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## The Youth, the Challenge of the New Educational Order and Development Alternatives

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### **SAP's Negative Impact on Education**

Since the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which started in some African countries as early as the beginning of the 1980s, youths have for the past two decades been hard hit by the cuts in salaries of their parents and the ban on state employment imposed by the so-called adjustment strategies. Within this same period Africa has registered a net population growth of 20 to 30 per cent, that is, from 700,000,000 to about 1,000,000,000 inhabitants between 1980 and 2005. This rapid growth accounts for the very young population of Africa as compared to most countries of Europe and North America (especially the USA and Canada), that have very high and rapidly ageing populations.

The Bretton Woods Institutions and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were quite aware of this youthful population growth in Africa, and indeed in all Third World countries, but did not put in place parallel alternative measures to make use of this dynamic human resource and render it more productive and self sustainable. Instead they concentrated only on financing the reproduction of the neo-colonial state system to maintain the tributary economic system imposed during colonial times. It was still the interest of the metropolitan capital of the neo-colonial structures that had to be taken into consideration and attended to. Therefore, the youth of Africa were still subjected to the type of colonial educational curriculum developed to satisfy colonial needs. Those youths whose parents could no longer afford this colonial form of education were forced to drop out of school, to join the growing jobless young population, who are popularly known as 'sauveteurs',<sup>1</sup> a 'survival of the fittest' category. In short, not even the colonially educated youth were saved from the unemployment

problem. They swell the 'survival of the fittest' category of unemployed youths of Africa.

The high rate of unemployment of the youths and the very low rate of wage earning capacity of their 'extended family' mentors and providers of their basic survival needs create more dependence on meagre extended family budgets. Many local small businesses are forced to close down, especially the small and medium sized businesses, because the autocratic neo-colonial states are the sole providers of liquid cash that circulates in the community through salaries, wages, and payment of local contracting firms. There are thus no other alternatives for employment for the youths since the collapse of the entrepreneurial state.

This reinforces the grip of the autocratic neo-colonial state on civil society, since everybody, just like every business, depends on the omnipotent State for survival and performance. The SAP and the Bretton Woods Institutions' managers were quite aware that the colonial system set in place gave full rein to the state to be the sole employer. Even after so-called independence, no measures were taken to create alternative income generation and employment facilities. One would think, and rightly so, that the Bretton Woods' SAP was intended to prepare for the brain and muscle drain of African youths into the industrialised world.

With very minimal circulation of liquid cash and non-payment of services by the state, poverty becomes as biting as it is unbearable. Most state workers go for months without salaries; just like state contractors wait for months for payment of bonds. The situation is one of state delinquency, where the state is unable to honour its part of the contract both with the civil service for state-employed workers and the civil society of the free-lancers and self-employed. The result is a crime rate that soars, just as the state delinquency rate rises in corruption and lack of transparency. The state, in order to solve its financial and management delinquency problem, is forced by SAP to raise taxes even on basic commodities and services. This high tax raise is destined to garner revenue to pay the immoral debt of the Bretton Woods Institutions. There are no substitutes for the social welfare system where everybody is condemned to the 'survival of the fittest' make-shift strategy and behaviour. This situation strangles and gradually kills all private economic initiatives, especially the small and medium sized businesses and the self-employed who are endeavouring to make ends meet. It also affects the transparency and good governance of state business, thereby raising corruption to its summit. Finally, it contributes to poor productivity and poor performance of the economy at all levels of social participation in state management by civil society.

The salary cuts imposed by SAP to curb government spending so as to amass money to pay for the imposed debts, have earned it the name of "State Approved Poverty", which has created devastating results in the domain of reproductive health and in the general health care of citizens. It has also not only contributed to, but also hastened, the creation of the new brand of African youths popularly known as 'Bush-Fallers' (Natang Jua 2005:22-25) who are forced to expatriate themselves under all forms of hardships to look for survival havens in foreign

lands. The brain and muscle haemorrhage of youths from Africa is very beneficial to the Western capitalist countries – Europe and the USA especially. These highly industrialised countries with rapidly ageing populations need not just the cheap labour and well educated youths to boost the population. They also need the colonially well educated and trained youths of Africa to contribute to the social security of the ageing populations of these countries.

With the present wealth and development of South Africa, it would be difficult to convince South African youth to migrate for good and settle in Europe, the USA or Canada as youths of other countries of Africa are doing today. Instead other African youths are trying to migrate to South Africa. Then just think of what would happen if other countries like South Africa developed in the African continent, or if all Africa became like South Africa. Would any African youth want to smell Europe or America, apart from those who might want to go there just for personal reasons and transactions? But Africa has been condemned to become the poor bowl-in-hand beggar of the world, willing to take whatever rubbish without questioning – the dumping ground for toxic, nuclear and all sorts of industrial wastes – thus becoming the most highly infected continent by the HIV/AIDS pandemic virus and all other health hazards.

With the breakdown of the pre-colonial cultural and traditional social security systems, the African socio-economic and political systems have not provided for an adequate and efficient social security system for all as the cost of health care and security have risen. Yet there is a clamour for the achievement of Millennium Goals for Africa by the year 2015.

### **The Need for an Alternative Structural Adjustment of Educational Policy for African Development**

If we accept Amartya Sen's (1999:53) definition of development as freedom, then the fundamental question is: how does education fit into this scene? If education can be defined as the process of inculcating cultural and traditional values, skills and strategies into an individual to enhance his or her talents in capability towards livelihood-building, then one could agree with Sen that it deals with building the various dimensions of an individual's right to freedom. Anthropometrics implies that freedom is the foundation of being human. According to Amartya Sen:

The objective of development relates to the valuation of the actual freedoms enjoyed by the people involved and the enhancement of human freedom is both the main object and the primary means of development. Individual capabilities crucially depend on, among other things, economic, social, and political arrangements. In making appropriate institutional arrangements, the instrumental roles of distinct types of freedom have to be considered, going well beyond the foundational importance of the overall freedom of individuals.

It is from this standpoint of Amartya Sen's that I would like to consider education as the liberating motor for capacity-building towards livelihood-building for the development of individuals and communities as a con-synergic whole. Since Africans through colonisation have been subjected both to mental and physical slavery, Africa's youth of the Third Millennium have the task of deconstructing its educational philosophy and curricula to recreate and reconstruct that liberating space conducive to productive business development. This means that Africa must review its imposed policy of 'education for all' by the year 2015 in the Millennium Goals and NEPAD's aims for Africa, for the youth especially.

The United Nations' development programmes in Africa and the Third World insist on literacy as if literacy alone is the solution to all development ills. This raises some critical questions and assessments, namely:

- Does it mean that all Africans must go through the same pre-fabricated literacy moulds imposed by the colonial and industrialised powers in the name of education before they can be developed? This falls in line with Paulo Freire's pedagogy (Freire 1985).
- If development is freedom, people-based and people-orientated, does it not mean that people be given the freedom to decide and choose the kind of education that will suit their development needs?
- Since the foundation of development is the participatory and transparent management of the natural and human resources of peoples and communities, is it not a top priority to develop strategic business management curricula for African educational systems?
- Should business management, business philosophy and ethics curricula not become the foundation of education in enhancing development in Third Millennium Africa?

### ***The Need for 'Liberation Education' for African Development: The Question of Language***

The problem of Africa's underdevelopment is the pre-fabricated literacy and educational programmes imposed on Africa from colonisation to the third millennium era. The literacy-imposed programmes as well as the education curricula in Africa have always been, and still remain, very alienating because the freedoms of Africans and their development focus on self-determination have never been given their rightful consideration.

Africans have been taught to communicate and think only in European languages; but never in African languages, except only when used to transmit dominant Euro-American-centric thought, cultural values and religious patterns of belief (witness the transmission of the sacred texts of the grand religions into local languages), behaviour and consumption. This is because they realise that language is the foundation of culture and cultural transmission of values and belief systems. As I indicated elsewhere (Fongot-Kinni 2004), the promoters of the dominant

colonial languages are so aware of their superiority complex and want to maintain these languages at all cost, and at all times, as the foundations of all business management and communication management strategy.

From the intellectual and ideological standpoint, Africans were groomed and sometimes forced to adopt foreign ethnocentric, superior-rating ideologies, and accept bastardising their rich heritage as expressed through their spiritual and material cultures and languages. Intellectualised Africans were obliged to make room with any available space in their brains and souls only for the dominant thought patterns. The irony is that these foreign cultures and languages are very sensitive and protective of their heritage – to a point where they do not hesitate to manifest their hostility to other cultures that infringe on their integrity and survival (witness the work of the Academie Française and English purists in this regard).

Africans are made to believe that it is not proper to question the fact that English is the World Language and the Language for Business Management par excellence. But they forget to realise that languages rise and fall just as Empires and Civilisations have risen and fallen into decay. Once upon a time, it was the language of the Pharaonic Egyptians, then the Phoenicians, the Greeks, the Romans, the French, the British, and today the Chinese have come to stay. Tomorrow, it may be the turn of Africans if they want to liberate themselves from this cyclic domination of colonial and neo-colonial languages by adopting African languages with an international vocation.

But Africans are not trying to critically evaluate the impact the Chinese language will have on world business civilisation in the Third Millennium. As I have mentioned previously, language plays a foundational role in all communication and business management strategies of any people. The African youth of today refuse to question whether African business development would be possible without the enhancement of African literacy in African languages. However, Nigeria, the Congo, the Southern African countries, Tanzania and Kenya are well aware of the role of local languages in business development, and human development as a whole. This is because these countries believe that language is at the centre of every development and business management in progressive liberation terms and that the language that provides this forum or liberation space is the African language, wherever one might want to do business.

The mastery of many languages by businessmen and women is the key to success in business management, communication management and business development. All African long-distance and trans-border businessmen and women are polyglots and masters of many African languages, and are experts in communication management in business capability-building. These are the future liberating business designers and managers, as well as the liberating business educators in Africa for the Third Millennium.

***Freedom to Decide and Choose the Kind of Education that Suits Africa's Development Needs***

In talking about the new brand of youths in Africa whom Lapiro de Mbanga (1987)<sup>2</sup> identifies as 'Sauveteurs', 'Make-shift Survivor Businessmen/women', I inferred that they, like the new unemployed 'creolised geo-urban' social strata, are the capability-deprived category in African human resources, just as they are the greatest asset for enhancing creativity in business production, business management and communication management of Africa in the Third Millennium.

This dynamic youthful human resource is only waiting to be tapped and empowered through capability-building and livelihood-building strategies. The plight of this group is that they are still considered and treated like children or minors without the right to vote, or to decide on the kind of education or business strategy development that would be to their benefit and human development. The unfortunate creative category of this lot is recruited into the classical neo-colonial mainstream category, where they are transformed into inheritors and reproducers of the status quo type of education, for business managers of the status quo neo-colonial states in Africa. In most African countries the youth have been reduced to second-class citizens of executors, and just like the women, they do not have access to the decision and policy making machineries of the paternal state. They are only recruited in the youth wings of political parties which do not give them the liberty to decide on their fate and destiny as the 'so-much-acclaimed' 'leaders -of-tomorrow', by the very leaders who do not give the liberty for deciding on their destiny and future. The tendency of the neo-colonial mercenary states in Africa is to brainwash the youth and transform them into the mass handclapping machine road-side-lining flag wavers for the autocratic and folkloric democratic leaders and Heads of States of Africa. To brainwash the youths the more, these political leaders and Heads of State are perpetually re-elected into power through the established mechanism of the folkloric democracy monsters, while at the same time re-assuring the youth that they are the leaders of tomorrow. At best they are treated as a subaltern socio-political category (vigilantes and vanguards of parties) or relegated to a dependent civil society that only serves to perpetuate personality cult worship – witness the case of President Biya's Youth (PRESBY) and Jeunesse de Chantal Biya (JACHABI).

In short there is no participatory discourse and constructive space between the youth and their bought-off natural 'mentors/teachers' and politicians. Such a discourse implies that the education of youth should follow the andragogic Socratic and Platonian continual, critical and discursive approach or Freire's model of humanising pedagogy (op cit.:55) and not the pedagogic approach. It also obliges educators to give the orientation and freedom to youths to develop their teaching materials and to engage in peer teaching to enhance their freedom of creativity, critical thinking and choice of areas of education that they believe are

relevant to their future needs for developing their capability-building, livelihood-building and well-being. In this regard I would again take the advantage and liberty to call on Amartya Sen (1999:51) to instruct all African educators and development scientists in this regard when he insists on development as freedom:

The ends and means of development call for placing the perspective of freedom at the centre of the stage. The people have to be seen, in this perspective, as being actively involved – given the opportunity – in shaping their own destiny, and not as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs. The state and the society have extensive roles in strengthening and safeguarding human capabilities. This is a supporting role rather than one of ready-made delivery. The freedom-centred perspective on the ends and the means of development has some claim to our attention.

This means that education curricula for the youths of Africa today and the future should respond to the demands of the youths of today and their destiny; with regard to their future needs and their critical approach in evaluating and reconstructing the classical forms of education dispensed in African schools and universities. For instance, most subjects that are studied in schools and universities are very environmental and human-based: whether when dealing with medicine management, technology management and application, natural and human resources management, or business management, one has to deal with the anthropometrics and environ-metrics of capability-building, and capability-provision for individuals and communities in their natural habitat and their socio-economic world.

The pertinent questions of advocacy for change in policy and approach to African education of youths for development in the Third Millennium are:

- How can African youths be expected to be the leaders of tomorrow, and address the needs of their livelihood-building and capacity-provision for the development of Africa if they are not given the freedom for critical discourse on the educational systems that condition their destiny and development process?
- Have African youths ever been given the chance to critically appreciate the anthropometrics and environ-metrics of managing business in Africa?
- If African youths are not given the critical freedom space to deconstruct and reconstruct their colonial and neo-colonial educational curricula, how can they reclaim their own destinies and autonomously determine the development goals of their generation?
- If African youths are not given the critical freedom to experiment on and apply new theories for appropriately creative and productive development, how can they respond adequately to the challenges of the Third Millennium?



***Developing Strategic Curricula for African Educational Systems:  
The Case of Business Management***

The Third Millennium Goals for Africa require among other priorities new strategies for developing education curricula that will lay emphasis on developing multiple talents of young Africans right from the cradle. This will reorient the content of curricula in the domain of pedagogy itself, the basic and applied sciences, social sciences, philosophy, the arts and management. There is a need to give an African dimension to these disciplines and integrate local knowledge systems and technologies within their core content. The case of business management needs some special attention.

The rationale of this proposal is motivated from the anthropometrics of African societies. It has been observed that geo-ethnic communities and socio-economic groups that initiate the mastery of business management right from the cradle, thereby making the acquisition of the techniques of business management as a necessary component in life, are generally richer and develop faster than those that do not. This is the case of communities like the Igbos, the Hausas, the Malenke, the Fulanis/Fulbe, the Ewes, the Ijaws, the Yoruba, the Fon, the Bamileke, the Kongo-Ba-Kassai, and the Wolof, whose business acumen is universally acknowledged. The secret of their success can be said to lie in the fact that they start early in childhood integrating and honing skills and strategies in marketing, money management through savings, banking, lending and investing in other forms of income generating business. These categories of Africans tend to be multi-faceted and multi-dimensional in whatever production they engage in and are also very gifted in communication management and business management. They are essentially multi-lingual in African languages and are experts in cross-cultural management.

Anthropometric observations confirm that these categories of African peoples adapt easily to other African cultures and to Western cultures without necessarily losing their cultural identities. They are more African-inward-looking in development skills and strategies but also more cosmopolitan than most of the other geo-ethnic categories of Africa.<sup>3</sup> They tend to behave like the Jews, the Arabs, the Chinese, the Indians and Pakistanis of Europe and Africa who insist on inculcating their children with their cultural philosophies and values alongside the European and African cultures. These geo-ethnic cultural foundations, alongside with the cross-cultural enhancements, have rendered these particular peoples experts in domestic and world business wherever they are found. In Africa, only the geo-ethnic communities that integrate business management from the cradle as a part of life can rival and even challenge the Jews, the Arabs, the Indians, and Chinese who tend to control even to the extent of monopolising business management in Africa.

Anthropometrics points to the fact that life is the continuous process of acquiring skills and strategies on livelihood management which solely depends on the management of the natural and human resources for profits from the surplus



value of production and for the sustainable development of resources. Pre-colonial Africa provided the space for acquiring the foundation skills on the management of the natural environment and the natural and cultural resources of every people. This enabled the individual to acquire the minimum skills in self-sustainable management, production, distribution and business within the corporate community. For education to be productive and sustainable to development in Africa, the youth must be educated to re-incorporate the African cultural skills in management and create new appropriate curricula for African ongoing development in the Third Millennium.

When Tony Blair takes it upon himself to advocate equipping African youth with skills for developing Africa in the Third Millennium, I seem to believe that he has recognised that the colonial and the neo-colonial syllabi for Africa have not been orientated to respond to and address Africa's development needs. In 'The Blair Report on Africa' (Babendreier 2005) the prime minister of Great Britain insisted on the need to educate African youth and advocated '... Providing funding for all African boys and girls in Sub-Saharan Africa to receive free basic education that equips them with skills for contemporary Africa'.<sup>4</sup> But before Africans should hope and wait for Blair's education funding for Africa that might come too late, or just with other strings attached, it is high time Africans themselves start laying the groundwork for recreating the new curricula for educating the youths of Africa. As the leaders and managers of African resources tomorrow, the youths must be schooled, among other educational requirements, in the basics of business management and resource management in general, as essential tools for sustainable development in Africa in the Third Millennium

### ***Ethics in the Curricula: The Foundation of Education for Africa's Third Millennium Development***

There is a need to infuse ethical values into the curricula at all levels. This ethics could be developed from a variety of sources: primordial African cultures, core universal values derived from the so-called grand religions, social and political philosophy based on rationality, and existential praxis. Bernard Fonlon (1967) highlighted the aim of education as recreating and moulding the spiritual soul in the educated memory in a healthy body.

There is also a need to develop an African philosophy of education, which insists on incorporating spiritual-building and cultural-building values. It is the recognition of this African social and philosophical value of ethical education and its incorporation in all aspects of human and resource management that leads to business management and development of the individual and the community in a sustainable manner. Such an African philosophy of education should consider education as a holistic enterprise of moulding the individual to imbibe the values that will render him or her an ethical being first before anything else. Therefore, any education that does not lead human beings to fulfil life missions

(Fongot-Kinni 2002), which should be the enhancement of human and social life on earth, is of no value.

It is within the social matrix of corrupting colonial and neo-colonisation ethics that it could be confirmed that Africa needs a new mental-liberating and soul-liberating ethical educational order before anything else. This new African Business Ethical Order – (ABEO) – must be founded on the indigenous African social and cultural values of communalism and solidarity. These values must be integrated in the educational curricula with emphasis on human and cultural resource management, for effective international business management, to attain sustainable humane development of Africa in the Third Millennium.

This calls for the designing of curricula for the training of trainers in the new African Business Ethical Order in general and management, whether in public office or private business, bearing in mind the cross-cultural diversities and complementarities of the normative orders and behavioural patterns that build up African civilisations in marketing and exchange in commodities: in real and artificial capital.

### Conclusion

If it can be accepted that the youth of Africa of the 1980s to the Third Millennium are the 'lost generation' (Nantang Jua 2005), the factors contributing to this impasse are basically structural. The Structural Adjustment Programme imposed by the Bretton Woods Institutions in Africa was more preoccupied with one aspect: the recuperation of the debts owed to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It did not care about the fate of the youths who were an important stakeholders in the SAP business. It did not carry out a situational, structural as well as a systemic and anthropometrical analysis to measure the impact its policy would have on the youth sector of the population. It did not care at all to carry out an impact assessment of its policies on the entire systemic interconnected structures of the stakeholders as government decision-makers and executors and the stakeholders as civil society and victims. It did not create alternative structures within the system to address the problem of unemployment of the youths, nor did it create alternative structures within the civil society that would generate employment for the youth. Instead it wasted energy and money on what appeared to be mere mouthwash propaganda on transparency, democracy, the fight against corruption and good governance of the same inadequate structures that were reproducing them. The SAP created a system that was in essence corrupting and enhanced the very endemic corruption that has been promoted by the colonial and the neo-colonial system and the Bretton Woods Institutions in Africa since 1884 through 1945 to the present day.

SAP promoters were and are aware that the education curriculum imposed on the youths from the time of the colonial exploitation of Africa was intended to respond to the needs of colonial exploitation and never for the self reliant and sustainable development of Africa. This curriculum contributed to transform

African youths into Eurocentric clowns, copy-cats, Fey-men and Fey-women,<sup>5</sup> who constitute the growing categories of 'Bush-Faller' outcasts of all sorts, even to the point of becoming mercenaries against their own countries and peoples, in the name of 'going hunting in greener pastures' in Europe, the USA and Canada. The mentality is corrupting and unethical as youths invent compensatory alternatives when they fail to fall within the classical systemic chain of school to work as Nantang Jua has demonstrated. This corrupting and unethical attitude is boosted by the neo-colonial curriculum which has obliterated all fear and respect for ethical values.

This is the reason why the African education of youths for development must be inward-looking for the interest of Africa and Africans; and for the building of the complete human being, spiritually and materially. Africa must develop a new liberating education curriculum for its youths, which must take cognisance of the African values of appropriate proactive development for Africa; and integrate African values of communitarian solidarity. For all is not just economics and unethical capitalism, if at all we must first seek the economic kingdom; nor is all just selfish politics, for the political kingdom of self aggrandisement; it is also for the religious kingdom, a 'City of God' on earth (St. Augustine), with an African religious tolerance that builds on solidarity and communitarian development for the good of all Africans, all Humanity.

## Notes

1. Local term for hawker.
2. Local popular musician.
3. Warnier attributes entrepreneurial spirit of the peoples of the Cameroon Grassfields (West and North West Provinces) to a combination of values of hard work, an inward-looking spirit and cosmopolitanism derived from a long historical past (Warnier 1985, 1994).
4. When Blair limits his attention to 'basic education' it carries with it an evident colonial tinge. One is left to wonder whether basic education can lead to development.
5. Local term for con-men.

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