Educational reconstruction and post-colonial curriculum development: A comparative study of four African countries

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Nation-building in modern Africa has faced the challenge of integrating multi-cultural traditions. Reform of inherited educational systems that largely functioned to maintain the colonial order of dependency and elitism has been an essential part of this task. Reconstruction of curriculum to reflect indigenous traditions, social change and empowerment was advocated by African critical theorists from the late 19th century to the present. This paper surveys African reform thought and curriculum development in Kenya, Mali, Mozambique and Nigeria since independence. Comparative analysis focuses on the inclusion of African culture, history and language in curriculum and innovation in methodology. Finally, African initiatives are contrasted with reconstructionist theory that integrates traditional culture with the demands of modernisation.

African education, cultural relativity, curriculum reform,
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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between education and national development in Africa continues to be a question of critical concern in many countries. Education should function as an agency of cultural transmission as well as change; it should also reflect the dynamic process of nation-building that is continually being modified by new conditions.

The school's effect on culture and its role as a conveyer of culture are issues of great political sensitivity in most countries. Although early European nation-states evolved as the political expression of one culture, most countries today include people of many cultures. Most African states, for example, have high levels of cultural and linguistic diversity. This situation presents many challenges for schools, which are expected to cultivate a common national spirit and unity. Some obvious questions that are asked in many nation-states are whether and how diversity can coexist with unity. Another issue is whether national values can ever have as deep a significance as the moral and social foundations of any particular culture.

Schools can play a significant role in mediating the relationship between particular cultures and the nation-state. National stability and strength depend on effective integration of plural traditions. Under colonialism, cultural diversity was submerged by the exclusion of most African traditions from education. An alternative reconstructive approach would identify the common values within diverse traditions and integrate these with modern content and skills. Educational reconstructionism aims to build a common civic culture based on mutual

respect for cultural differences and acceptance of a social compact based on global standards for human rights.

The idea of nationalism implies something original or unique about the people who live in a country. Today, it may be asked whether such concerns really matter. Global culture may pervade even the smallest African villages. However, the history of colonialism in Africa resulted in a peculiar type of psychological dependency which has made the reassertion of African culture and identity an important part of African nation-building. This revival has involved the study and preservation of indigenous cultures, languages, and natural environments and a full renaissance of the artistic, literary and spiritual potential of African peoples. In any movement of this kind, schools should play a key role.

Another consideration for educators who try to relate school programs to perceived national needs is knowing exactly what is meant by 'national development.' Increasingly, in modern times, economism has become a dominant force influencing education policy. This occurs in highly industrial countries as well as in the poorest developing nations. Education is regarded as the key to economic development. This impression persists in spite of the fact that such growth usually results from complex relationships between many variables rather than any simple one-to-one interaction between schools and jobs. For example, if violent ethnic rivalry causes national instability, this may inhibit economic growth by deterring investment even though schools have produced many graduates whose mathematics and science skills offer a good labour source. In many countries, economic development options depend on natural resource endowment. Another perspective considers growth from the standpoint of the human resources needed to sustain manufacturing and services. Usually a positive effect of schooling on economic development is contingent upon integration of curriculum with a sustainable policy of national growth; such growth should also be inclusive and beneficial to all sectors of the population.

This paper examines school policy development in four African countries since independence with particular attention to the socio-cultural and economic effects of education. Analysis is focused through the lens of the philosophy of educational reconstructionism. The study first reviews some critical perspectives of African intellectuals on national development and the issue of cultural reconstruction. Educational policy and curriculum development is then examined in Kenya, Mali, Mozambique and Nigeria to analyse the extent of decolonisation and reintegration of traditional African educational values and social organisation in school programs after independence. Finally, some insights and remedial strategies from reconstructionist theory are presented.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

Since independence, the role of African education has been inextricably interwoven with the quest for national development and modernisation. The inherited colonial systems were expanded and modified to serve new economic and social needs identified by African governments. For the most part, educational policy decisions and implementation remained highly centralised and reflected the will of ruling elites. In many countries, results have not matched expectations and educational systems have, in some cases, caused new problems for nation-building.

Before and after independence, a number of African intellectuals engaged in critical evaluation of the goals and practice of education. Their thought shares many affinities with a reconstructionist perspective, which regards contemporary education as most effective when it integrates the values and strengths of traditional culture with the knowledge and skills required by new conditions of modern life. The spirit of nationalism embodied in

rediscovery of the roots of African identity in the pre-colonial past is also reflected in this thought. This critical theory is focused on four areas: evaluation of colonial education, critique of post-colonial education, re-examination of traditional African education, and exploration of educational alternatives for liberation and achievement of an authentic African national identity.

The critique of colonial education continues to be significant because this structure conditioned the reactions that led to reform efforts in the post-colonial era. Ajayi (1996:16-20) traces the origins of African reactions to colonial education to the late 19th century when both James Johnson in Sierra Leone and Edward Blyden in Liberia criticised the neglect of African culture and history by mission schools. Johnson alleged that these schools caused Africans to lose self-respect and "love for our own race." Both men called for inclusion of African heritage in curriculum. Blyden urged the study of African languages that were repositories of tradition. On the whole, African assessment of pre-independence schooling is negative. Victor Uchendu (1979:3), for example, concludes that the purpose of all colonial education was "subordination of Africans." Moreover, he rejects the idea that colonial schools provided education on European standards in concluding that: "What reached African colonies were not metropolitan educational transplants but … adaptations which served to perpetuate colonial domination."

Several Africans who experienced colonial education report that it had the effect of undermining traditional societies; on the one hand, by introducing an individualistic Euro-centric value system that was alien to African communal mores and, on the other hand, by isolating students from their local communities. Kofi Busia (1964:7) recalled how schools in Ghana separated students from the life and needs of their community. For Apollo Rwomire (1998:19), the role of colonial education in the service of imperial domination and economic exploitation caused a number of undesirable effects, such as economic inequality, social stratification, cultural and intellectual servitude, devaluation of traditional culture, and curricula that were irrelevant to the real needs of society. Ali Mazrui (1978:16) sheds more light on this cultural discontinuity in terms that explain the linkage of education with the rural-urban divide:

> Western education in African conditions was a process of psychological de-ruralisation. The educated African became … a misfit in his own village … when he graduated … his parents did not expect him to continue living with them, tending the cattle or cultivating the land.

After independence African governments invested heavily in educational expansion and diversification; the gains in enrolment, literacy, skilled human resources and educational facilities have been impressive given the constraints of limited resources. Many critics, however, think the system has failed to improve life for most Africans and continues to destabilise society. One social observer, B.S. Kwakwa (cited by Bray, Clark and Stephens in Nwomonoh, 1998:265) reported on the social divisiveness of schooling in Ghana:

> The effect of the Western type of education has been to produce … three nations in one country, each unable to communicate effectively with the others … the 'educated,' … many who do not understand the ways of the 'educated,' … then … a third group, the 'half educated' who understand neither the ways of their own indigenous society nor those of the 'highly educated.'

Some problems identified by Uchendu (1979:1-2) include the rural-urban disparities, ethnic and geographic inequality of access, and differences between mission and non-mission based education. He further notes that the traditional roles of education, socialisation of youth and cultural transmission, have been submerged by the political mandate that schools must function as the "servant of government policy." The rural-urban disparity in educational provision was interpreted by Moumouni (1968:274) as an extension of the same economic exploitation practiced under colonialism:

> A cut-rate education … for peasant children … will … prepare the way for a more profitable exploitation of the peasant masses by the leading classes … acting in the name of their selfish interests and those of their neo-colonial masters.

Another scathing analysis of the impact of education is made by Rwomire (1998:8) who cites numerous problems, like irrelevant curricula, antiquated methods, high drop-out and repetition rates, and overcrowding and laments that many graduates are docile, dependent, low on initiative, and immoral. He also blames schools for inculcating a culture of egocentric materialism, causing the decline of collective responsibility and contributing directly to unemployment.

A critique of the ideological foundations of African education is advanced by Mazrui (1978:13); he regards neo-colonial cultural dependency as a threat to African psychological autonomy and sovereignty and reports that: "Very few educated Africans are even aware that they are also in cultural bondage. All educated Africans … are still cultural captives of the West." This critique of colonial and post-colonial education together with a quest for identity has led some African intellectuals to re-examine the objectives, methods and outcomes of traditional, pre-colonial forms of education. These studies provide perspectives that may become a guide for reform of education. They also offer valuable insights for post-colonial social reconstruction. Moreover, it is important to understand that traditional education still exists in Africa and provides socialisation for many youth who never attend formal schools.

The traditions of indigenous education vary widely due to the extreme cultural diversity of sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, common elements characterise most societies. With few exceptions, notably Islamic Koranic schools, African traditional education is informal and occurs in the context of family, community, clan and culture group. It is a life-long process involving progression through age groupings that are correlated with the acquisition of experience, seniority and wisdom. Cultivation of the individual's communal responsibility was the dominant objective of this education. Dickson Mungazi (1996:40) notes that the individual's "place in society was determined more by his contribution to its well-being … the individual had to be trained to remain sensitive to the needs of the community as a whole and others as individuals." Busia (1964:17) further clarifies the African ideal of socially-centred human development: "Traditional education sought to produce men and women who were not self-centred, who put the interest of the group above personal interest." Traditional education was an organic process with a high level of consistency between activities and desired outcomes. For example, the ideal of communal participation was reinforced by immersion in traditions through dance, song, and story, involvement with learning groups, exposure to cooperative work, and ancestor spirit worship that cemented kinship ties and obligations. Because custom prescribed rigid role expectations for males and females, indigenous education was gender-specific and segregated.

Indigenous education was practical and relevant to the needs of society. Babs Fafunwa (1982:9-10) reports that the focus of education in old Africa was social responsibility, political participation, work orientation, morality and spiritual values. Learning was by doing, which involved observation, imitation and participation. Jomo Kenyatta (1965:119-120), for example, compares Gikuya education with the idea of progressive education that the US educator, William H. Kilpatrick, defined as "wholehearted, purposeful activity proceeding in a social environment." Kenyatta further notes that "knowledge thus acquired is related to a practical need, and, … is merged into activity and can be recalled when that activity is again required. Behaviour also is learned from doing things together, and is therefore directed to social activities from the outset." Education is thus closely integrated with cultural reproduction; given this experience it is no surprise that profound alienation

arose later in response to the isolation of formal schools from the social realities of African communities.

Traditional education integrated character-building, intellectual training, manual activities and physical education. The content included all of the activities, rituals, and skills required to sustain the culture and life of the family and community. Great importance was placed on interpersonal relationships and reciprocal obligations. Fafunwa (1982:9-10) again recalls: "In old Africa … the man who combined good character with a specific skill was adjudged to be a well-educated and well-integrated citizen of his community." Trades were learned by the apprenticeship system.

Some reflections on indigenous education include analysis of intersections and conflicts with paradigms and value systems introduced by European colonisers. A major incompatibility involves the conflict between Western competitive individualism and African traditions of cooperative communalism. A related contrast occurs between Western schooling that works to eliminate students through failure on tests and traditional education that strives to include all children in the community. Differences of this type caused Mungazi (1996:50) to conclude that Africans who accept Western culture must, of necessity, reject the viability of their own culture. Busia (1964:15), on the other hand, acknowledges the pre-scientific basis of African cosmology and acclaims the value of Western scientific thought in replacing superstition with tested knowledge; however, he and Mungazi (1996:41) rightly cite African traditions of observation and understanding of the natural environment which led to discovery of healing techniques as evidence of indigenous scientific observation and thought. Moreover, African traditional religions, that are polytheistic and based on the worship of life-sustaining natural forces, seem more compatible with today's emergent global environmental ethos than Western monotheistic faiths that place humans over nature. The role of African religion as a foundation for morality in human relationships mandated its inclusion in traditional education; this contrasts with secular modernism which tends to exclude religion from formal education. The global revolution to equalise gender roles is in clear opposition to basic principles of traditional African education and society. On the other hand, in the area of learning methods, indigenous reliance on field experience, active discovery and close observation reflects a progressive pedagogy and seems more likely to promote retention of learning than classroom-based book and test methods that dominate Western schooling.

Re-evaluation of traditional education is part of a process of reclaiming cultural identity with deeper roots in authentic African traditions. Formal education is viewed as a potential means of liberation and many reform strategies have been proposed. Kenyatta (1965:118) thought that education must maintain the traditional structures of family, kinship, sex and age grouping if African societies were to remain stable; otherwise, he foresaw the onset of social disintegration. Busia (1964:31-33) identified a widespread expectation before and after independence that "education should be rooted in Africa's own cultural heritage and values and have relevance to African societies." Like Edward Blyden, he felt that schools could only preserve and transmit this culture by maintaining African languages. This point was made even more forcefully by Moumouni (1968:275), who claims that "real literacy … can only be taught in an African language and should extend to the entire population." Such mass education is seen as one way to counteract the elitism and class divisions created by Euro-centric schooling.

Mazrui (1978:18) identifies a deeper need for young Africans to "struggle to conquer African self-contempt" which arose as a psychological by-product of Euro-centrism. On the other hand, he asks whether Africa could "return to traditional values without sacrificing any

possibility of a scientific or technological revolution" (1978:35-36). Mazrui suggests a dual solution of Africanising the humanities while boosting technical and vocational training.

A more radical plan is favoured by Unwuachi (1972:10), who thinks that "black cultural objectives can never be obtained by using … white European standardized educational processes." In his view, Western culture as motivated by individualism, economic expediency, self-interest and 'superego' principles is incompatible with the African emphasis on collective life, economic communalism, resource-sharing, and group obligation. He calls for a new departure in African education to build community values, strengthen the family, teach ethical standards, promote health, and develop capacity to achieve the basic needs of security and human welfare. Like many African intellectuals, Unwuachi was inspired by Franz Fanon (1966:252-255), whose call for liberation urged:

> Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry … let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating … institutions … which draw their inspiration from her … we must work out new concepts and try to set afoot a new man.

A synthesis of goals for the reconstruction of African education is found in a recent book by Ajayi, Goma and Johnson (1996:192-194) who considered the reasons why universities have failed to stimulate development that improves the life of the masses in so many African countries. Nine areas were identified as needing attention in school programs. These included many ways to improve living standards such as: elimination of disease, hunger, ignorance, and poverty; moral guidance; promotion of values; building respect for indigenous African culture; reduction of crime and violence; achievement of national integration with preservation of cultural diversity; protection of the environment; and strengthening of democracy.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

After independence, African educational policies were refocused on the priority of national development which encompassed the goals of Africanisation, national unity and economic growth. The motivation for this change was a reaction against policies of colonialism that had imposed a Euro-centric, divisive and exploitative régime upon Africa. Concern for empowerment of African peoples brought the promise of social reconstruction. However, socially-inclusive nation-building has faced many challenges due to the extreme social diversity and poverty in many African countries. It was made more difficult by the goals of rapid industrialisation and modernisation which created a new class structure and soon produced many unfulfilled expectations.

In Kenya, Mali, Mozambique and Nigeria, development and education policy reflected acceptance of economic Westernisation in the form of either capitalism or socialism, with expansion of educational opportunity for Africans. All these countries began their independence with educational systems of European design, modified to fit the needs of colonialism. In Mozambique, Samora Maciel's policy declaration for schools in 1974 called for elimination of illiteracy, liberation from capitalist mentality, elimination of the negative aspects of African traditional culture, empowerment of the masses through education, and restructuring of schools as learning communities based on trust between teachers and pupils. His ideas echoed the FRELIMO goals of building social solidarity by removal of racial and tribal discrimination, emancipation of women, and cultivation of respect for science, service, and work. Concern with combating illiteracy, which stood at 93% in 1975, was paramount. Equal access to education, a goal re-stated in the education laws of 1983 and 1992, was to be achieved by free and compulsory education. Training of skilled persons for economic development is another consistent feature of Mozambiquan policy. The 1992 law, however, deleted most of the Marxist-Leninist theory without altering the basic structure of the school

system. This reflects the demise of this ideology in world politics. Important reform initiatives begun in late 1992 include commitment to "education for all," basic education, and system expansion. Other goals are decentralisation, privatisation, improvement of teaching methods, creation of community schools, and more relevant curriculum. The Strategic Plan for 1999-2003 continues this emphasis on system-building for vocational skills and economic growth, but also asks education to strengthen democratic institutions.

In Mali, policy set goals of high-quality mass education, equal educational opportunity and rapid training of workers for production. However, the approach in Mali, more than elsewhere, sought to confront the psychological fall-out created by colonialism. Education was to be employed to de-colonise the minds of people who had been alienated from their own culture by years of European domination. The policy also called for promotion of Malian, African, and universal values. Emphasis was given to political as well as economic emancipation by demanding provision of education equivalent to the standard found in other modern countries. This commitment was renewed in 1991 by a national debate which called for "basic education for all" with new schools, added service in deprived regions, and cooperative plans to boost access (Ouane, 1995:616).

In Kenya and Nigeria, educational policy at independence was most concerned with using schools to develop manpower for economic development and Africanisation of the civil service. Consequently, in Kenya, expansion of secondary and tertiary education was the top priority with less concern for basic primary education. The Ominde Report of 1964 called for education to serve Kenya's national development (Kay, 1975:185). Racially-segregated colonial schools were phased out to provide Africans with the same quality of education once reserved for white settlers. Otherwise, the old system was left intact. However, strong popular demand for education resulted in the foundation of many Harambee schools by fund-drives organised by wealthy patrons. These examples of communal generosity demonstrate a linkage of African tradition with nation-building. Nevertheless, grass-roots demand for education in the 1960s and government neglect of the rural sector caused Kenya to shift policy in the 1970s toward integration of education with rural development. Primary schools were to prepare students for agriculture, family welfare, and community development. Secondary schools were called upon to promote national unity, economic growth, individual development, social equality, respect for Kenya's "rich and varied cultures," and international understanding (cited in Kay, 1975:185). In 1983, however, this basic education scheme was dropped with adoption of the 8-4-4 system; once again, secondary and tertiary education became the priority.

Current Kenyan policy espouses universal education, with equal opportunity for all. The core goals reflect traditional values of training in social justice, morality, and responsibility, along with acquisition of life skills needed in the local environment. Modern policy goals include national development and unity along with individual service to the nation. Kenya's social diversity has brought a collateral concern for preservation of cultural heritage, social justice, human dignity, political equality and multicultural education.

Critical reviews of the 8-4-4 system in 1990 and 1995 resulted in recommendations for reorganisation of content and reduction of subjects due to student overload. A recent high-level reform effort, the Koech Commission, made sweeping recommendations. These included new efforts to build patriotism, national unity, mutual social responsibility, morality and ethical standards; education for all, including early school leavers; provision for continuous learning; quality and relevance based on science and technology for rapid industrialisation; and legal guarantees of each person's right to education. The report also specified twelve years of compulsory basic education. The Koech plan was dismissed as "unrealistic" by President Moi in the summer of 2000. Current policy calls for modification

of the 8-4-4 system by reducing subjects and strengthening curriculum with emphasis given to industrialisation, environmental education, AIDS awareness, gender equity, and elimination of child labour and poverty.

Nigeria, by far the most ethnically-diverse and politically divided of the four countries, did not begin to construct a national education policy until ten years after independence. This came after several coups and a bloody civil war, which nearly tore the country apart. The foundation for Nigerian educational policy is found in the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974), which proposed the goals of equal opportunity for all citizens, a free democratic society, justice, national unity, self-reliance and a dynamic economy. The succeeding development plan established universal primary education and proposed that education should foster the study of Nigerian culture and teach the importance of national unification. A further policy objective has been correction of regional imbalances in educational opportunity so that citizens of all cultures have equal access to modern schooling. The policy framework is a federal union in which each of the 36 states controls primary and secondary education, except for some federally-run secondary schools. The policy of equal opportunity has led the federal government to apply admission quotas and differential cut-offs in qualifying examinations for federal secondary and tertiary institutions; as elsewhere in the world, these policies have sparked much controversy.

In the 1980s the Nigerian government moved to intensify the role of education in promoting industrialisation and modernisation by boosting emphasis on science and technology. The failure of this initiative, however, coupled with instability in the oil economy, led to structural adjustments and fiscal austerity, which set back educational gains. Expenditures on education actually began to decline long before this in 1977 and were only five percent of the budget in 1984.

Two policy initiatives in the 1980s were significant. Secondary education in Nigeria was restructured. The old colonial model of a five-year GCE O-Level plus a two-year GCE A-Level was replaced by a three-year Junior Secondary plus three-year Senior Secondary system. The junior level combined academic and pre-vocational content that responded to the growing problem of unemployed secondary school graduates. The senior level offered the choice of academic, vocational technology or teacher-training tracks; this again was an attempt to better correlate schooling with employment outcomes. Another federal policy revision in 1981 was the recommended abolition of the primary school Form 6 leaving examination, with new certification being based on continuous assessment; in practice, however, states still have the option of using this examination.

Nigeria continues to face many serious educational problems. Financial crises, political instability, the brain-drain, disintegration of civil order, and military dictatorships have obstructed progress in educational innovation and excellence. Beginning in 1992, a new decentralisation policy was adopted to strengthen community and local government responsibility for primary education; this effort involves 593 local governments. States remain responsible for secondary schools, except for a handful of "Unity Schools," which are open to multicultural enrolments from the entire country. Current policy calls for nine years of basic education for all through Junior Secondary level. The goals are three-fold: building national consciousness and unity; nurturing correct values for the survival of each individual and of Nigerian society; and training citizens for understanding the world. Other policy objectives are reduction of rural-urban school inequality and improvement of gender equity in access to education. Community education programs have been started in remote areas for nomadic peoples. A compulsory education policy is anticipated. The high illiteracy rate (44% of all persons over age 15) influenced adoption of a free universal basic education

plan in 1999 for primary schools, nomads and out-of-school youth. By increasing the relevance of education, the policy intends to improve performance and retention.

Curriculum revision provides another measure of post-colonial educational reconstruction in Africa. The new government of Mozambique, for example, moved rapidly to implement structural reform by replacing the competitive, test-centred Portuguese system with cooperative, less rigid, non-authoritarian schools. Self-help, sharing of experiences, and group learning were emphasised. Implementation of these plans was slow, however, and the colonial system remained until 1983. Colonial textbooks were gradually replaced by teacher-produced, Africanised curriculum and textbooks. Innovative community-based education focused on collective farming, hygiene, literacy and political education. The country's mainly agricultural economy was served by school-based farm programs that aimed to reduce the rural-urban social division; in addition, these programs tried to build acceptance of the dignity of manual work. This emphasis was expanded at the secondary level with agricultural, commercial, industrial and social service courses of study. Such vocationalisation reflects the concern for life adjustment found in traditional African education. Curriculum development in the 1990s has addressed several problem areas affecting Mozambique's well-being and unity; these include environmental education, population and family life, multi-cultural education and education for peace. For example, one innovative UNICEF-sponsored program, Circo da Paz, uses popular theatre to teach peace and conflict resolution.

In Mali, post-colonial curriculum development has sought to Africanise and modify content and structure to suit local and national needs. Nine years of primary school is divided into three cycles, with an early focus on initiation, aptitude and orientation; subjects are taught by means of practical activities based on the culture, economy and society of the students. Content reflected in these activities includes agrarian pastoral life, the environment, science, technology, population, health, nutrition, family and community life, sports, art and cultural expression. Traditional Koranic schools and secular Medersas, or Arabic language schools, have been encouraged to complement religious studies with new curricula in reading, writing, computation, moral and civic education and either French or one of the national languages.

Ruralisation of Malian school programs in the 1980s aimed to make education a means of improving and sustaining rural life. This involved the addition of more relevant content as well as adjustment of the school calendar to fit student participation in the rural economy. Demonstration schools were established to teach technology, home economics, practical agriculture, animal husbandry and market gardening. However, this project encountered resistance from parents who disassociated education from traditional manual work.

Vocationalisation of education is also present at the secondary level in Mali; students may choose between the traditional academic course or a technical track with programs in industry, health, trade and agriculture. The colonial centralisation of curriculum and textbook provision has been retained in the interest of national unity. However, regionalisation of curriculum development was adopted in the late 1970s.

In Kenya, the shortage of skilled labour in fields based on mathematics, science and technology resulted in immediate efforts to improve the matematics-science curriculum in the 1960s. Programs like Entebbe Mathematics and African Primary Science were developed in Africa by US organisations; activities were based on the Kenyan environment. The Kenya Institute of Education began producing new curriculum and Africanised textbooks were published by the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation; Voice of Kenya broadcast radio programs for schools.

Pre-primary education in Kenya results from initiatives by parent associations which reflect the cooperative nature of African culture. The activity-based curriculum is similar to that of traditional education in its emphasis of language development, environmental awareness, number work, music, movement, art, crafts, physical development, religious and moral education, general health, nutrition and child care.

Primary curriculum revision in the decade 1965-1975 brought the infusion of Kenyan content in history, geography and music; locally-produced teaching materials reinforced this trend. In addition, the new primary approach tried to replace teacher-dominated rote learning with new methods that encouraged active, child-centred group activity designed to develop cooperation, creativity, discovery, self-expression and self-reliance (Kay, 1975:186-187).

Primary schools in Kenya follow a common national curriculum set in the 1980s. The curriculum includes language (English and Kiswahili), mathematics, science, agriculture, social studies, art, craft, music and physical education. In the 1990s, agricultural science, business education, home science and religious education were added. The expected outcomes for primary schooling reflect a blend of goals from traditional African education, Western individualism, and nationalism. Students, for example, are expected to develop desirable social standards and attitudes; to become constructive and adaptive to life based on moral and religious values with responsibility to community and nation; to appreciate their own and others' culture; to grow toward maturity and self-fulfilment; to develop self-expression, self-discipline, self-reliance and full utilisation of the senses; and to acquire a foundation for the world of work in the context of national needs.

The Kenyan secondary school curriculum was criticised for neglect of African literature and Euro-centric bias by a 1974 conference of university professors; they proposed a radical revision, which, if adopted, would have Africanised the content and control of curriculum development. Ngugi wa Thiongo, a leader of this movement, attacked the existing curriculum as a form of "cultural genocide" that perpetuated intellectual dependency on the West (cited in Lillis, 1986:71). He proposed a new sequence with primacy given to African and other Third World literature. Unfortunately, the conference failed to include grass-roots teachers or officials from the inspectorate, ministry or examination board in its deliberations; consequently, the proposal was rejected. However, many of its provisions were later adopted, including a controversial inclusion of the study of African oral literature.

The secondary school curriculum was substantially revised with adoption of the 8-4-4 system in 1985. In part this was in response to the crisis caused by growing numbers of unemployed secondary school graduates. The secondary curriculum was vocationalised to improve the correlation of schooling with the world of work. In addition to communication, mathematics, science, humanities, physical education and foreign language, the theme of applied education provided opportunities to study agriculture, industrial education, home science, art and music. Business education was added in the 1990s along with social skills, ethics and cultural subjects. Other related vocational secondary programs are craft apprentice, artisanship, commercial trade, nursing and veterinary studies. Polytechnics and a technology institute were created to teach secondary school dropouts.

The 8-4-4 reform proposed a reduction of reliance on competitive examinations, a legacy of the British colonial system. However the system has resisted change and old methods continued for many years. Criticism of the Kenyan secondary program in the 1990s stressed that too many subjects were overloading students and contributing to failure. As noted above, recent reforms have reduced the number of subjects.

Like Kenya, Nigeria inherited a British-style, examination-driven system which reinforced widespread reliance on rote learning. This structure also assured that the curriculum was

controlled by the West African Examination Council. A National Curriculum Conference in 1969 (cited in Kurian, 1985:947) initiated the first reform challenge by advocating that education should strive "to prepare for life, relate to others in an environment of mutual understanding, promote civic responsibility and effective citizenship, gain a consciousness of personal and national identity, and appreciate scientific and technological progress." Nigerianisation of curricula was promoted by the National Book Development Council, which sponsored publication of texts by Nigerian authors. Curriculum is now controlled by each state, but national guide-lines began to be defined after 1980 through the work of the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council.

Pre-primary education in Nigeria was private, urban and elitist. Recently, access to pre-primary education has improved. Instructional goals at this level emphasise: social norms; cooperation; team-work; inquiry; exploration of nature and the local environment; music; art; play; health habits; and the rudiments of colours, letters, numbers and shapes. Subjects offered are English and one Nigerian language, arithmetic, writing, reading, rhymes, social studies, music, singing, basic science and nature study. English and mathematics are the major subjects with daily classes scheduled each weekday.

Nigerian primary school curricula consist of reading, arithmetic, geography, history, nature study, hygiene, cooking, needlework, handicrafts, religion, physical education, handwriting and drawing. Completion of this six-year course used to require a special examination, but this was abolished in favour of continuous assessment. The current goals for primary education are functional literacy and numeracy with the cultivation of positive attitudes leading to cooperation, community and continuous learning that support national development. Therefore, priority is given to communication, literacy and numeracy as learned through the subjects of language arts, mathematics, science, social science, agriculture, and cultural arts. Most emphasis is given to English language, mathematics and science.

Secondary education in Nigeria affords a choice between commercial, grammar or technical schools. The core curriculum includes English, literature, religious knowledge, mathematics, history, geography, physics, chemistry, biology, and physical education. Other subjects are French, Latin, local languages, higher mathematics, agricultural science and home economics. The Sixth Form, a two-year post-secondary college preparatory track that was a legacy of the colonial era, was eliminated with adoption of the 6-3-3-4 system between 1977 and 1981. In this system, science and technology dominate the curriculum; environmental education and population education were also added. The Junior Secondary course includes academic and pre-vocational content; a technical vocational program also occurs at the Senior Secondary level. These changes reflect the policy of widening study options and diversifying outcome possibilities. Junior Secondary graduates, for example, can choose to go on to Senior Secondary, a technical college, vocational training and/or an apprenticeship. These different vocational programs provide opportunities for training in over 39 trades that are essential for a modern economy. The Senior Secondary core curriculum is dominated by English, mathematics and science; however, vocational subjects offer 17 options for skill development.

The language issue in education has serious implications for cultural reconstruction and learning efficiency. Colonialism left a legacy of alien, European official languages in all four countries. Each country has numerous African languages, and many native speakers are multi-lingual. Some widely-used indigenous languages serve as regional lingua franca for trade. Nevertheless, literacy and proficiency in the alien official languages is one criterion for indigenous elite class formation that reproduces the caste system created by colonialism.

In Mozambique, 20 different Bantu languages are spoken; Portuguese, the official language, is the mother tongue of less than 1% of the population. Mali has 12 local languages but French remained as the official and national language until the 1980s. In Kenya, there are 42 African languages along with Hindu, Gujarati and Urdu; English is the official language and Kiswahili, a widely-used medium in East Africa, is the national language. In contrast to the other three countries, Nigeria is a case of exceptional diversity, with 394 spoken languages. Twelve of these African languages with well-developed orthographies, are spoken by 85% of the population. Nigeria uses English as its official language; Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba have the status of national languages.

In these and other multi-lingual African countries, language policy reflects the need to preserve national unity by not granting official preference to any one African language. In addition to offering a culturally-neutral means of communication, the alien European languages provide continuity with colonial political foundations and a basis for essential contact with the outside world. English, in particular, is rapidly emerging as the dominant world language, even though Chinese and Spanish each have more speakers. Nevertheless, this complex African language situation creates significant challenges for language and learning in schools. The language issue in education also has a critical bearing on cultural preservation, intercultural understanding and African nationalism.

Education language policy after independence has been marked by very gradual Africanisation. Until recently in Mozambique, Portuguese has been used as the only medium of instruction in primary, secondary, tertiary and adult education. This policy was identified as a major factor underlying primary level learning difficulties, grade repetition and high dropout rates. Less than 20% of the population speak Portuguese. In secondary schools, English is introduced in grade 8 and French in grade 11. Thirteen African languages have now been recognised as national languages in Mozambique. Curriculum revisions in the late 1990s planned to introduce these Mozambiquan languages as mediums of instruction in early primary grades, particularly in rural areas where Portuguese is virtually unknown.

In Mali, French was used exclusively as the language of instruction until the late 1970s because of concerns that an alternate multi-lingual policy would lead to disintegration of national unity. This situation began to change in 1979 when the National Directorate for Functional Literacy and Applied Linguistics ran successful pilot programs in bilingual education with mother tongue instruction in four rural schools (Ouane, 1995:622). This initiative was expanded in the 1980s with development of "pedagogie convergente," a French transition program that strives to produce functional bilingual learners. French is not introduced until the child is able to write in the mother tongue; thereafter, oral and written French are boosted through grade 4. From grade 5, the child devotes equal time to one national Malian language and the second language (French). This new policy was associated with the recognition of 11 Malian languages as national languages in the 1980s. English is added as a first foreign language in grade 7. In spite of these efforts, literacy and fluency are low in all languages; in 1987, for example, only 20% of 6-9 year olds could read and write in any language. By 1994, 109 schools were providing instruction in 4 national languages. Development of African language teaching is resource-intensive because of the need to produce original materials for distribution at the local level.

In Kenya, English was adopted as the language of instruction in 1961; moreover, most Kenyans at this time rejected mother tongue instruction because of its association with colonial education policy. English alone was seen as the essential language for empowerment and advancement. Therefore, schools in the early post-independence era followed a 'straight for English' policy. Nonetheless, the content of textbooks was Africanised. Concern soon developed, as elsewhere, about the importance of mother tongue

as a medium for early learning. Kiswahili is the language of instruction in grades 1 to 3 in most rural schools; English, however, is the teaching medium from grade 1 in urban schools, and from grade 4 in all schools. English is also taught as a subject in primary grades 1 to 3. Nevertheless, official policy aims to preserve the culture, values and heritage that are transmitted by all 42 local languages; therefore, early instruction tries to utilise whichever mother tongue is dominant in a district. Kiswahili, the national language, is a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary levels. Other languages offered in secondary school are French, German, and Arabic, reflecting Kenya's location between Europe and South Asia, as well as cultural diversity within the country.

In Nigeria, as in Kenya, British colonial policy had encouraged mother tongue instruction, especially in early primary grades. Here, unlike Kenya, the policy was continued after independence; mother tongue or the dominant local area language is used for teaching in pre-primary and primary grades 1 to 3 while English is taught as a subject. In all, 270 Nigerian languages may qualify as instructional tongues for early primary classrooms; many of the smaller languages have no written orthography, which makes materials production quite difficult. From grade 4 on, English becomes the language of instruction and the mother tongue is studied as a subject. Arabic reading and writing is taught to Islamic students in Koranic schools. At the secondary level, teaching continues in English, with the local language studied as a first language and one other Nigerian national language taken as a second language. In addition, French and Arabic studies are offered as electives in some schools.

Some of the concerns and problems affecting schools in Africa provide insights about needed future educational reconstruction. These fall into five categories: policy reform, access, materials and facilities, methodology and relevance. First, in the area of policy, is the question of compulsory education; hitherto, resource insufficiency prevented this and in most cases this obstacle still exists. However, the Jomtien initiative of 'education for all' may only be achievable with a change of national priorities to actualise compulsory education. Some nationalisation of private schooling is needed to assure equity in access to the secular curriculum, however government controls also should be limited to prevent the type of bureaucratisation that stifles innovation and reform.

Inequality in access to formal, modern education contrasts sharply with traditional African education that was inclusive of all children in the village. In most cases, formal education in Africa reproduces a Western-type class structure with greater inequalities than that found in industrial societies where a wide range of wealth and poverty influences individual opportunity. All four countries exhibit significant inequality based on gender, poverty, regional differences and rural or urban residence. Pre-school education, when available, is urban and elitist. Special education is nearly non-existent in Mozambique and Mali and reaches less than 1% of those in need in Kenya and Nigeria. In many areas, rural schools are fewer, more remote, poorly equipped and understaffed. In Kenya, access to basic education is reduced due to emphasis on the secondary/tertiary levels; nevertheless, in 1994 only 30% of primary school graduates found places in secondary schools. Likewise, in Nigeria, just 35% found such placement and these were less than 5% of the school-age population.

Inadequate facilities and instructional resources affect most African countries. Many circumstances contribute to this situation. In Mozambique a devastating war closed or destroyed 3,400 schools. Rapid urbanisation in Kenya, Mozambique and Nigeria caused a growth in school-age population that continues to outpace school construction; this leads to overcrowding and reliance on substandard and unsanitary buildings. Insufficient supplies of textbooks and lack of essential facilities and equipment for science laboratories detracts from the quality and potential of instruction. Rural schools are more affected by these

deficiencies than urban districts. Scarce resources and inadequate government expenditures are the cause of many of these problems. However, in a country like Nigeria, which has huge oil resources, the low expenditure on education is nothing less than a case of mismanagement and misplaced priorities. Nigerian textbook publishers, for example, are capable of supplying the entire country but pricing and distribution problems have resulted in persistent supply problems.

In contrast to traditional African education, where methods involved active participation, observation and learning by doing, instructional methods in modern, formal African schools continue to be dominated by rote learning, pupil passivity, limited verbal interaction, and reliance on text and test. One reason for this is the shortage of trained teachers. Another factor is the climate of competition and high-stakes testing which encourages memorisation for examinations more than acquisition of applied skills, critical thinking or creativity.

A final concern involves the relevance of education to the social and economic well-being of each country and to each individual's fulfilment of potential. All four countries have low completion rates, high grade repetition and significant numbers of drop-outs. These facts seem to indicate either that the schools are not teaching students well or that the curriculum is irrelevant to their needs. In many cases, formal school curricula have been criticised for being unrelated to the conditions and demands of life in rural areas. There is likewise a need to increase the use of African languages as mediums of instruction in areas where these are the only effective means of communication. Another dimension of relevance involves philosophical consistency. In Kenya, for example, the traditional principle implied by Harambee schools, "let's all pull together," is contradicted by reliance on competitive testing which pits students against each other in a process of deselection. In Nigeria, the clash between Islamic tradition and Western education demonstrates that when schooling is perceived as a form of alien socialisation it may become an object for cultural resistance. Finally, as more African countries move to expand democracy, schools should not only teach how this form of government works, but also restructure themselves as participatory, open forums in which students and teachers can practice democracy through debate, discussion and exchange of views about their political destiny.

EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

This analysis concludes by considering some indicators for educational reconstruction in the four African countries. Reconstructionist philosophy is concerned with the role of the school as an agency for social improvement. Democracy and belief in the "intrinsic and equal worth" of all humankind are central tenets of this philosophy. The reconstructionist approach to education is experimental; it first tries to foresee future social directions by analysis of past and present trends. It then defines the type of social order needed to preserve fundamental human ideals in the context of the changing future world. These conceptions of future society are then used to reconstruct education (Berkson, 1940:202-203; 209-210). The objective is adaptation to modern life without disruption of traditional culture and community. In the realm of education, this process has been defined as restoration of basic values from the past, transmission of culture, and transformation that revitalises culture through efforts to solve current problems and crises (Brameld, 1971:425-427).

Looking first at African educational policy, there appears to be a need for more consideration of what kind of future society is emerging. How else might planners foresee the type of economy and skills that will determine the opportunities available to young people in the future? The idea of rapid industrialisation as the only path to modernisation may need revision; alternatives point to more balanced solutions that utilise all sectors and local resources. If the trend toward stronger democracy endures, restructuring of schools

should focus on greater participation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and non-authoritarian teaching methods. Many African countries have serious resource deficiencies that limit costly expansion of education; given this predicament, what alternative formats for education exist at the village and community level that could revive some of the informal methods of traditional African education?

In pre-colonial Africa, most children were educated in the home and village. If modern education is to replicate this level of basic education, it may need to restore the role of the community to achieve it. African school systems today still follow the rigid structure of time periods and grade-level progression found in Western education. What would an African-originated modern education system look like? The policy innovations of ruralisation and vocationalisation are good examples of reconstruction; these initiatives respond to prior educational neglect of rural areas and the unemployment of school graduates. Other reconstructive curriculum developments, particularly environmental education and sex education, are restorative and transformational given the current crises of resource depletion, pollution and AIDS.

The development of gender equity is another case of transformative policy. This innovation remains far short of the goal of gender parity. In traditional African education, boys and girls were segregated with different curricula that prepared youth for their divergent life goals. This transition has met with cultural resistance and remains controversial; nevertheless, the evidence of added value that female education brings to child-rearing, health, family well-being, economic life and community makes a compelling case for gender equalisation in African educational reconstruction.

Curriculum content has considerable influence on educational reconstruction. Post-colonial African countries have made significant advances in Africanising their curricula. In some instances, like Mozambique, this required a major research effort to discover, verify and publish new knowledge. The study of African economics, geography, government and history, the cultural heritage of dance, music and visual arts, literature and natural resources are important in the cultivation of self-esteem and the creation of national identity. Multi-ethnic nationalism in Africa requires innovative forms of social studies that balance an understanding of particular cultures with recognition of the commonalities in different traditions that make for unity. Multicultural education offers some promising approaches for promoting social stability in the context of social pluralism. Building tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity should be a major goal of any curriculum.

Cultivation of oral and written fluency in local African languages is important in building self-esteem, preserving culture, and advancing the literary output and identity of African peoples. Two recent articles on language policy in Kenya and Nigeria (Bunyi, 1994; Ufomata, 1999) outline the complexities and advantages of school promotion of indigenous languages. Students also need to study regional African and European languages that widen their circle of communication. The importance of African language development is further underscored by the historical reality that early nation-building in Europe was closely linked to the cultivation of vernacular languages and literature.

Many insights about instruction and learning can be gleaned from the practice of traditional education. Learning was accomplished by observation, imitation, demonstration and practical activities. Applied skills and understanding were stressed over abstract knowledge. Advanced trades and other occupations were transmitted by forms of apprenticeship. Infusing more of these strategies into formal education would provide a valuable alternative to the book and test syndrome that dominates many schools. Work-study, cooperative

education, and similar field-based experiences would provide many more opportunities for meaningful learning.

A key issue for educational reconstruction in Africa involves how to define and balance the equation of cultural transmission. Jomo Kenyatta once observed that for Europeans "individuality is the ideal in life," whereas for Africans, "the ideal is right relations with, and behaviour to, other people" (cited in Kay, 1975:189). In the West today, schools as well as corporations are concerned about teaching human relations, team-work, and interpersonal skills. This has come about because of a breakdown in family and community that, sadly enough, is also a result of modernisation in Africa. Individuality is needed in the modern world, but it must be balanced with bonds that preserve the family and community. Otherwise, as we have seen, life becomes incomplete and uncivilised. African nations should strive to preserve their traditions of cooperative, communal and extended family culture that provides a foundation for human relations and social security in a changing world. Schools can assist this process by teaching students to value and honour tradition as well as modernity. Some goals that link school and community reflect traditional African educational objectives of character development, respect for elders and established authority, positive attitudes toward work, acquisition of a vocation, cultivation of a sense of belonging, active participation in community and family life, and appreciation and understanding of local cultural heritage (Fafunwa, 1982:9-12; Kenyatta, 1965:119-120).

Another facet of African educational reconstruction involves the need to create a basis for a common civic culture in nations with a high degree of cultural diversity. Each culture must be respected and preserved. However, more is needed to achieve national solidarity. Busia (1964:59), for example, noted that "the tasks of … achieving a new social unity and cohesion can only succeed if the citizens share a common set of values and standards of public morality which are supported by law as well as public opinion." He calls on schools to integrate groups in ways that foster associations, inter-group understanding and cooperation. This proposal is exemplified by the mission of the federal 'unity schools' in Nigeria.

Historically, however, democracy has not always worked to promote inter-group harmony or consensus. The ancient Greeks, who gave birth to democracy, were deeply divided, often engaged in civil war, and committed what would today be considered gross violations of human rights. In some democratic states, minorities have been abused, whereas in others they have managed to rule over majorities. Clearly, the task of building a stable political order is complex; therefore, schools in Africa should continue to teach basic civics, along with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as an antidote for civil disintegration that looms as a potential crisis in many countries. Addressing this need, Mungazi (1996:169-197) outlines some priorities for a civics curriculum; these include constitutional government, free speech, critical thinking, multi-party democracy, free press, disclosure in political life, political opposition, regular elections, limited terms of office, ethical conduct of officials, and the issue of corruption.

The reconstructive approach cannot avoid the basic question of the purpose and outcomes intended for African education. Embedded in this concern is the issue of who will benefit from this education. Another aspect of this problem is what type of socio-economic development is desired by the African people. If modernisation with rapid industrialisation is the choice, education will undoubtedly need to reproduce a class structure and hierarchy of occupational specialisation like that found in other techno-industrial countries. On the other hand, if a mixed economy is desired, which balances modern industrial, traditional agrarian, craft, resource extraction, tourism, trade and service sectors, education should foster specialisation along with programs that are more inclusive of all sectors of the population.

The objective in such a society would be to enhance and preserve traditional life while enabling development that assures the provision of basic needs and economic growth.

While Africans must decide for themselves which direction is most desirable, African traditional culture would suggest that the choice should fall on the side of a more balanced, human-centred development. Moumouni (1968:284; 292), for example, called on education to respond to "the profound aspirations of the African masses" by "improvement of the physical and psychological living conditions;" however, he also cautioned of the need to "safeguard the 'African originality' and the 'African personality' in their most authentic and most positive aspects." The legacy of colonial and post-colonial education suggests that this goal can be reclaimed through conscious reconstruction. Bray, Clark and Stephens (1998:264), for example, conclude that "Western education has brought a new set of values that has destroyed rather than reinforced much of the old societies." So we need to ask: can the old values be revived? And if not, what will replace them? The breakdown of order in many parts of Africa suggests that a reconstruction of identity based on progressive traditional values is a viable option.

Uchendu (1979:280-294) conceives that African development should incorporate a duality of plural nationalism and economic modernisation. In this framework, he identifies four challenges: bureaucratic state regulation, multi-cultural nationalism, popular participation in the demand-decision process, and equity in access and distribution of goods and services. The need to relate education to African social structure is central to the transformational ideas of Kenyatta (1965:123). He enjoined teachers to:

> promote progress and … preserve all that is best in the traditions of the African people and assist them in creating a new culture, which though its roots are still in the soil, is yet modified to meet the pressure of modern conditions.

CONCLUSION

Reconstruction is an ongoing, never-ending process. It works in the context of the present crisis, but moves to transcend this by creative integration of past successes with future goals. Several guidelines for educational change can be inferred from the current crisis in Africa. Foremost is the need to depart from dysfunctional external models of curriculum that do not relate constructively to the needs of all Africans. A fully-indigenous reorganisation of education is essential; new nations should develop programs and institutions that work for their particular cultural and national needs.

Curriculum change should involve teachers at every stage of decision-making; improved in-service training is essential. Curriculum needs to be diversified to be relevant for the great variety of social contexts found in each country. Village development should be as important as urbanisation. Revision of popular ideas about the purpose of education may be useful in correcting the perception that schooling is only a track for literacy and the salaried job. A school serving people-centred development should provide a foundation of knowledge that improves every aspect of rural and urban life. Dependency on textbooks, curriculum designs, teachers and priorities from external sources that cannot be translated into locally-relevant forms of education should be abandoned. African educators in the 21st century face the challenge of creating multi-purpose systems that preserve the multi-cultural social fabric of each country in a context of national inclusion and unity. Schools also need to build the capacity for economic growth, improvement of living standards and constructive political life that benefits all people. The future stability of most African countries will likely depend on how effectively these needs are met.

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