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THE GAP BETWEEN PROMISE AND PERFORMANCE: EDUCATIONAL POLICY-MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN KENYA

by Margaret Nguu

Introduction

Education in Kenya is viewed as an important component of national development. It is regarded as a critical factor in eradicating ignorance, illiteracy, and poverty. Since 1963 education has been used as an instrument of transforming the country from a stage of traditional economy into a modern industrial economy by creating the necessary skilled manpower.

At the time of independence, Kenya inherited an educational system that was structured on racial basis, and that deliberately ignored those regions with less economical and agricultural potential. The achievement of independence released a popular demand for equality between regions and among individuals, as well as a demand for improved welfare for all. In 1963 the KANU Manifesto stipulated that "all Kenyans should share equitably in the benefits of development.

In 1964 the Kenya government appointed the first education commission to give advice in the formulation and implementation of national objectives for education.¹ The commission came up with five main educational objectives aimed at (i) fostering national unity, (ii) providing equal educational opportunities, (iii) enhancing manpower development, (iv) fostering national development, and (v) fostering Kenya's cultural heritage.

The subsequent national educational policies in Kenya have been designed to meet these national objectives using education as a tool. Through educational policies the government attempts to exercise and maintain control by providing a framework for actions related to competing national interests and needs. But because of the inherited social stratification and regional disparities in economic development, policy implementation in Kenya has proved to be a complex affair. The process of achieving national goals tends to be conflictual and contradictory. Where the problems of implementing national policies are founded on structural contradictions of a society, the gap between policy promises and performance can be elusive despite the best efforts of reformist leaders.

The objective of this paper is to examine how policy-making and implementation in Kenya has succeeded in restructuring and reforming the educational system since independence in order to meet two of the five national educational objectives cited above; namely, the provision of

1) Equality of educational opportunities and 2) Enhancement of manpower development.

Overview of Educational Policy

Kenya's Sessional Paper no. 10 of 1964 defines the national philosophy as that of political democracy and mutual responsibility. The implied principles in the paper were that all members of society were equal in their political rights, meaning that individuals and groups are to be held on an equal basis. No individual or group would be allowed to exert undue influence on another individual or group. Consequently, the government gave priority to the decolonization of the educational system from the inherited racially segregated system put in place by the European, Asian, and African schools, transforming it into a desegregated, harmonious national educational and school system that was to be of service to all and for national development. Second, the government embarked on an ambitious program to expand primary school opportunities in order to provide universal primary education to all school-age children by the year 1983.² Third, secondary and post-secondary school facilities were to be expanded in accordance to the country's manpower needs for accelerated economic development. Fourth, the school curriculum was to be reviewed with an aim of making it relevant to national economic development needs.

In order to follow up on these noble goals and successfully implement them, the Kenya government has commissioned several studies on education since independence: the Ominde Commission on National Educational Objectives (1964-5); the Gachathi Commission on Educational Objectives (1976); the Mackay Commission on Second University (1981); and, finally, the Kamunge Commission on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond (1988).

All these commissions and other government surveys and development plans as well as a myriad of national and international private studies have consistently come up with explicit policy recommendations and strategies for national education and development. However, a survey of educational achievements will exemplify the fact that Kenya's education system is characterized by conflictual and contradictory policy designs, poor implementation processes, and lack of proper evaluations which render goal attainment elusive, thereby creating a serious gap between policy promise and actual implementation.

A Policy Analysis of Education in Kenya Since Independence (1963-1990)

Overview

Colonial education in Kenya was inadequate in quantity and quality to the Africans. Its objectives were narrow and restrictive. The restrictive effect of colonial policy on African education meant that at the time of independence a large number of school-age children (50%) were not going to school, and only a small number had passed through the system. This was reflected in the critical shortage of educated and trained local manpower that was urgently needed for economic and social development of the country after independence.³

Colonial education induced attitudes of human inequality and, in practice, underpinned the domination of the weak by the strong. In accordance with the adopted philosophy of democratic socialism and egalitarianism, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s witnessed dramatic quantitative expansion of education, as shown in Table 1 below. However, the country continued to grapple with the questions of relevance and adaptability of acquired knowledge and skills to national needs.

Beyond expanding educational opportunities, the Kenyan government embarked on reforms that have altered school categorization, the length of education cycles, the terms of access to school, the curriculum content, financing, and general management. However, adverse economic conditions of the 1980s, combined with high population growth, which is among the highest in the world at 3.6%, have been major challenges in the provision of quantity and quality education in Kenya.

Kenya's Desegregated School System

In an effort to equalized educational opportunities, the Kenya government moved to abolish the inherited distinctions between European, Asian, and African schools. All public primary schools were declared open to all school-age children without discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, or national origin. This was followed by the abolition of high-cost secondary schools which admitted students on both academic merit and financial ability.

Although these were commendable moves, which were also to help in creating national unity, the practical aspects are far from being realized. For instance, the good quality primary and secondary schools had already been established in certain areas, especially in urban centers and the former settler enclaves of the high potential agricultural areas.

Therefore, at the time of independence, hardly any of the European and Asian primary schools and the high cost schools were found in the remote rural areas or the low-income residential estates of urban areas where Africans lived.

Though the reformist intentions were genuine and fair, they proved difficult to implement successfully for the benefit of the poor. It is not practically possible to redistribute school facilities and resources. The abolition of progressive school fees structure benefitted the financially capable parents most as it lowered the fees of the former high-cost schools. To replace the lost revenue, new taxation methods which affected all adult Kenyans (rich or poor) were established. This meant that the poor took a heavier burden than before by subsidizing the education of the well-to-do children. Hence, the children who were already disadvantaged educationally, socially, and economically benefitted least from these so-called "equalizing education policies."

The government could have helped the disadvantaged by providing extra support in the rural areas through school staffing, and provision of more development funds for construction of new school facilities and for equipment. But this was never a priority except in the arid districts where the government constructed boarding primary schools for the children of nomadic communities, and established hardship allowances for teachers posted to teach there. Ironically, a study by Nkinyangi found that most of the places in these schools were taken by children from the settled agricultural communities all over the country, and even from Nairobi itself.⁴ The recent call for "cost-sharing" in the provision of social services, education included, does not help, and if anything, it makes matters worse for the poor.⁵

With the advent of the 8-4-4 education system, parents, through Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) have to provide all the school development funds and equipment for practical subjects except Science, of which the Ministry of Education (MoE) provides science kits to secondary schools. In addition, the necessary school resources (teaching aids, text books, and stationery) have to be provided by the parents either individually or as a group. Therefore, access to and success in school do not only depend on the parents' willingness to send the child to school and the child's ability to perform well, but are also significantly influenced by the school quality as well as the parents' economic capability.

The Quantity-Quality Mix

A major achievement in the development of education in Kenya since independence has been the quantitative expansion of schooling opportunities at all levels, and particularly, post-primary levels. This

expansion while fulfilling widely and deeply felt need for manpower development, has nevertheless over-stretched both public and private resources available for education. Table 1 below traces the quantitative development of education in Kenya.

Table 1
Number of Primary, Secondary, and University
Institutions and Enrollment, 1963-1989.

Year	Prim. Schools	Enroll- ment	Second. Schools	Enroll- ment	Univer- sity	Enroll- ment
1963	6058	891553	150	28764	Univ.--	Col. 613
1970	6123	1427589	763	126855	1	2768
1980	10255	3926629	1785	399389	1	8648
1985	12936	4702414	2413	437207	2	9128
1989	14691	5389300	2654	640735	4	27572

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Kenya

Note: The provisional figure for 1990/91 university enrollement is 40,000

Table 2
Primary and Secondary School Teachers by Qualification

Year	Prim. Schools	Trained	Un- trained	Second. Schools	Trained	Un- trained
1963	22772	17193	5579	1602	1098	504
1970	41479	32929	8550	5881	3681	2200
1980	102489	72029	30460	16916	8229	7687
1985	138375	93041	45334	21712	12552	9160
1989	163609	114087	49522	28156	17139	10917

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Kenya.

A careful evaluation of educational provision reveals that in terms of quality, efficiency, and equality of access, the success of policy implementation has not been so tremendous. The colonial curriculum that had been designed to cater for economically, socially, racially, and politically stratified society has not been significantly reformed to meet the set national objectives. One ambitious program of the republic government was to attain universal primary education by 1983.⁶ But considering the ratios between the number of pupils at school out of the total population of children between the ages of 6 and 13, it is noticed

that the participation rate ran between 86% in 1980 to 89% in 1989. Therefore, as late as 1989, the goal of universal primary education had not been achieved.⁷

The national participation rate notwithstanding, when the participation rates are considered at the district level, it becomes clear that some districts have only achieved dismal advancement in this area. According to the *Kenya Country Paper* (1989), the arid and semi-arid districts have had very low participation rates. Wajir had 14%, Garissa 20%, Mandera 26%, Marsabit 37%, Samburu 54%, Kajiado and West Pokot 64%. Ironically, this happens when some other districts have recorded participation rates of over 100%. Some of these districts are Siaya and Kericho with 100% each, Nandi 101%, Bungoma 106%, and Elgeyo Marakwet 140%.

But the over-100% participation might not be telling a success story only. Further scrutiny of these statistics shows inherent problems. The major problems with these statistical analyses are the high rates of repetition and dropouts, over-age children being enrolled, and underestimation of the school-age population projections within such districts. High educational wastage rates (repetition and dropouts) show that there is low educational efficiency and efficacy, signalling poor resource utilization.⁸

High wastage rates are the major constraints in achieving universal literacy in Kenya. This is because when pupils drop out of school, particularly in the first four years of primary education, they are likely to relapse into functional illiteracy, thus continuing the cycle that was beginning to be broken. Nevertheless, according to the MoE Statistics Unit (1987), an incredible 63.3% of the 1974 Standard One intake did not make it to Standard Seven in 1980. An equally incredible 64% of the 1979 Standard One intake did not reach Standard Eight in 1986. Both of these intakes followed "presidential decrees" abolishing tuition fees for the first four classes, and for all primary school classes respectively.

The two presidential decrees were landmarks for the attainment of universal primary education. It would appear that some of those who enrolled in school simply because tuition fees had been abolished lacked the means to pay the many non-tuition charges that were immediately introduced to replace the lost revenue. For some of the pupils, the poor quality schools they attended failed to meet their expectations and aspirations.

Because of the tremendous increase of pupil enrollment from 1,816,617 in 1973 to 2,734,398 in 1974, following the 1974 presidential decree on school fees, school facilities and personnel became over-stretched. For example, in 1976, the City Council of Nairobi had 115 primary schools with a total enrollment of 84,000

pupils. This reflected an increase of 2,000 children over the previous standard one places. After the 2,000 had been admitted, the City Council had to turn down over 4,000 children who needed places due to lack of sufficient funds to provide the necessary physical facilities.⁹ However, all the children who reported to school in rural areas were accommodated in makeshift classrooms or under trees. The poor quality education in these schools coupled with bad weather played havoc on the children's expectations.

The sudden expansion of the educational system required a commensurate growth in the teaching force and not surprisingly, this in turn increased the reliance on untrained teachers. In 1973, about 78% of the primary school teaching cadre were professionally qualified. In 1974 this figure dropped to 67%, and in 1975 to 65%, in 1976 to 63%, which means by that time 37% of the teaching force were untrained.¹⁰ Thus, the long-term goal of the government to move toward a primary school teacher corps composed entirely of professionally qualified personnel received a setback.

The restructuring of the educational system into the 8-4-4 system demands more teachers to cater for the new subjects and for the extra class at the primary level. Therefore, although the number of untrained teachers had dropped to 26.3% in 1979, this proportion rose to 30% by 1989.¹¹

The high proportion of untrained teachers and lack of quality and sufficient physical facilities present serious problems in the provision of education. Although most of the untrained teachers are allocated to teach the lower classes, this unofficial policy does not help; in fact, it makes matters worse. If a solid education foundation is not laid down during the impressive years of the child's development, negative attitudes toward education may be formed and further carried into adulthood.

Suffice it to say that Kenya as a young developing country suffers dire resource constraints in trying to provide basic needs to the rapidly growing population of 3.6% per annum. Kenya's economic growth has remained at between 5.2% and 5.0% since 1985.¹² When there is resource scarcity as there always is in Kenya, the available resources should be utilized to provide benefits to the majority, and especially the disadvantaged in society.

On the premise of equality of opportunities girls and women need to be considered as belonging to the disadvantaged group. In Kenya, it is remarkable that a national participation rate of 48% for girls at the primary level has been attained. But with increasing competition at higher levels they are progressively marginalized, both proportionately and in the courses they take.¹³

While educational wastage remains high as indicated above, the wastage rate for girls is invariably higher than that of boys. The greatest wastage for girls is during the last two years of primary school. Between 1985 and 1986, the comparative figures were a loss of 19.2% for boys and 30.2% for girls as they moved from Standard Seven to Standard Eight.¹⁴ It has been shown that most of these pupils dropped out because they could not put up with the stress and strain of the examination year, while others repeated Standard Seven in order to strengthen their performance in the national examination. Pregnancy and early marriage also contribute to female wastage.¹⁵

In addition, some communities in Kenya still relate the role of women to traditional social and economic activities, consequently failing to appreciate the importance of women's education. According to MoE statistics unit, the following were the percentages of girls' enrollment in arid and semi-arid districts of Mandera 24%, Garissa 29%, Wajir 30%, Sanburu 33%, Turkana 34%, Marsabit 36%, and West Pokot 39%. However, in the more economically potential and highly developed districts, girls' enrollments were even higher than the national rate of 48%. For instance, the enrollment rates for Kirinyaga, Murana, Nyandarua, Nyeri, and Embu were 50% each, and 49% in Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Bungoma, and Nairobi.

The argument for more education has consistently maintained that education contributes to national development. But evidence taken a step further shows that when schools open their doors wider to girls and women, the benefits multiply. A more educated mother raises a healthier family—she can better apply improved hygiene and nutritional practices. She has fewer and better educated children. She is more productive at home and in the work place, and is better able to supplement the family income. Indeed, failure to raise women's education to a par with that of men exacts a high development cost in lost opportunities to raise productivity and income, and improve the quality of life.

The School Structure, Curriculum, and Examinations

Kenya's education system is structured into interdependent cycles: primary, secondary, and tertiary. To move from one cycle to the next, pupils have to take highly competitive national examinations. This structure was inherited from the colonial government, whose main purpose for formal education was to train qualified personnel for white-collar jobs. Soon after independence, the continuance of this policy was justified because there was dire need for qualified local personnel to fill the technical, managerial, and political leadership positions left by the colonial administrators.

But as those positions as well as the newly created ones were being taken up, there was need to restructure the education system, the curriculum, and the evaluation process, to cater for the needs of this agricultural country. As early as the 1970s, the late President Kenyatta began to call on the youth to "return and work in the rural areas" in order to help accelerate rural economic development. However, the president's call was not, and still is not, matched by a serious school program that would assist the youth in playing roles in rural economic development.

The curriculum inherited from the colonial system was, for the most part, unrelated to local needs, and required immediate modification. It was for this reason that the Curriculum Development Research Center was created in 1966. The functions of the Center were later taken over by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE). In trying to improve the content of education, Kenya has had a number of experiments and innovations. Some of these, such as the New Primary Approach (NPA), Modern Mathematics, and School Science Project (SSP), have proved unsatisfactory and have been discontinued.¹⁶

But relevance of education to current and future needs of the country continues to be a major preoccupation of education planners and administrators. It is felt that the general academic and certificate-oriented education that Kenya has had so far cannot adequately meet the needs of a modernizing economy that requires more technological inputs and skills for its development.

Thus the search for relevant education has been the subject of a number of review committees on education whose aims have been to marry expansion with quality. The Presidential Party on the Second University, 1981, recommended the establishment of the 8-4-4 education system. Although the current 8-4-4 education system has practical and vocational biases, the mode and purpose of evaluation and examination have remained significantly the same.¹⁷ The education system still sanctions and certifies the passage of pupils from one grade to the other by setting major national examinations at every entry point. This policy is a direct contradiction of the policy which calls for each cycle of the education system to be made "terminal." The accumulation of more and higher diplomas almost always improves the candidate's prospects for future employment. Hence, the orientation of the 8-4-4 education system is not yet terminal.

The 8-4-4 education system promises many things to the graduates and to society in general, but, in reality, its accomplishments do not seem to measure up to expectations. For example, this system with its technical and vocational bias has been called egalitarian because it can create more and better opportunities for self-reliance. The primary and secondary school pupils learn and sit for a minimum of ten

compulsory subjects in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KSCE) examinations respectively.

The major criticisms that have been levelled against the system are:

i) The curriculum is too broad and the subjects cannot be covered effectively within the available time.

ii) The content of the syllabus is beyond the ability of the pupils. For example, some of the topics that were covered by students in high school (form five and six) are now being covered in form three and four.

iii) The system was implemented hastily without professional consultations and feasibility studies, and before proper preparations in terms of qualified personnel, physical facilities, and resources were carried out.

These and many other aspects of the 8-4-4 system have caused problems of quality, stress, and tension on both pupils and teachers leading to student indiscipline and the production of graduates who have no saleable skills even in the rural areas. This in turn leads to rural urban migration and under-employment and unemployment. In 1991 there was a wave of student strikes in secondary schools, the worst of which was at St. Kizito mixed secondary school in Meru on July 14 which left 19 girls dead and over 70 others hospitalized. The incident prompted the president to appoint an eleven-man commission to investigate the causes and possible solutions to the nationwide school strikes.

The implementation of the 8-4-4 education system has proved to be a heavily financial burden to parents. Many schools have therefore had to make do without the necessary facilities. As late as mid-1990, only 3,000 primary schools had workshops out of the needed 13,000, and only 2,000 schools had Home Science facilities. As for secondary schools, there were only 2,029 science laboratories out of 5,544 required, and only 1,500 workshops. Parents find the burden of putting up these facilities, equipping and maintaining them almost impossible to bear, particularly those with low incomes in the rural areas. This perpetuates the problem of inequality of quality school opportunities while all the children are expected to sit for a common national examination for mobility in the educational ladder, and for future development. It is not surprising, therefore, that the 1989 KCSI examination recorded mass failure in the sciences, technical subjects, mathematics, and business education subjects (commerce, economics and accounting).

Manpower Development

The government's manpower development policy as stated in the 1970-74 Development Plan is

to overcome the persistent scarcity of certain types of middle and high level manpower, and to reduce Kenya's dependence on foreign nations for the manpower required for development purposes.

At the time of independence the country was faced by a critical shortage of manpower. For instance, in 1963, of all the 1,569 secondary school teachers only 364 were Africans; of the 25 highly trained surveyors only 2 were Africans, and there were 11 vacancies; of the 339 medical doctors about 50 were Africans.¹⁸ By 1983, twenty years later, there were 3,829 qualified graduate teachers and 787 medical doctors.¹⁹ In 1989, the number of qualified medical doctors was 3,266, dentists 561, and graduate teachers 7,315.

The increase in manpower qualification is a general trend for all government departments, and especially since the expansion of university education. While this growth is commendable, there is an acute lack of balance between demand and supply for the various government departments and the private sector.

While a good proportion of the qualified personnel cannot find relevant opportunities for employment, some sections of the economy are still suffering dire shortages, necessitating the recruitment of foreigners. Recently, The Daily Nation quoted the education minister warning Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) arts graduates that "the government will no longer guarantee them jobs."²⁰ The irony of it, as the correspondent of the paper put it, is "that the country still has not got enough trained teachers."

As of that date (August 17, 1991), the country needed 732 teachers in Physics, 456 in Chemistry, 319 in Biology, and 317 in Mathematics. Despite all this, during the academic year ending in July, the state universities produced only 93 science teachers of which 40 were in Mathematics, 23 in Biology, 12 in Physics, and only 8 in Chemistry. After this analysis, the secretary for the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) lamented that "the shortage will continue for a long time as the universities tended to overproduce arts graduates."

And as if this was not warning enough to education policy makers and planners, a survey of the university undergraduate enrollment shows that 63% of the 36,781 undergraduates currently in the four state universities are taking art-based courses. Specifically, by June of 1991, 12,035 of the undergraduates were taking Bachelor of

Education (B.Ed) in arts, and 8,366 were taking Bachelor of Arts (BA) general. Unfortunately, some of the Diploma Science Teacher Training Colleges that were producing secondary school teachers were converted into constituent colleges of the state universities.

These university colleges are now offering graduate teaching degrees, the majority of them in arts. For example, in Maseno, 900 of the 1,600 undergraduates are taking Christian Religious Education (CRE), a subject which does not require any more teachers currently.

While the secondary schools are being flooded with qualified teachers in the humanities, the primary schools need 11,500 trained teachers. In addition, majority of the former "Harambee" or community secondary schools, which were recently elevated to "Public School" status, are doing with a majority of untrained teachers, often times with a shortage of both trained and untrained teachers.

Let it not be seen as if this problem of unemployment and underproduction of the relevant skills was only within the ministry of education. Although agriculture is the mainstay of the country economy, our agriculturists and veterinary medicine graduates have hard time getting jobs. Therefore, it is not just holders of general degrees who find it hard to get jobs but even professionals like engineers, architects, environmentalists, and forestry personnel are faced with the same problem. Nevertheless, there is personnel shortage in medicine, pharmacy, nursing, surveying, and teaching in primary schools. The unemployment problem is most critical among primary secondary, and post-secondary trainee graduates in that order.

Apart from the current problem of unemployed graduates in an environment of special skills scarcity, education planners and policy makers need to address themselves to the question of curriculum change to meet the challenges of the 8-4-4 education system promises. Will the system produce graduates at all levels, and in particular at the university level with the relevant skills and attitudes that are required for rural development and self employment? For example, will the future architects, doctors, pharmacists, nurses, teachers, and the rest be better than those produced by the previous system? If the purpose of the 8-4-4 system has to be realized, what curriculum changes are necessary at all levels? So far, at the university level the only change effected is the introduction of common undergraduate courses in communication and development. Is this all that is necessary for the system to make difference in the preparation of tomorrow's leaders?

Kenya's Route to Policy Implementation

In Kenya, there seems to be a dichotomy between policy maker and policy implementors. Decisions are made somewhere and passed down through a chain of command to the grassroots level for

implementation. The implementation process is inevitably ridden with confusion and distaste. In order to camouflage the leadership's self-vested interests in educational policy, a gradualistic incremental approach is adapted.

Incrementalism builds on the past and makes only marginal changes to current policies. It does not seek to make a contribution to policy making by assessing the pros and cons of alternatives. Therefore, the connection between policy and good reason for it is obscure. Governments often use incremental policies as instruments for protecting historically inherited inequalities. The key participants do not represent the diverse interests, values, and needs of the population.

Incrementalism, on the other hand, is a non-adventurous process, whereby competing interest groups reach an agreement through compromise. But to compete, the individual or group must have access to the decision making process. Not everybody has this access, and indeed only a minority, those who are better organized and influential, are represented. The gradualistic policies in Kenya, therefore, reflect the values and interests of those in power, and they help to maintain the status quo using education as a tool.

This approach is contradictory to the call for egalitarian society based on the philosophy of African Socialism. According to this philosophy, educational policies should be designed for the benefit of the majority. In the African context, this would have implied radical changes soon after independence. But the conservative approach seeks justification on colonial legacy and neocolonialism. One wonders how long African countries will hang on to this theory, which is perpetuated by inherent fear of innovations, the unknown, facing to challenges, and taking charge of their own destiny.

In addition to incremental policies, the Kenyan government promotes a highly factionalist educational ideology. The ideology argues that

inequalities arise out of the needs of society for occupational specialization, and are not only inevitable but actually beneficial for all, because they provide the incentives necessary for greater economic efficiency.²¹

Under this ideology, policy makers try to justify inequalities and enforce their acceptance by making the rules governing distribution of rewards appear appear legitimate to all, even to those who benefit least from them. For example, the tremendous expansion of educational opportunities regardless of their quality is viewed by the masses as an egalitarian process that will contribute to social and economic mobility through hard work.

This is made reasonably acceptable by offering a structured educational system which affords personal escape routes from low socioeconomic status to high status by a select few who manage to make it to the top of the educational ladder. This acts as a mechanism of social control, for those who do not make it can only blame themselves for not working so hard.

The selection is aided by the highly competitive examination and evaluation process. This process implies that the highly qualified will be highly rewarded, and become more influential, socially, economically, and even politically. Therefore, parents who are capable try very hard to give their children a head-start in education, providing them with a competitive edge against the poor.

Recommendations

Educational systems cannot operate in a socio-political vacuum and they cannot grow unless they are part of an intensive social and political plan. It is therefore important that diverse sectors of society take interest and be involved in the future of education. It appears simplistic to assume that the ministry of education personnel, with the support of a few commissions of inquiry, can ignore public opinion and solve education problems from the central office. Society has tremendous influence on educational inputs and outputs. It is the society which feeds schools, and it is the same society at both micro and macro levels which utilizes the output of schools.

In order to enlist the help of the public in preparation of educational policies, it is essential to propagate digests of information about the situation, needs, and the objectives the system intends to achieve. People will tend to hold back from or become distrustful of matters which they do not understand. Free discussion and methodical consultation of public opinion at every point of formulation and implementation becomes an obvious necessity for future success.

Once consultations with the public and professionals are made the different policy alternatives should be carefully analyzed in order to arrive at a priority list. Before blanket implementation is undertaken, a pilot testing of the decision is necessary. It is through such pilot projects that real strengths and weaknesses, and the practical aspects of the project can be discerned. The evaluation of the pilot project provides information on the necessary modifications, facilities, and materials required for general implementation. Before the implementation process begins, there should be a clear link and coordination incorporated between the different departments which will carry out the implementation.

Indiscriminate investment in education can lead to human and material waste. Therefore, optimum returns can be obtained only

through a careful analysis of trends in the economy. Lack of projections of the type of skill which are likely to be needed a decade or more ahead, and the number of trained persons who would find appropriate employment in the formal and informal sectors, can lead to serious frustrations of government efforts in the form of either shortages of certain skills or over-supply of other qualifications, or both, as the current situation in Kenya shows. It is therefore recommended that allocation of the country's scarce resources to different educational sectors and cycles be done after a careful evaluation of the country's future needs and the economy's absorption rate.

The educational planning unit of the MoE should in the future work more closely with the diverse interest groups—curriculum specialists, research institutions, book publishers, parents, teachers, school and other institutional administrators, students, religious leaders and other education sponsors, education leaders at the province, district, division, and zone levels, the inspectorate, the examination council, the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), the TSC, and other relevant personnel. A notable exclusion in this list are politicians who are expected to play their role in the August House where they debate Education Acts that become the guiding principles to professional policy makers. The interference of politicians in matters of policy making and implementation seems to create bottle-necks rather than assistance.

Another source of conflicting force to policy implementation and the realization of goals in Kenya is organizational bureaucracy. The current centralization of decision making and the strict control over implementation of policies is both time-consuming and frustrating. A lot of precious time and scarce resources are lost in the process of bureaucratic communications.

The MoE ought to put the policy of "district focus for rural development" to practice in the area of education. What the ministry needs is to give general guidelines to District Education Officers (DEOs). The DEOs should be answerable to the central office, and the other officers should be answerable to the DEOs. However, the modalities of executing this policy should first be carefully worked out. Second, the recruitment of the DEOs should be strictly made on merit.

On the 8-4-4 education system and its purpose: the debate on this system has shown that the philosophy behind it is quite noble and acceptable to the majority of the population. The major criticism has been on the implementation process, especially the hasty manner with which it was implemented. This paper has shown several weaknesses as have been deliberated by the public. A final observation is that if technical skills are taught by ill-prepared teachers (poor qualifications and lack of facilities and resources), the learners develop poor attitudes and even distaste for such skills. This, coupled with the colonial

mentality that those who do blue-collar jobs are inferior, will make the teaching and learning of such skills impossible.

Therefore, the government should make the preparation of schools for successful implementation of the 8-4-4 system a top priority. In my view, it is a waste of scarce resources to produce thousands of graduates who are like "jacks-of-all-trades and masters-of none" simply because the MoE is spreading the scarce resources too thinly. It would be better if available resources are divided between a viable number of institutions to provide a few select options of the skill to those students who, after a careful evaluation, are found to have aptitude and/or talent for them. Surely, it is not every student in school who can make a good farmer, teacher, nurse, secretary, and the like even if each student was given the same quality of exposure.

Conclusion

We have been accustomed to thinking of education as an end in itself and largely as a means to the fulfillment of the aspirations of the individual, and, especially, as a tool for social mobility. There is another side to the coin. The educational system of any country is a reflection of the philosophy of governance and the shared values and interests of those in power. Kenya's education system is not an exception, as has been shown.

The emerging lessons from the analysis of Kenya's education system is that despite considerable achievement in educational expansion since independence, the government still faces formidable challenges and obstacles in its attempt to implement the multiple policies, some of which have contradictory elements. In addition to the conflictual aspects of the policies, certain pressures such as rapid population growth, slow economic growth, and international political and economic pressures counteract efforts to realize the set goals. However, a major culprit seems to be poor planning and management of the education industry.

Although there have been several steps to integrate the entire school system by passing and implementing egalitarian policies of access, in reality, the school system is still highly differentiated in terms of quality, and stratified in terms of life chances conferred to those who attend the different public schools—national, provincial, and district with further differentiation in quality within each group. The students in the different schools are comparable to a race in which some of the competitors have gone through a rigorous course of training under highly qualified coaches, while some have just been warned of the coming event. At the end of each cycle, all students sit for highly competitive national examinations. In this race for certificates, some of the students will be as good as non-starters.

The school structure creates a pyramid tapering in shape, which has a close connection to the occupational reward structure. Parents and their children are aware of the academic status of the different schools and, therefore, all are clamouring for the high quality schools, leading to the high rates of wastage in repetition of classes and dropouts. Therefore, a child's admission into one type of school and not another is in itself a pre-discrimination on future prospects of mobility. The labor market expects the school system to do the shifting and sorting of candidates for different jobs. Those who have been tested and certified stand a better chance.

In order to give the public a hearing in matters of education and development, a review of the entire system is necessary. To do this a proper scheduling and consultation with relevant interest groups within each step in the process of decision-making, implementation, and evaluation should be a top priority.

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