

Enhancing Information Literacy for Vision 2030 and Beyond: Introducing quality to education

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Abstract

This article is more of a political statement, though the author has no particular interest in politics. It is borne out of the realisation that politics play a major role in national education systems and successes, or, put the other way round, national education is positively or adversely affected by national politics. National policy formulation and budgetary allocations are political processes. The article therefore looks at a cross-section of issues affecting the Kenyan system with a particular interest in the accusations of weakness and failure in order to find a hope and a probable solution. It dwells mostly on local media reports on educational issues, analysing them and seeks to challenge stakeholders to invest more in education, look at the curriculum and to focus education on the kind of society it is expected to produce. In this modern day there is need to equip graduates with life-skills, over and above passing examinations. Information literacy skills enable an individual to conduct independent information research, efficiently retrieve the information using modern technologies, critically evaluate their findings and effectively apply relevant information into their day-to-day situations. This way, individuals would be less prone to making less informed decisions and being swayed by social currents. They would also become more successful in performance of their job tasks, become evidence-based practitioners and achieve life-long learning. This would be an information competent generation marching on to the achievement of Vision 2030 and beyond.

Key Words: Kenya; Vision 2030; Literacy; Quality Education; 8-4-4 System

Introduction

Education is the single most important factor essential for economic growth, technological advancement, social-cultural sophistication, healthy living and successful political governance. Nelson Mandela affirms this and states that education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world (van der Rheede, 2009). Education is more than speaking a foreign language. It encompasses the development of skills and competencies essential to navigate through life and efficiently and effectively perform productive tasks necessary for maintenance and enhancement of life. It therefore has to be looked at holistically and not just as a process where children or individuals go through a school system. It has to be viewed from the end product also; the graduates who will emerge from this system and the consequent society created.

According to the World Bank (2005), education must impact on national economic development and poverty reduction. The proclaimed development of the western world may be seen as commensurate to the superior literacy levels. Advanced literacy enables critical judgement and entrepreneurship which are critical for the choices an individual makes in every sphere of life. Individuals are therefore able to study and criticise information available to them,

including decisions made by their leaders which impact on their society. They are consequently able to make investment and career choices which propel their socioeconomic development.

The Kenyan government sees provision of education and training to all Kenyans as fundamental to the success of overall development strategy (Government of Kenya, 2005). Not endowed with rich mineral resources which aid development in many nations, and faced with a fast rate of globalisation and internal social upheavals, Kenya's only hope lies in re-assessing and refocusing her education system to invest more in her wealth of human resources (Kenya, MOEST, 2004). Furthermore, education is paramount for bridging the knowledge gaps between privileged and under-privileged communities, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, agricultural production, healthy living, industrial development and economic empowerment.

Information Literacy

Education should be about literacy which implies the “ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society” (UNESCO, 2004). On the other hand, Lau (2006) describes information literacy as the ability to find right information and use effectively. It is the ability to access information efficiently and effectively, evaluate information critically and competently and use information accurately and creatively. An information literate person is skilled in information-gathering strategies, critical thinking skills for selecting, discarding, synthesizing and presenting information in innovative ways to solve real-life problems. It is the ability to use complex information from a variety of sources to develop meaning or solve problems. Therefore, an information literate person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information. As education is a continuous process the information literate person is one who has learnt how to learn; knows how knowledge is organized, how to find information and how to use information such that others can learn from them. This therefore incorporates lifelong learning. An information literate student, professional or citizen is therefore able to benefit from the worlds of knowledge and incorporate the experiences of others into one's background, thereby employing evidence-based practice in their daily functioning (Weber and Vonhof, 2009).

The level of competitiveness in modern society requires increased information literacy skills for daily decision making. Already there is increased investment in the establishment of necessary information infrastructure to make available advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) essential for information delivery, access and use. Education must therefore embrace more than just alphabetic and functional literacy to include information literacy –critical location, evaluation and use of information, digital information literacy –blending modern technology with information, and social literacy –effective communication in a cultural context (Bruce, 2003). The education system in place in Kenya must therefore do more to equip pupils and students with not only reading and writing skills, but also with necessary information literacy skills.

Educational reforms

The 8-4-4 system of education in Kenya has come under criticism as questions of its quality, curriculum and end product are raised (Kamande, 2009; Waweru, 2009; Wanjiku, 2009; Siringi, 2009; Ongalo, 2009; Mutisya, 2010). The 8-4-4 system has been accused of being sub-standard or too overloaded. The 8-4-4 system was introduced to focus on vocational training whereupon the matriculating student would be equipped with skills that would enable them eke a living –not necessarily lead happy successful lives. Thus, the first problem of the 8-4-4 system is that, its emphasis is on school dropouts, those who fail to complete a given course (Chase, 2006). The system may therefore have contributed to the high rate of school dropout in Kenya. It fails to achieve the very aim it set out to achieve; it is not aimed at excellence and advanced skilling.

The 8-4-4 system brought in a heavy curriculum with over 13 subjects while the previous curriculum had only six. The expanded curriculum required more financing to facilitate. The system was introduced at a time when there was an economic crunch. Donor agencies, unable to sustain support for the government introduced Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) requiring that stakeholders, especially parents cost-share to keep their children in school (Rono, 2002). The poor parent, faced with other survival issues and now the burden of increased cost of education and required also to contribute towards the availability of school facilities could not handle all the pressure. These two factor heavy workload at school and lack of school fees--can be traced as the main reasons for a high school dropout rate (Somerset, 2007; Bedi, Kimalu, Manda & Nafula, 2002). Therefore, school drop outs are left with no life skills and few vocational skills.. They were also skills that every other person basically had and this increased the competition. To refine these skills so as to beat the competition one had to go to school, which was impossible. As a result of the vicious cycle, destitution set in and with it frustration (Rono, 2002). People had to use brawn to survive and therefore brute criminality set in. A true man-eat-man society had been created.

For the next decade and a half, the nation has continued to churn out of its school system people with minimal survival skills. Results from the KCPE and KCSE examinations testify to this, as in both, less than half of those who sit these exams, progress to the next level. Of the 2008 graduates, only 20,000 of them got admitted to the public universities, leaving out a total of 52,500 students who attained the minimum required grade of C+ (Siringi, 2010). Already, primary school enrolment is not a hundred percent, and only 38% of those children who enrol in class one go on to finish at class eight (Ndurya, 2009). If only half of class eight graduates go on to secondary school, where does the other more than half go? If only less than 10% enrol in universities, what happens to the 90%, bearing in mind the high secondary school dropout rate, and that more than 50% score below grade D in KCSE (The Steadman Group, 2009)? These are pertinent questions that education stakeholders must address if the Kenyan society is to be redeemed.

In Kenya, one is described as a minor or a child until one reaches 18 years of age. It means that children at age 13, 14 and 15 years drop out of school (in the name of ‘finishing’ standard eight) and have to seek alternative ways of living. Usually, at this stage the parents are unable to handle the rebellious teenager who has “finished” school. The local use of the phrase “finished school” may have a wrong connotation especially to the child and also to society. While information literacy envisions learning that is never ceasing, the person who thinks they have “finished school” already sees no value in continued learning and information seeking and

use in daily decision-making. This goes on to entrench the prevalent culture of a non-reading society (Indangasi, 2000; Shahonya, 2008; Mbae, 2004?).

Since most children cannot sit at home and wait grow to be 18, they are forced by circumstances to join the labour market therefore complicating the already bad situation of child labour (Manda et al., 2003). Secondly, they are expected and are usually admonished to start behaving as adults. They therefore go out and do the things that adults do. They work –usually in exploitive situations where they develop a low self-esteem and low self-worth. As “adults” they are independent to make any choices they deem fit: they get involved in criminal activity and premature sex. They get killed as criminals, die of sexually transmitted diseases, mostly HIV and AIDS, or the girls go back home to the same parents they left, with the added “baggage” of an unwanted pregnancy and/or child, if not children. This makes matters worse for the already aging parent, who could not support the girl alone in the first place. This repeats the vicious cycle of poverty and want as meagre resources are stretched to meet ever increasing needs (Nafula, Onsomu, Mwabu and Muiruri, 2005; Mensch, Clark, Lloyd and Erulkar, 1999).

Disparity also sets in as the children with whom they sat in the same classroom, played games together and shared faithful friendship, but managed to go on to secondary school, return for the mid-term break or school holiday speaking a “foreign language”. The two children can no longer see eye-to-eye, as one is becoming more sophisticated (labelled proud)- and the other is disadvantaged. They can also not play together because their goals are now different, one wants to find out how to make some extra money to survive while the other wants to study and pass the next exam. One is required to ‘behave like an adult’ while the other is still pampered and told s/he is a child and should not engage in certain activities. This is where the seeds of social classes are planted. If they stick together, one vision will be terminated. Usually the school-going child will be tempted to start making money like the one not in school, even if the money is made illicitly. They get lured into sex or drugs, either out of envy and malice or cheer naivety on both. Only in rare cases, where the one not going to school is so determined that they may be influenced to seek schooling in any way possible (Gitonga, 2010). Dropping out of school has very negative effects on socio-economic development of any society.

The government, in acknowledging the challenges posed by 8-4-4’s heavy curriculum has constantly endeavoured to downsize it, adjust it, drop subjects, make others lighter and give children options and choices, just to see which fits best (The Standard, 2002). This has brought about the new Alternative A and Alternative B syllabuses, aimed at bright students and weak students respectively. It must be clearly pointed out that making subjects lighter and optional just to improve final year examinations scores cannot be a strategy for a nation that seeks to be a centre for technological excellence by the year 2030. The curriculum must be rationalized but excellence and highest standards for each subject taught must be sought if Kenya is to become the hub it is aimed to be in Vision 2030 strategy. Children need to be guided and encouraged as prevailing deficiencies in the system and poor student attitudes may be to blame for poor grades (Owondo, 2010; Kalambuka, 2010).

It is encouraging to note the introduction of free primary schooling which saw an increased enrolment and a return to school of individuals who may have earlier given up on ever getting and education. However, these gains must be built upon and not lost (The Standard, 2010; UNESCO, 2005). The reforms being implemented by the government to increase access to secondary schools must be commended and more must be done to ensure no child is seen to drop out of school after primary level (Kenya, MOEST, 2004; Daily Nation, 2009). School fees and levies must be controlled and the initial spirit of keeping children in school even when there are

outstanding balances should be maintained. The government should seek to ensure that next to each primary school there is a secondary school ready to take up children after the primary level. This does not mean that a child should only join the secondary school adjacent to their former primary school as at this level, a child who is able can join a school away from home. This should be encouraged as it can provide a great opportunity for cultural exchange. But for those not able to afford boarding fees, public day schools near where the children are should come in handy (Kimalu, Nafula, Manda, Mwabu and Kimenyi, 2001; Onsomu, Muthaka, Nware and Kosimbei, 2006). No child below the age of 18 years should be elsewhere but in a formal school until they sit the form four examinations. Even the girls, who would have the misadventure of getting pregnant when in school, should be allowed a year or so to take care of the child and then be rehabilitated back into the school system to complete her studies (Kibaki, 2006; Abdi, 2009, Vukets, 2009; Awino, 2010). To discourage laxity and delinquency, where children also become stubborn and willingly drop out of school, Kenyan society should seek ways of making life more challenging for school dropouts. An alternative informal education system –not classroom-based- should be initiated where individuals who inadvertently dropout of school can continue to learn and attain further skills (Finland, Ministry of Education, 2009). Sadly, a whole generation feels wasted and lost by actions not of their own doing.

Private and International Schooling

Meanwhile most people who can afford, including the same politicians who endorsed this system prefer the other systems and will pay and arm and a leg to ensure their children go through these. Others put their children in private schools either offering the same curriculum but under better educational conditions, or those offering an international curriculum, e.g. the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (Tooley, 2006; *The Standard*, 2009). There are those who, after secondary school, opt to take their children especially to Uganda for the A-levels and then on to Makerere University or other international universities. Still others take their children abroad for a completely different system of education. Those in these other curricula claim to have a superior education with well rounded, properly refined graduates equipped with creative and critical thinking skills (Waweru, 2009). To note is the many graduates from the United Kingdom and other nations who just after high school and before joining universities, have skills to create jobs for themselves and others. A few have come to Kenya to provide mentorship programmes to their age-mates and peers (Ayodo and Otieno, 2010).

Kenyan graduates on the other hand, even at and after university, still do not know what their career choices are: they do not know what they have trained for, what they want to do with their lives or where else to go; they are jacks of all trades and masters of none (Ongalo, 2009). In the second year of their training at university they are still changing courses. Others even at the end of the course are still complaining that the course they wanted to do or they would have chosen is not the actual one they trained in; that some were forced by their parents to take certain courses (Kahihu, 2008; Kweyu, 2009a; Osoro, Amundson and Borgen, 2000). All they know is that somebody should create jobs for them somewhere where they then can be employed, prospects of which are getting dimmer by the day (Gachenge, 2009).

Our neighbouring nations with whom we are supposed to compete have different curricula. While we must not follow the same curriculum, though this may be preferable more so with the envisaged East African integration, there is need to have an educational system that is superior. Our graduates would be ready for the modern day job market, and where, if jobs are not

available, they would be ready to initiate and create jobs themselves (Kweyu, 2009b; Ombuor, 2009). Equally, the breadth and length of the country should be hospitable, habitable and welcoming, ready for the ever-increasing population, ready to invest.

The language content of the curriculum needs to be looked into also. In a bid to avoid losing our native languages, it may be prudent to encourage the learning and use of vernacular languages (Woolman, 2001). This should not however be used to promote tribal hegemony and jingoism, but simply for cultural identity and preservation, as captured in the Kenyan Draft Constitution (Committee of Experts on Constitutional Review, 2010). Further, to encourage tribal and cultural integration Kenyans should be encouraged to learn and be able to communicate in one or more other tribal languages of one's choice, over and above their vernacular. Above all there is need to introduce another international language in the curriculum, apart from English and the national Kiswahili. The aim here should be to prepare our graduates for the international job and commercial market. The need for excellence should be demanded unless one wants to pursue a career in the language or literature. Already there is no perfection in both Kiswahili and English though these are taught from early on. That there is debate on the place of Kiswahili itself is telling (Daily Nation, 2010). The fear of imperfection and failure in a third language should therefore not exist. The purpose of introducing such a language should be to equip the graduates with a "working knowledge" of the language, where they can speak, read, write and communicate in the said language. If one lands a job in an area where the continued use of the language is required, they can work towards perfection then. Former United Nations Secretary General Dr. Kofi Annan, respected in Kenya for his role in resolving the post-election conflict is as able to speak a few Ghanaian languages as well as perfect English and French (Sales, 2001).

Investing in education

There is therefore need for the government to heavily invest in education. It has been said that if one may think education expensive, one should [not] try ignorance. It may be possible to link third world poverty, ill-health and socio-economic retrogression to low levels of literacy. The reason why the government should take initiative in investing in education is that it is easier and cheaper to govern a more educated society than a less educated one. The Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress (2000: Introduction) reports that:

Experience, training, and education are the three main mechanisms for acquiring human capital, with education being primary for most individuals. Education facilitates the acquisition of new skills and knowledge that increase productivity. This increase in productivity frees up resources to create new technologies, new businesses, and new wealth, eventually resulting in increased economic growth. ... the returns to individuals and society from education are substantial.

Just as it would rather have parents and guardians themselves invest in education, government as the national guardian of all who live within its confines should lead the way. So if it expects parents to invest in their children education-wise, it should itself invest in its people education-wise. It is for its own good. It will ease all other areas of governance that would be demanded of it, from control of crime, to reduced health costs and highly improved economic investment and growth. Similarly, Jorgenson and Fraumeni (1992) also identify a direct link between national

educational investment and economic growth. If Vision 2030 is to be achieved, education must play a key role (Kenya Government, 2007; Otieno and Colclough, 2008).

The losses made during the post election violence, in terms of personal losses, business losses, losses in tourism earnings, destruction of property, and the loss of life were massive. All these can be attributed to ignorance and lack of proper education, which through skewed policies has entrenched social inequalities (Mbugua, 2008; Kumba, 2009). Computed into monetary value, billions of shillings were lost. More billions are lost daily as a result of ignorance. Then funds are raised for internally-displaced persons (IDPs), for forest evictees, for victims of floods and famine, health-related issues and other “natural” disasters, all of which could have been mitigated through proper education. Investing in education would not only save this money but contribute immensely to economic growth. Well educated people are excellent consumers of services and goods as they are empowered. Investing in education would mean increased consumption resulting in increased revenue for government. An illiterate society implies a drain on government revenue as it results in ‘fire-fighting’ tactics to solve the problems of society.

One of the most precious resources in Kenya is her human resource and invest in the development of this resource is paramount. Skilling up the work force through relevant skills development and education (Palmer, 2007) must therefore become a core component of the Vision to make Kenya a prosperous middle income nation by 2030. Kenya must work to enable her citizen access the best education locally, at almost no cost on their part. She must then go ahead to provide a climate where the attained skills are utilised and best returns received, thus curbing brain-drain that weakens developing nations (McGrath and Akoojee, 2007). The biggest budget will continue to go education, which must be viewed as an investment, and then conditions availed for a return on that investment.

Peace and stability must be ensured within our borders, and efforts to pursue peace in our neighbouring nations should be intensified. All regions in the nation must be equitably developed and investment increased to stem rural urban migration, with most people seeking settlement in Nairobi. Other cities and towns must be established with similar amenities to Nairobi to ensure increased access. National institutions and offices can be headquartered elsewhere away from Nairobi to take government closer to the people. Instead of a situation where Nairobi is Kenya and Kenya is Nairobi, other cities can ease the pressure on Nairobi by developing their own city and town systems. National expansion must be pursued at all costs. Individuals and companies would then be able to set up investments around these new institutions and towns. It must be known that when people are provided with money they intend to spend it and it therefore remains in circulation. But while it is withheld, it tends to be rare and people slide into more poverty, their spending power diminished and no money is in circulation. This repeats the cycle of poverty.

This was one of the devastating results of the Structural Adjustment Programmes, among other factors (Mkadawire and Soludo, 2003). The nations that supported SAPs, themselves enjoyed free education for their citizens while prescribing for dirt-poor African citizens to pay for their own education. It must be noted that the decades of the eighties, especially in Africa were characterized by the highest levels of corruption and embezzlement of public resources. In effect, the prescribers of these SAPs were willing to condone massively corrupt governments to keep African citizen poor while they did business with these same governments and used their citizens as guinea pigs to carry out their various experimentations –with medicines, weapons and economic models. Further, while the World Bank and International Monetary Fund were giving these prescriptions, they were only concerned with their business and profits as they encouraged

governments to obey their conditionalities if they were to get more aid, which is only given as loans and have to be paid back, with interest (Manudu, 1997; Ng'weno, 2007). This is the best model of neo-colonialism and continued subjugation of Africans pursued by the west. Evidently, some advice comes with vested interests and should be ignored or done away with (Warah, 2010b).

Change in the Curriculum

As has already been seen, the 8-4-4 curriculum brought in over 13 subjects to be covered by the students. With it came increased costs of textbooks, raw materials, equipment and facilities needed to facilitate the vocational aspects of the studies. There was increased workload for the teacher and student and the demand for more school hours. Many children could not handle these and therefore dropped out. The need for suitably qualified teachers increased in tandem with increasing population. There is therefore need to critically look into our education system so as to introduce efficiencies and ensure it effectively produces graduates well equipped for modern day life experiences. Stop-gap measures over the years have proved inadequate as standards have remained low. On one hand, the system has been seen to be more a failure than a success as only about 25 percent of Kenyan children access secondary education and only about 20% of these progresses to any form of tertiary education (The Steadman Group, 2009). This implies that only less than 10% of the population acquires some measure of information literacy skills.

A serious re-look at the curriculum is a must if this nation is to meet its objectives for vision 2030. Constitutional reforms alone cannot bring about needed change and development. They must be coupled by a complete change in societal attitudes, which can only be best achieved through quality education. A good education would ultimately equip individuals with requisite information literacy competencies thereby improving job performance, social lifestyles and political participation. The rest of the world is refocusing its education in this line through information and communication technologies (Semenov, 2005). Information literacy is the bedrock of this progression.

Purpose of Education

The aim of this education must be thoroughly focused. The colonial government initially had one aim: to train Africans to be servants, so that upon graduation at any and all levels, they'd be employed by the Europeans. After independence it was important that the government needed to train people to take over the civil service and other jobs that were being forsaken by the leaving colonists. Between the 1950s and up to late 1970s, a Kenyan who had even the most modest of education was likely to find a job with a government department or agency as anyone able to read and write was welcome (Eshiwani, 1990; Mboya, 1963; Sifuna and Otiende, 2006; Woolman, 2001). However, during the same period more Kenyans attained higher levels of education helped by the more opportunities availed by the government through free education. They became more skilled as the world was also experiencing a technological change ushering in an age of sophistication and increased competitiveness.

Political incompetence and corruption also ensured that nation did not develop at the same rate as the population demanded. Cronyism and nepotism saw incompetent staff retained in the civil service and others employed even as more well-trained graduates continued to be churned out of the education system with skills that required employment (Wrong, 2007). It was

not realized that once we got the staff we needed in the civil service, there was a need to change the focus of our education from producing employees to producing more of employers. Instead, poor fiscal, business and economic government policies or lack of them appear to frustrate would-be employers and investors. Producing employee graduates seemed to be the emphasis of our education system and a popular song was even composed to encourage children to study so as to secure “good jobs” in the future: “*Someni vijana, na muongeze pia bidii, Mwisho wa kusoma mtapata kazi nzuri sana*” [Study, young people, and put more effort into it; at the end of your studies, you will get good jobs]. Children eagerly pursued education but sadly could not get the good jobs as promised. Consequently later generations found no value in education and hence dropped out (others could not continue due to the factors already mentioned).

In Kenya, career guidance and life-skills has for a long time not been part of the education system. Many children therefore go through school without a clear concept of where they aim to go. Those who pass their exam and can afford to pay the fees, remain in school because it is smooth sailing while those who seem not to do well academically opt out because they find no value in the school system. Guidance and counselling including career guidance as has been identified of late must be entrenched into the school system right from early elementary education stages (Kweyu, 2009a; 2009b; Nyutu, 2007; Kithyo and Petrina, 2002). Mentorship should be inculcated in all schools both rural and urban. While many children in the urban areas are more informed and grow up with career choices in their minds, their rural counterparts grow up not knowing much about the world. It must be emphasised that the purpose of education must not be that one “secures a good job” but so that one can enjoy an improved standard and quality of life. A good job is not the end; it is a means to an end. Human beings, like well manufactured sophisticated equipment and machines, must position themselves towards achieving efficiency and effectiveness as opposed to production and activity.

The human resource Kenya prides in is that Kenyans “work very hard”. Efficiency in human resource in the modern world has been shaped to “work smart”. Working smart is a concept where in a world of increasing costs and demand for speed, one seeks to employ the least inputs to achieve maximum outputs through knowledge. One uses contextual intelligence to plan and alter behaviour aimed at efficiently and effectively attaining a given goal (Sujan, Weitz and Kumar, 1994). People employ modern technologies which take less human energy but produce excellent result. Computers, robots and such other equipment are manufactured for this very purpose. Kenyan graduates must seek the cutting edge in the competitive market where information propels their productivity. This is what is being referred today as the knowledge economy or information age. Today, it is not how hard one works that gets them ahead, it what one knows. With an inadequate education in Kenya, it is WHO one knows that gets people ahead, bringing about unfair competition, cronyism, nepotism, tribalism, corruption and other negative vices that threaten the very fabric of society. Tribal clashes and post-election violence witnessed in 2007-08 is a repercussion of these and can therefore be attributed to our education system (Ng’weno, 2007; Manundu, 1997) and ultimately lack of information literacy.

Instead of training to be an employee, the education system should be such that individuals train with a focus on being job creators and employers –business owners, large-scale farmers, and farmers of special products that have high returns, manufacturers, innovators, creators and technology wizards. The catalyst that is lacking must be found to sharpen and enhance the skills of graduates. While it is good to encourage people to learn in school, it may be more appropriate to teach people that education is wider than just a job (Warah, 2010). In the words of another popular song, “*Hata wewe mwanangu, amka kumekucha, kwani hizi ndizo saa*

za kwenda shule. [...] Elimu ndio msingi wa maendeleo” [Even you my child, wake up dawn has broken, it is time to go to school ... Education is the foundation for development]. The education system therefore should change to one that focuses on personal growth, critical judgement and social development. Children should be educated not to be employees, but to have knowledge, wisdom, understanding and intelligence. They then should use these qualities they way they deem best, being well informed (Palmer, 2007; The Standard, 2010). A few would be employed in the government as the civil service would need to function, but that would not be the focus of going to school. This would highly mitigate the levels of unemployment, estimated at 40% as at 2008 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010)

School life

The system should also change from being examination-oriented to being school-life based (Mongolia, 2007; Bwana, 2009). The entire school life would be documented: academics, sports, the arts, personality, hygiene and people skills. Right from class one, all aspects of a child’s life should be trained, examined and documented and an average or mean score regarded as their performance. Aptitude tests should be introduced where the child’s perception is measured. This would enable better self understanding. A child would know in which areas s/he is strong in and those in which she is weak in. Consequently, they can either focus more energy in refining what they are good at so as to be the best in the area, or they can also pay extra attention to the areas of weakness and improve on them. This way, the idea where private schools and academies drill children into passing exams and not being wholly educated would cease. Education should be about producing a complete, well-rounded whole person, not just passing exams. It should also inculcate personal skills and skills that will be useful in the job and business world (Kigotho, 2009; Wanjiku, 2009; Ongalo, 2009).

University Education

Universities and university education is essential for development (Mutisya, 2010; King 2007). With national expansion must come expansion and increase in the number of universities, university places and other tertiary institutions. Apart from training and equipping students with skills essential for development, university life is historically known to cause development of settlements whereby non-university communities establishes themselves around a training institution in a bid to supply necessary goods and services. Shops, entertain spots, transport, other learning institutions, religious organisations and institutions tend to come together around a university in order to provide supportive services. This tends to generate a completely new community and cities are known to have developed as a result. Those matriculating from secondary schools if qualified should all be absorbed into universities to pursue courses of their choices and in which they fit best. Reforms in the higher education sector are urgently needed focusing on quality training and quality of education while increasing enrolment for improved national development (Daily Nation, 2010; Kigotho, 2009; Kamande, 2009).

The National Youth Service (NYS)

The National Youth Service (NYS) should become the National Right of Passage. Every single Kenyan youth, upon attaining 18 years should go to the National Youth service for at least 6

months at government expense. All Kenyans, whether they ‘completed’ earlier school or not, physically challenged or not (as long as one is not mentally challenged or bed-ridden) should all go to the NYS. It is here that the youth would be trained into a national culture, dealing one fatal blow to tribalism and corruption and most unethical behaviour. The quasi-military training with the personal discipline and responsibility instilled in the individual is most essential to put a demand on excellence in the Kenyan character (Aron, 2010). For the attainment of vision 2030, a moral and ethical behaviour is demanded of the individual and the nation (Ikiara, 2010; Kenya Government, 2007).

The NYS curriculum should be detailed to have more life skills, financial skills, people skills, personal safety and national security, cultural diversity, hygiene and environmental concern. Graduates should possess entrepreneurial/professional/vocational skills and a changed attitude towards self, fellow man and country. One should be trained in a national ethic, a national culture, and a national psychology as opposed to an ethnic/tribal culture, ethnic psychology, ethnic stereotype and/or the complete lack of ethics. Education at the NYS should play a crucial role in helping destroy age old cultural practices that hold society back. Ethical practice and hard (smart) work must be instilled. The ANC Freedom Charter of 1955 saw education as aimed at teaching the youth to “love their people and their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace” (African National Congress, 1955). This should be the ultimate goal of the Kenyan education system.

The same education system should thoroughly train and equip teachers and trainers for effective delivery. Through economic reforms educators should be adequately remunerated and motivated. Just as it is possible to remunerate and motivate political leaders so as to participate in national debate and development, so should it be with educators as people who play the biggest role in shaping society. There is need to increase the number of teachers to rationalise teacher-to-child ratios for effective teaching to take place (Deolalikar, 1997). Teachers and educators should be thoroughly trained in modern technologies and information literacy in order to ensure they are able to cope with the modern child who is highly exposed as well impart the essential information literacy skills (Semenov, 2005).

Information Literacy

As identified earlier, information literacy is the acquiring of skills necessary to access, evaluate and creatively use information, becoming an independent learner who demonstrates a proactive social responsibility (ALA, 1989). As information literacy is about lifelong learning, the training in information access and use should start early in life and continue into adulthood and on to old age. Availability and accessibility of information literacy tools is therefore essential to the learner.

A lot of learning starts early at home for the growing child. Families that can afford purchase children books and learning materials and make them available for their children. While government has been seen to encourage and invest in a national and public library system, a lot is yet to be done. There should be government policy for the establishment and stocking of a school library in every established school, manned by a person trained in information science. Libraries should be made accessible to the children as much as possible as through reading, one is able to grow their imagination and see possibility as well be kept from delinquency (Mbugua, 2008). From an early age children should be exposed to reading, studying and research. With a sound education system that seeks to inculcate values more than pass exams (Bwana, 2009), it

would be possible to create room to educate children in independent learning skills available in libraries. Advancement in these skills should continue as the child grows to include technological literacy (computer and other equipment) and media literacy (information carriers and presentation) (Lau, 2006). The information science course in itself must adapt to the changing society and have a major component of its modules as information literacy skills training. The information worker should be trained to train information users in information literacy.

The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All of 2000, in line with the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, 1990, all made various commitments to quality education and training (Unesco, 2000; 1990). Ten and twenty years later, these goals are still to be met, yet remain as noble now as they were then, if not more. Goal number three and number six of the Dakar Declaration should inform and drive the national agenda for strengthening information literacy in all sectors of society. These commit to ensuring that the learning needs of all people, young and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes (*Goal 3*) and that there is improvement of all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all especially in literacy [...] and essential life skills (*Goal 6*). An informed and an information literate population is such an outcome.

The establishment of a Techno-City, the setting up of digital villages, the rolling out of ICTs in schools, and the landing of the various undersea fibre optic cables are a testimony to the need to quickly access and use information in order to compete globally. This can only be achieved through capacity building in the area of information skills (Tilvawala, Myers and Andrade, 2009). These facilities may go unutilized or misused as possible users appear incapable of making the most efficient and effective use of them. Information overload is also an incapacitating experience, hence the need to equip consumers with information access, retrieval, evaluation and use skills.

Recommendations

- That the gains made in free primary education should not be lost (through corruption or otherwise) but must be built upon. Education for all by 2015 must be achieved
- Secondary education must be availed for all children. No child below the age of 18 years should be elsewhere but in a school pursuing formal education. A secondary school should be established next to every primary school to help mop up the primary school leavers.
- Education should not be for the purpose of passing exams but for the purpose of producing wholesome individuals who are information literate, whether academically gifted or not. Academic excellence should be just but one aspect of success; personal, social, cultural and physical excellence should be equally important and should be cultivated within the school system.
- Government should invest heavily in education, both for the children and the training of educators. Equally, the educators should be well remunerated and motivated to do their job. The initial investment may be high but the returns are also higher and with a highly literate society, there is every chance of breaking even and reducing the cost of investing in education. This responsibility should not be left to parents and those who want to profit from the education system.

- The hallmark of every educational centre, every school should be a functioning library, manned by qualified information professionals. This should prepare every learner for a life of information use, becoming an independent learner and ultimately a lifelong learner.
- The national youth service should become mandatory for all Kenyan youths. Upon matriculation from high school, each one should have a mandatory stint at the NYS for training in discipline, personal responsibility, security and a national ethos.
- At each level library and information literacy training should be conducted to ensure that Kenyan graduates are thoroughly equipped with job performance and necessary life skills
- At least two international languages should be taught to ensure that Kenyans can work and fit easily in the international arena. Knowledge of other African languages and vernacular should also be encouraged.
- Information Literacy module should be a core course in the training of librarians and information personnel at all levels. Teachers and educators should also be thoroughly trained in IL.

Conclusion

Governments the world over are reengineering their education to be in line with modern information and communication technology driven world, or the knowledge society. Kenya seeks to play a participative role in this area. The education system and curriculum must not be subject to political whims of individuals and parties, bent on winning elections. Sound policies and curriculum must be put in place that will outlive politicians and parties. Government must ensure there is increased funding and investment in the Kenyan human resource in order to move away from the cycle of poverty, crime, and violence. The education system must therefore be geared towards making graduate information literate rather than coaching them to pass exams and secure jobs. Only then can they know when information is needed and efficiently retrieve it from the available sources using modern technology. They should be able to critically evaluate information for usefulness and relevance, constructively criticise the vendors of information and then effectively use the relevant information to meet daily challenges and answer life's questions which they face. No longer would they be held hostage by variant views without critical judgement, while this would also enhance task performance and socio-political participation. Information literacy is life literacy. It is the achievement of total emancipation, for which the founding fathers of the nation advocated and fought for when they said that freedom would help them defeat poverty, illiteracy and disease.

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