

A Survey of Education and Politics of National Development in Kenya

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Abstract: *This paper attempts to bring out the impact which politics has had on education in Kenya. In the efforts to explore the linkages between education and politics in Kenya, this paper zeroes in on one salient aspect of politics which will be operationalized in this study to mean nation-building. This variable of nation-building has been selected for analysis on the basis that it constitutes the core of politics of independent countries in terms of the uses of state power through value allocation. Over time this variable has preoccupied the policies of not only Kenyan political leaders but also African leaders in general. This study carries out a critical examination of various political forces which influenced the trend of education from the colonial to post-independent Kenya. The study is significant as it contributes to the history of education in Kenya specifically and Africa in general. It is a useful study for educationists and policy planners for it brings out the relationship between education and politics.*

Keywords: *Education, Politics, Nation-building, Pre-independence, Post-independence*

1. INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of education in any society is to harness and develop the talents and human potentialities of every individual so that she/he can fulfill his/her moral, intellectual and material needs and contribute to the general well-being, survival and development of that society. Thus education, in all its facets, is a life-long process through which an individual acquires knowledge and skills that can enable him to understand and adapt to an ever-changing physical and social environment. It does not necessarily mean schooling which we often expect to motivate children to independently search for solutions to problems and to crosscheck their conclusions on discussions with the teacher.

However, it has been discovered that with time, people have changed the notion of education to mean schools, but schools geared towards meeting their desired needs for gainful occupations within the permanent social ranks. Education since then has been noted for playing a very important role in the development of the nation and its economy. It can, therefore, be observed that the collective potentialities of people in the form of knowledge, skills, attitudes, values or a combination of all these attributes, are the main assets of a nation in its development.

All the same, these assets can become completely wasted unless their development is carefully monitored. Such monitoring of the human potentialities needs to be done both in relation to the rate at which these are required and the nature of the potentialities acquired. Consequently, education has become the greatest instrument man has devised for his own progress and that of the society in which he lives (Ikejiani, 1964:7).

2. POLITICS

Implicit in the concept of politics (leadership) is the relationship between the rulers and the ruled of which the task of the rulers is to preside over societal relations with specific reference to the production, allocation and distribution of values and resources through various strategies and

techniques. The extent to which society's leadership structures and functions have been institutionalized is very much a product of historical duration and influences the resultant nature of leadership. For the purposes of this paper, politics will refer to the capture, consolidation and use of state power. "Capture" includes the seizure of political power either constitutionally or unconstitutionally. "Consolidation" and "use" refer to acts by and processes of political leaders in the entrenchment of their regimes and application of political power.

3. NATION BUILDING

On the other hand, nation-building is a process of reconstructing a society's shattered economy as to reflect the socio-economic and political needs of the people, who constitute that political community. The colonialists, for example, promoted settler economy and nationalism asserting control over the Asians and the Africans. They had no desire to create or forge a Kenyan culture but rather exploit it.

It was this view of the nation based on racial segregation that was resisted by the Africans up to the time of independence and immediately after. This move led to an exodus of the white settlers out of Kenya, stagnating any form of development that had taken place. It is in this respect that the newly independent state had to take urgent steps to rebuild a new Kenya nation with a national identity. To achieve this education was seen as the only instrument that could be used to bring about this new nation.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: PRE-INDEPENDENCE KENYA

Prior to independence, education in this country was designed to meet the needs of the colonial regime. These needs were determined by the structure of a highly segregated colonial social system whereby all managerial administrative and supervisory jobs were reserved for Europeans and Asians respectively while the Africans were primarily relegated to the villages to engage in subsistence agriculture or take up unskilled or semi-skilled jobs on settler plantations or in urban centres. Because the bulk of the African population was not expected or allowed to play any significant role in economic life of the country, there was no mass education for them.

The provision of education, during the colonial era, was carried out on racial lines. For example, the provision of secondary schools on the eve of independence reflected a racial pattern. Schools like Duke of York (now Lenana School), Duke of Gloucester (Jamhuri High School) and Prince of Wales Schools (Nairobi School), were special school reserved for the European and Asian communities. And here a special kind of education designed for them was offered, (Namaswa, 1990: 10). The expenditure on education reflected this same pattern. Anderson (1970:50) found that the capital costs of education for the various racial groups varied a great deal. The table 1 shows this trend.

Table 1. A Comparison of the capital costs of Education for the various racial groups between 1949 and 1952

Year	European	Asian	Arab	African	Inter-racial
1949	577,992	191,219	16,922	280,519	
1950	421,215	213,783	3,745	69,677	
1951	398,350	200,025	35,100	126,250	67,625
1952	281,457	200,775	21,568	432,620	174,500
Total	1,679,014	805,799	107,335	909,066	242,125

Source: Anderson (1970:64)

Further disparity is observable in the recurrent expenditure amongst various racial groups. Hazlewood (1979: 189) found out that the average annual earnings of the 22,000 whites in employment were over 1350, 500 for the 38,000 Asians and 75 for the 530,000 Africans. From these data, it can be observed that the whites who constituted less than 4 percent of total employment population received one third of the total wage earnings. On the eve of

independence, the Kenya Government was faced with two major problems to which education was assigned the responsibility of solving.

The first and more immediate was the need to provide competent Kenyans who could take over from the departing colonial administrators. This was achieved within a relatively short period through a crash programme of localization and training (Wanjigi 1983: 46). The second and perhaps more challenging was the long-term problem of devising a system of education which would address itself to the complex political, social and economic needs of an emergent nation.

5. POST-INDEPENDENCE KENYA: 1963-1994

Kenya became independent in 1963. Therefore, the task for newly installed Government was how to modernize its economy. The fulfillment of this task was seen possible if education was put in place. The goals of education in an independent Kenya were first articulated by KANU in its 1963 Manifesto: “The first aim of education will be to produce good citizens inspired with the desire to serve their fellow men. The next aim will be to set our young people’s feet on a path of instruction which will correspond with the requirements of the new nation and meet their desire for careers.” Soon after this pronouncement, a high powered Commission of Inquiry (Ominde Commission) was appointed in December, 1963 to review the existing system and advise the Government on the formulation and implementation of new national policies for education.

Since then, the aims of our education system have been re-stated in several Government documents, first in the Session Paper No. 10 of 1965, and subsequently in the various Development Plans and in reports of specific education commissions. In all these documents, the recurrent theme has consistently been that education would be the principal means by which Kenya would seek to disperse knowledge and develop skills necessary in modernizing the economy.

Prominent among such commissions are the 1964 Kenya Education Commission Report, the Ndegwa Commission Report of 1971, the I.L.O. Report of 1972, the Wamalwa Report of Training 1972, the Gachathi Report of 1976, the Working party on the Financing of Higher Education 1982, the Presidential Working Party on Second University 1982 (Mackay Commission) and the Kamunge Report on Education and Training in the Next Decade and Beyond 1988. All these education commission reports emphasized the need to re-examine and re-adjust Kenya’s education system to reflect the changing order of the society.

Consequently, the recommendations of these commissions were adopted and implemented, some with devastating results but others registered significant outcome. Take for example, at independence, Kenya was acutely short of skilled manpower and lacked adequate facilities for education and training. The first priority was therefore placed, and rightly so, in the expansion of schools and hence student enrolments. The table 2 shows this expansion and student enrolment between 1963 and 1990.

Table 2. *School Expansion and Student Enrolment 1963 – 1990*

Level	1963		1982		1990	
	No. of School	Enrolment	No. of Schools	Enrolment	No. of School	Enrolment
Primary	6,058	936,000	11,806	4,120,145	13,000	5,100,000
Secondary	151	35,000	2,100	464,671	4,600	564,000
University	1	-	2	6,627	4	20,000

Source: Republic of Kenya: Economic Survey 1991

From the table, it can be observed that from 1963 to 1990, the number of institutional establishments have increased tremendously while enrolments in primary, secondary and university establishments have risen phenomenally. Further evidence of rapid quantitative expansion in enrolments is adduced from the table 3, which shows Primary School enrolments over a period of time from 1965 to 1982.

Table 3. *Enrolment in Primary Schools by Province 1965 – 1982*

Province	1965		1971		1976		1980		1982	
	Enrol.	%of nat. enroll.	Enrol.	%of nat. enroll.	Enrol.	%of nat. enroll.	Enrol.	%of nat. enroll.	Enrol.	%of nat. enroll.
Central	238,001	23.5	371,913	24.3	571,583	19.7	696,968	17.7	715,236	17.4
Coast	57,523	5.6	87,845	5.7	160,156	5.5	230,221	5.7	254,888	6.0
Eastern	199,107	19.6	315,454	20.6	543,222	18.7	752,844	19.1	768,958	18.7
Nyanza	162,229	16.0	248,990	16.3	550,580	19.0	785,537	20.0	814,010	19.8
Rift Valley	161,272	15.9	228,797	14.9	530,646	18.3	781,847	19.8	859,425	20.9
Western	146,679	14.5	200,708	13.1	446,185	15.4	569,057	14.5	587,982	14.3
Nairobi	45,096	4.4	67,523	4.4	84,738	2.9	97,984	2.5	105,549	2.6
KENYA	1,010,889	100	1,525,498	100	2,894,617	100	3,926,629	100	4,120,145	100

Source: Kenya Statistical Abstracts 1966 – 1983

From both tables 2 and 3, there is no doubt that in sheer quantitative terms, expansion in education since independence has indeed been a success story. The great leap forward occurred in 1974 when fees for the first four years of primary school were abolished. Secondly, there was sustained popular pressure for education especially in densely populated areas, and thirdly there was the Government's need for indigenous trained manpower. Consequently enrolment in some provinces (table 3) almost doubled over the previous year.

Another feature that necessitated this expansion was a growing demand resulting from a high population growth rate and the unprecedented enthusiasm of the Kenyan people in establishing education facilities on self-help basis. This led to the growth in form of expansion of both public and private national catchment schools and institutions of higher learning which have enhanced national integration and the growth of a conscious educated elite which cuts across ethnic and other parochial interests, to project a truly a national identity. These achievements have naturally given rise to a high participation rate in nation-building to the extent that the Kenyan society apparently is unable to cope with the strains and stresses of modernization and exacerbated the problem of unemployment amongst the educated youths.

A major weakness in the education system has been its incapacity and inflexibility to adjust to the changing aspirations of individual Kenyans and the needs of the labour market in terms of new skills, new technologies and proper attitudes to work. This has resulted in paradoxical situation

where acute shortages of manpower and massive unemployment co-exist. One example of this is the increasing number of school-leavers who, though educated, are unemployed either because they lack the specific skills required for wage employment or self-employment – or because the school-leavers themselves are selective about the type of jobs they think they have been prepared for.

It is for this reason that the Kenya Government decided to launch and implement a new education system – the 8:4:4 education system in order to inject some practical and rural oriented skills into the curriculum, moving away from the traditionally heavily biased intellectualized curriculum. The main objective was to introduce practical subjects in the school curriculum. By practical subjects is meant subjects that give the learner practical skills and knowledge that should enable him or her find gainful employment either in salaried jobs or in self-employment so that he or she can fit into day-to-day economic activities more easily.

The curriculum so designed included subjects like carpentry, agriculture, art and craft, cookery or home-science, and music. These subjects are geared to initiating pupils into the practical world of work.

In a way, they are intended to provide students with increased awareness of Kenya's development potential and the role they can play in that development process, especially in the rural areas where 80 percent of the population lives. Ideally, all school subjects are expected to help the learner eventually get some form of employment. But the main thrust of the 8:4:4 is interesting in that it indicates an attempt to teach children something about entrepreneurship that will enable them to participate in income-generating activities. Behind this thinking was the realization that not all school-leavers will be absorbed in direct employment or pursue further training.

Consequently, they should have a curriculum that is sufficiently diversified and that will enable them to be able to create and be functional in the society. Since then hundreds of thousands of school-leavers have entered the labour market. Research needs to be carried out to find out whether they are utilizing the practical skills they acquired from school. Already the modern sector of the economy seems characterized by few employment opportunities left only for the specialized cases. Can it therefore, be assumed that a majority of the school-leavers are engaged in self-employment activities? Be that as it may, within the last five decades Kenya has been independent, the number of primary and secondary schools has increased tremendously.

Teacher Training Colleges have risen gradually from 7 in the colonial period to 22 in 1990. These turned out a total of 9,000 trained teachers annually, (Annual Report, 1990:13). In-service Teachers Programme was established with an approximated enrolment of 3,000 students continued to attend training sessions during the holidays. Along with this was the emergence of Private Primary Teacher Training Colleges sponsored by various religious organizations. These, too, played their role in the production of trained teachers. At secondary education level, Diploma Teachers Training Colleges were established and turned out an estimated 1,000 trained teachers annually. These were holders of S1 and Diploma Teachers certificates, filtering into the education system. At the same time, the number of universities has gradually increased from 1 in the colonial period to 5 at 1995, today in Kenya 67 universities. These universities together with their constituent colleges are turning out highly specialized personnel. Amongst them are doctors, scientists, engineers, lawyers, social scientists, agri-economists, architects, teachers and administrators, just to mention a few.

Independent Kenya has been able to replace, or largely replace, the high proportions of administrators and other high-level staff from abroad with her own nationals (and, in some cases, is now exporting professional skills). In general, the greater numbers of educated people permeate the whole society with a heightened readiness to take on development tasks. At tertiary level, a myriad of post-primary and post-secondary institutions have emerged. They include youth polytechnics turning out artisans and carpenters; Institutes of Technology and the more advanced Polytechnics are offering specialized vocational and technical training programmes. Private Commercial and Technical Colleges are in existence offering Secretarial and Technical Courses. In agriculture and Industrial sectors, various skills training colleges have been set up. They, too, are turning out extension officers who have contributed to a rising agricultural and industrial output.

On the whole, the provision of education has seen the development of more and better education facilities; hospitals and health services; cleaner and more regular water supplies; more modern and better roads; industries, though clustered in major towns, have emerged and generally attracted a dynamic movement of population from the rural to urban areas. As a consequence of this movement, despite high capital intensity of much new investment, there is the urban-rural imbalance occurring everywhere in development and, with it, the widening division between average incomes and average living conditions of those working in urban and rural area have become apparent. This does not mean that all family incomes in cities are uniformly high while those in villages are all extremely low but only that those in cities fortunate enough to have steady jobs usually gain substantially higher rewards than those who do not have jobs or who are self-employed in rural areas.

In Kenya today, there is a state of prevailing under-employment and lack of employment opportunities. Consequently, the principle of self-employment being propagated now is better designed to maximize total production than the principle of wage employment. In so far as this is the case, the development of agriculture can provide, as it were, a bargain sector a sector with a large unexploited potential, with relatively low investment and in a comparatively short time. Bauer et al (1957:319) argued that the development of the production of cash crops is generally a necessary pre-requisite for urbanization and industrialization.

In more detail, the following observations might explain why priority to agricultural development is paramount:-

- (a) It is cheaper in capital than most forms of industry (capital output ratio is lower).
- (b) It affects the bulk of the population and the biggest single sector of national income-both politically and economically necessary.
- (c) It earns vital foreign currency for industrialization of both rural and urban sectors.
- (d) It creates a food surplus, which is increasingly needed not only by the future growth of industry but by the increasing population;
- (e) It diminishes the differential between the agricultural and industrial/urban sector, and should reduce the flow of labour towards towns to a volume which is acceptable and employable there; and
- (f) It is labour-intensive in a labour surplus situation.

But as long as the rural areas suffer from their characteristic malaise of not providing work with future prospects on or off the farms, many young educated people will continue to migrate to try their fortune in the cities. Namaswa (1992:15) observed that the existence of primary schools in rural areas of the developing world is generally considered to be a positive attribute. Knowledge in reading, writing and arithmetic is looked upon as an important pre-requisite for obtaining higher yields in agriculture. If, however, we look for empirical proof to substantiate the school's contribution to economic growth, the results are contradictory. Odeke (1971:200), reported negative effects on production in the case of Ugandan farmers attending primary school, which he attributed to education's arousal of the desire for less strenuous physical work than which is inevitable in a peasant society. He observed that illiterate peasants who had accepted their condition were more productive than frustrated school leavers.

Investigations by Watts (1969:19) in Kenya on co-operation between progressive farmers and state extension institutions showed that both peasants with a few years of schooling and farmers who had never attended school made use of extension services offered. Seeking generalisable statements on the contribution of school education to an increase in rural production, Lock head, et al (1978:67), evaluated 37 relevant empirical studies containing data on individual peasant farmers in the developing countries. In 83 percent of the cases evaluated, there was a significant relationship between increase in production and primary school attendance.

This is possible in so far as the basic pre-requisites for economic development, (for example, incentives to farmers, access to markets and creation of competitive marketing organizations,

availability of transport facilities, supply of inputs and agricultural research) are available. But if these are lacking then education for farmers tends to induce a migration of the more mobile population to urban areas. The need to curb rural-urban migration has necessitated the need for the Kenya Government to adopt various policies and strategies aimed at increasing productive employment.

The Government has pursued specific policies relating to the matching of people and skills with jobs through the provision of relevant rural-oriented vocational and technical education and commenced loan facilities through the Commercial Banks. This has led to the emergence of the Jua Kali or Informal Sector which is becoming significant in nation building. It is hoped that when this policy-decision is well rooted and there is a total change of attitude amongst the educated youths, they will turn to rural areas to earn a living there through self-employment, and in the process, they will immensely contribute to national development.

6. CONCLUSION

What can be drawn from the above analysis is that education must be perceived as a sub-sector of the totality of national development. This calls for collaboration between education and other sectors from where expertise relating to the role of education in general integration of the urban and rural areas can be drawn. Secondly, the educational programmes must be integrated and national; they must also be long-term and short-term. If they are geographically scattered and rural-specific they are bound to fail. But as long as they are open enough to give real options and are non-restrictive, they offer a better choice for the educated youths to participate in economic development. And this is the direction the Kenya Government has taken. In a nutshell, this paper calls for the recasting of the image and concept of leadership in Kenya. While appreciating the overwhelming role of political leaders in the formulation of socio-economic and political development policies, this must be done with the interests of the general public in mind. In addition to the lead provided by political leaders, public opinion must be given the recognition it deserves in pursuit of development.

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