks, materials, examinations, uniforms, meals, transportation to sports and cultural activities and other forms of contributions requested by local schools. In addition to the direct costs of schooling, households bear an indirect cost consisting of the lost value of children's labour at home, in the fields or in family and other businesses. By eliminating direct and indirect costs of schooling, families may send their children to primary school thus increasing demand and inclusive of children from poor families.

Increased access, especially from the poorer quintiles of the population as well as increased provision of textbooks, classrooms, and teachers stand out as some of the positive outcomes of FPE in Kenya today. Its negative effects on the other hand include a possible push-out effect of overcrowding on disabled and weaker pupils who are known to score lowly on the primary school survival rates. High dropout and poor completion rates for girls also need to be addressed alongside strategies for improving quality, which remains a major challenge. In a related study, Avenstrup, Liang and Nellemann (2004) identifies a variety of reasons for high dropout rates, which included amongst other school costs, the need for domestic labour, pregnancy or early marriage, disability or illness and lack of interest in attending school. HIV/AIDS also remains a big challenge and its high prevalence at the local level is affecting the efficiency and the supply of teachers and rapidly increasing the number of orphans. Sadly, its devastating financial and socio-

economic implications further complicate the situation affects women and girls more than their male counterparts.

4.4   Education and Politics: To Separate or not to Separate?

Following the arguments already aroused above, it is difficult to imagine an education system completely independent of political influence. As Vaizey (1967: 9) says, the functioning of society has become more dependent upon a highly abstract and complex body of knowledge that is transmitted in formal learning institutions. Whereas it is true that children learn a great deal from their interaction with family members, the print and electronic media and other intimate social groups, the formal learning process contributes an immense amount of their knowledge. Society runs schools and other learning institutions to instruct learners almost from infancy to age sixteen and well beyond. Vaizey (1967) further adds that research, learning and teaching is basic to economic development because they produce in the long run the trained workers who operate the economy. Secondly, school has a social role as a source of national unity. In support of the same, Merriam (1931: 331) asserts that

social and political attitudes are determined as early as in the pre-school years of a youngster and the formal school system is significant in terms of communicating political and social values. Education planners should therefore emphasize in the school curriculum the citizen's rights and obligations to participate in the government. This apparently unimportant individual will carry the destiny of the country in his hands in the near future. A third point in support of this argument is that the problem of expansion of education in a poor country like Kenya brings to mind other pertinent questions: If we do not invoke political will, where shall we get teachers? How shall we train or pay them once they are employed? In addition, assuming that we actually get them, where shall we get the money to sustain their further training and thereafter, the funds by which to pay their salary and allowances? We cannot manage all these without involving taxpayers through a taxation policy initiated and maintained by the government. Even in cases where funds are actually available, we still need government policy and machinery to divert resources to meet training, employment and salary requirements for existing and newly recruited teachers (Vaizey 1967: 10).

5.0 THE PROBLEM WITH OUR SYSTEMS

Since independence, the Kenyan government has taken a number of measures in the transformation and development of the existing educational facilities. As a result, the number of schools established, the amount of money allocated for education and the number of learners enrolled in educational institutions have all increased tremendously (Republic of Kenya 2001). Nevertheless, as Bigala (1978: 47) observes, programmes of education in general do not follow the realities of society and learners even at the university level are not prepared to face the challenges and responsibilities of modern life effectively and successfully despite all the efforts that the government is trying to put forward. Middlewood and Lumby (1998: 58) acknowledge that this may have come as a result of the notable distance that exists between the purposes of education as stated by senior officials of the Ministry and the practice by teachers in schools. One explanation for this is that the bigger part of the teaching force neither understands nor tries to achieve the declared purposes, which are usually very clear and straightforward to policy makers who announce them but remain a generality to teachers who are supposed to carry them out.

The effectiveness of the teaching and learning process depend primarily on the possession by both teachers and learners of sound and well-defined aims, which they attempt to pursue constantly. Such objectives help them in evaluating current educational activities and planning to achieve the stated aims (Reeves, Forde, O'Brien, Smith and Tomlinson 2002: 160). Secondly, this failure can also be blamed on the centralization of education whose ill effects have long been felt in the rural areas. Teachers in those places have to wait for long months to get textbooks or any other forms of equipment and materials required for teaching and learning. On many other occasions, the same selfless teacher digs deep into his own pocket to ensure that normal school operations do not come to a standstill. Thirdly, the methods of teaching applied in most schools continue to be traditional and outdated. Audio-visual materials and other instructional materials used in teaching are limited and teachers are therefore ill prepared to pursue their teaching activities efficiently. Fourthly, the system of inspection also leaves a lot to be desired. Other than being authoritarian and

unfriendly to the teacher, it creates the wrong impression in teachers, parents and pupils that success in examination is the best and only means of evaluating academic excellence.

5.1 Democracy and Citizenry: Can Schools make a Difference?

The key to solving the problems listed above lies in the national goals of education as individually set by each country. What needs to be done is to build those goals into a framework of a system that is truly national, democratic, modern and authentically African (Farrant 1980: 39). Most fundamental is the need to provide education to all girls and boys alike. As acknowledged by the Republic of Kenya (1976: 42), there exists an imbalance of access to education opportunities between administrative Provinces, Districts and Divisions in Kenya, and between the sexes. Such imbalances must be addressed purposefully by expanding the existing facilities to enable all its citizens to attend the kind of primary or secondary schools of their liking, and take up courses according to their intellectual abilities and aspirations. The system should also provide "second-chance" education opportunities to learners who fail to secure accesses to institutions of further studies and training due poverty and a variety of other reasons including. Schools should in this regard change their strategies and operate on a system geared towards making education more vocationally oriented and giving the learner a sound academic base.

According to Bigala (1978: 2), a programme of education should reflect the society it functions in as far as its objectives, content and methodology are concerned. Our immediate concern as a developing nation therefore is to quickly train our youngsters to become more intelligently loyal to the Nation and identity more with it, to participate more actively in its development programmes and thus assure its survival. Roach (1967: 31) suggests that one way of coming to grip with the African democracy dilemma as mentioned above is by creating knowledge among the masses as a means of orienting their behaviour towards the goals of a national society. Apter and Coleman (1962: 96) support this notion and further suggest the enculturation of a sense of common citizenship with shared political values, common purpose and respect for political institutions and established

authority. These are the principal challenges facing our political leaders.

The immediate remedy lies on how well we are prepared to design and adapt a socialization process that relates to our national aspirations (Bigala: 3) through our education system. As Kenya Institute of Education (2002: 4) observes, the first national goal of education in Kenya is to foster nationalism and patriotism in order to make a positive contribution to the life of the Nation. This idea agrees largely with an observation by Miel and Brogan (1957: 3) that a child is educated to "assist him in becoming the citizen needed for the nation "… and the other world."

6.0   EDUCATION FOR WHAT? FOR WHOM?

Farrant (1980: 12) describes a philosophy as a study of that which deals with the ultimate realities… and the general causes and principles of things that man observes and experiences. A national philosophy therefore encompasses the country's philosophic outlook and in particular, its interpretation of observed phenomena in matters regarding education. During the pre-independence days, our colonial masters trained a limited number of Africans to perform clerical work and junior government posts (Bigala 1978: 48). Despite the great expansion, changes and innovations in education, little seems to have changed in this regard and student's desire to learn is driven by their longing to obtain school certificates, degrees and employment. As Prewitt (1971: 248) laments, upward mobility, economic security and a high standard of living remains the privilege of people who hold degree certificates. It is therefore not surprising that teachers and learners consider success in terms of how best an individual passes an examination while totally disregarding all the other educational aims. Little wonder therefore that education aims in many African countries remain weak and inferior and do not cater fully for the physical growth of learners, which should be treated as importantly as the three R's (Republic of Uganda 1963: 11).

6.1   A Case for a Sound Philosophy?

Any teaching field must have a philosophy, a body of subject matter, and a method that reinforces both subject matter and the philosophy (Bigala 1978: 48). It is clear from the above explanation that many African nations have not formulated any clear and sound philosophies of education,

and their educational aims remain more or less the same as those of the colonial period. However, credit should go to Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere (1922-1999), the first president of the United Republic of Tanzania, for converting his own viewpoints into a sound philosophy of education. In Nyerere (1965: 2), he describes the purpose of education as one that should "… prepare young people to live and serve society and transmit the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of the society." Many African countries have adapted this notion, and his philosophy, education for self-reliance, has become a catchword phrase among many African educationists.

In the olden days when social life was simple, many families in Kenya were extended in set-up. The family provided the child with all activities and experiences she needed. Occupations were centred at the home and village, and the local community served as school life to the child (Bhatia 1989: 56). However, current economic trends have changed so much that the family no longer binds its members as strongly as before. This may be blamed on the introduction of Western culture into African life, which has developed into new institutions, new ways of life, a new people and an overall departure from native tribal culture. Bigala (1978: 42), citing urbanisation as an example, complains that it has brought about a host of social problems, among them the creation of social classes and attitudes formally not associated with our conservative African cultures. Nowadays, for example, people work for profit instead of the traditional communal work previously practiced.

Unemployment is another social problem that can directly be attributed to urbanisation. Unfortunately, there seem not to be an early remedy to this problem because the number of unemployed youth keeps on swelling and cannot be accommodated by the few job vacancies available (Sifuna 1990: 189). Besides, there has been a high rate of rural-urban migration as a growing number of school leavers come to towns from their village homes seeking employment. This has not only ended up creating congestion in the towns, but also deprived the villages of the much-needed rural labour leading to curtailment of agricultural production, which incidentally forms the backbone of most African economies. There has also been a big shift from the strong kinship ties and family loyalties, which previously perpetuated and maintained the high standards of ethics and

morality. Traditional sex roles are no longer maintained as women leave their traditional place in the kitchen and compete with men in waged employment. Sons and daughters no longer seek parental consent to marry and poverty, illiteracy and disease remain a social dilemma that most African nations must contend with. Other problems include the unchecked mushrooming of slum dwellings in cities and major towns, prostitution, crime and juvenile delinquency.

One of the most important functions of school, whether in the industrial West or in poor Africa, is to provide everyone with essential skills needed for daily living. With the marked weakening of the once strong family ties, school remain one the only organised institutions ideally equipped to assume functions previously bestowed on the family and community (Bhatia 1989: 56). As educators, we are inadvertently left with the mammoth task of designing programmes of education that will prepare young people to accept the value of rural employment and not to hanker after white-collar work (Bigala 1978: 49). The programmes so designed should focus more on local needs, labour requirements, and supplement formal schooling with more emphasis on various pre-vocational skills.

Nevertheless, school alone to cannot be expected to provide the answer and educators will rely largely on other socialising agencies to bring about a rural transformation by transmitting the desired values and attitudes to the learner. The other out-of-school agents include the village community, religious leaders, health officials and agricultural extension officers. Community based Non Governmental Organisations also play an important role in making the rural areas sufficiently attractive to the youth. Last but not the least; one must also consider political realities of the situation because public expenditure priorities are determined by economic as well as political considerations.

6.2   Policy and Practice in Schools and Yonder: Wherefore Teachers?

Teachers are no doubt the most important players in the discussion of reform and change within the educational sector. Other than being vital carriers of popular messages in the manner they teach the content of the subject matter, they also act as change agents of this or that ideology. Bacchus (1987: 151) identifies the school curriculum as a major instrument in ideology

reproduction adding that it is handy in transmitting societal values, norms and beliefs to the learner. Besides, the same curriculum can be used to inculcate certain dispositions, which help to pass ideals that the national leadership wishes to indoctrinate in its youth.

Schools are also viewed as institutions with the potential for social transformation and reproducing existing relationships. This particular function is achieved when teachers select, organise and evaluate knowledge so that only certain types of it are imparted to the learners. Even then, such knowledge is controlled by the desires of the people in authority. Overall, the outcome of schooling is a matter of preparing and initiating learners for adult life, knowledge, culture and values that are commonly acceptable.

A teacher's role in the teaching-learning process is essentially to develop individuals capable of fulfilling their potential in varied environments (Blandford 1988: 2). Any attempt to make reforms or changes in the existing system should therefore give due consideration to social and cultural aspects of life, as well as its political and economic horizons. Some matters will no doubt require immediate transitory, but many others may be considered in the end.

Following this argument, the process of change should not be confined in the classroom only, but be extended outside the school environments to tackle other problems that pose hindrances to achieving those objectives. Kenya harbours many nomadic ethnic groups, which have not fully appreciated the value of education as a tool for development. It becomes the responsibility of teachers in such areas to sensitise the parents and impress upon them the need to take their children to school. This could take the form of personal interaction with parents or public meetings. Through such initiatives, enrolment in school can improve and attainment of such declarations like UPE by 2005 and EFA by 2015 can become a reality. In fact, teachers can also address such serious matters as female genital mutilation, child marriages and child labour, which are rampant in those places. Gender equity in education could also be accomplished in the same way in areas where the education of girls is almost taboo.

Another critical factor impeding the change process in education is poverty. Schools especially in the rural areas are hampered by

an acute shortage of classrooms, teachers and teaching and learning materials. Sad as it may sound, many school children in those places attend classes hungry, ill dressed and without most of the basic reading and learning materials. Teachers can help alleviate this situation by educating people about ways and means of adapting themselves to their environment and utilising the resources available in their areas for development. Pastoralists could for example, be helped to understand that animal wealth can help them to support their children in school. Teachers are also recognised as opinion leaders in the community. They could assume this role more seriously and mobilise the community into constructing large classrooms, teachers' houses, and even access roads to schools.

Gender inequality in the community is another area where teachers could focus their attention. As matters stand, the girl-child is the one who suffers most from prejudices that society expresses towards her. Teachers can play an important role in changing attitudes by encouraging a socialisation process that is gender-sensitive within and outside schools. One way of making this notion work is by making school activities open to both sexes. Girls should especially be encouraged never to contend themselves with the customary second-class place because they can be as hardworking and conscientious as boys (Fontana 1988: 240). Illiteracy is yet another social problem that obstructs national development. In this respect Bigala (1978: 44) observes that attempts to improve health conditions in rural areas and productivity on farms are handicapped by widespread illiteracy. Teachers could be assigned the role of providing sustainable education through adult education programmes. They are best placed to encourage the masses to develop the habit of reading books and newspapers and could also be used to write primers in the most basic subjects. Another area of concern is poor health and sanitation. Bigala (1978: 45) attributes this problem to various reasons including ignorance, superstition and lack of a comprehensive health education programme. Educational activities could be used to direct health knowledge and habits among school-going children and the community at large through the consorted effort of teachers and other stakeholders. Eventually, distress arising from such common diseases like kwashiorkor, trachoma, poliomyelitis, tuberculosis and other parasitic and viral

diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS could completely be overcome.

6.3   Enhancing Teacher Competence

Technikon SA (2000: 103) recognises the fact that success in any educational programme depend largely on the outcome of efforts by society to improve the supply of teachers available. Training needs should grapple fully with the issue of teacher-competence not only in their subject areas, but also in other school-related activities. Even as new teachers are being trained to take their places within the sector, in-service training programmes should be set up for existing ones to improve their competence and professionalism. Teachers in Kenya and many other countries in the world are usually treated like an unprivileged group of workers although they are the ones who mould the destiny of the nation. They are underpaid and provided with very poor housing facilities. To make matters worse, they are offered very limited opportunity for personal development and denied a sufficient supply of teaching and learning materials. The same teacher is expected to extend his working hours in order to improve the scores of his learners even as conditions at his place of work are getting worse.

In order to give identity to teachers and the teaching profession, governments should lift their morale by providing them with improved schemes of service including salary and allowance packages. Promotion should be considered on merit and increments on salary should be consistent to the rising cost-of-living index. Teachers should also be encouraged to take up higher courses to improve both their academic and professional standing by granting them study leave with full pay, secondment and prompt redeployment to teach in relevant institution once they have completed their studies. A basic factor that determines the quality of education and training in the country is the quality of its teaching force. Our nations may be poor, but the justification of spending substantial amounts of money on education in the present economic situation is that it is a worthy investment for the future. Job satisfaction and the ability of teachers to perform professionally are key points in coming to terms with the ever-changing nature of our educational needs.

CONCLUSION

Change within schools and across the education sector is vital if we are to improve

practice and achieve quality education for all learners. Governments should therefore put in place principles, philosophies, objectives and policies that drive education towards advancement for the future. Compared to our neighbours, we may have recorded an impressive growth in our effort to provide quality education to the citizenry and in our efforts to meet the challenges of the new world order. However, a myriad of problems are still facing us. Key among them is the provision of adequate teaching and learning materials. Poverty also poses another big challenge that needs immediate attention as a big portion of our population live below the poverty line. For this reason, many parents can neither send nor maintain their children in school because they cannot raise the required user charges. The advent of HIV/AIDS has also had a negative impact on education because of the high number of teachers dying from it and the ever-increasing number of orphans diseased by their parents. This means that every year there are less teachers teaching in our schools and more children dropping out because they have nobody to sustain them there.

Education is a dynamic human activity whose societal needs and demands keep changing, and no government should bury its head in the sand and allow it to remain static even for a moment. Education planners should also acknowledge the important role played by teachers as change agents and engage more with them in bringing the required reforms (Reeve et al 2002: 169). Some good progress seems to be taking place in the formal education sectors in many countries in Africa. At least, children are being provided with a range of courses right from nursery school to the university (Bigala 1978: 119) although much more need to be done to make the systems more relevant to the needs of society. The effectiveness of any educational system is determined in its goals, which should be measurable. This would enable stakeholders to evaluate its achievements within a framework of a certain span of time. Should any weaknesses be revealed, we can put our heads together and come out with meaningful amendments. As (Bigala 1978: 117) argues, the educational system of any country should not be allowed to remain static especially when societal needs are changing.

Although it is appropriate to teach political values in order to instill citizenship values our children, those "nationalistic values" should be guided by pedagogical thought

rather than political ideals (Prewitt 1971: 13). Whatever we teach to children should help them acquire information, skills, values and habits relevant to them. Whereas governments should continue playing an active role in the development of education in the country, it should avoid using what (Technikon SA 2000: 25) refers to as "schoolroom indoctrination" as a channel for revolutionising the minds of young learners. This will be achievable when policy makers will start involving teachers not only in the decision making process in all aspects of education, but also in designing and evaluating the same curriculum they using in their respective classrooms (Prewitt 1971: 3).

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