

**ISSUES OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA
TOWARDS THE 21st CENTURY**

Harry Sawyerr
Member of the Council of State GHANA
Former Minister for Education GHANA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Mr. Chairman, Hon. Minister of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, Distinguished Academics and Professionals in education, Fellow Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I must first of all express my gratitude to the Government of Japan and to the Hiroshima University for the great honour they have done me by inviting me to the Guest Speaker to give the Keynote Address at this symposium.

I highly commend the Hiroshima University for establishing the Centre for the Study of International Cooperation in Education with the aim of finding the best ways assist effectively and efficiently in implementation of Japanese educational aid to developing countries.

The establishment of this Centre indicates in very clear terms the Government of Japan's determination to assist developing countries, especially in Africa, to solve their numerous educational problems.

We in Ghana have been benefiting from grants from the Government of Japan to our educational sector for some time now. Since February 1996, some 10 selected Primary and Junior Secondary School in various Regions of the country have received Grass Root Grant Aid from the Government of Japan through her Embassy in Ghana.

Japan International Cooperation Agency's support to the Educational Sector in Ghana has been growing through the years:

- (a) In 1995 JICA supplied Science equipment to the University of Cape Coast, the OLA Training College and the Komenda Training College worth Y2.8Million.
- (b) In 1996/97 JICA supplied Laboratory equipment to the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research at the cost of US\$150,000 and has in 1998 made provision of some \$7million Grant Aid for rehabilitation of the Institute and supply of more laboratory equipment.
- (c) In 1997 JICA distributed 143 Bicycles to Teachers in deprived areas in the Northern part of the country under a Teacher Incentive Package Scheme. Provision has been made for the supply of 320 more bicycles this year under the same scheme.

(d) Under the Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education Programme there are plans to support Science and Mathematics Education at the Junior Secondary School Level under the Project- Type Technical Cooperation in the years 1998-2000.

Under the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers Programme there are currently some 23 Volunteers teaching mostly Science and Mathematics at the Senior Secondary School Level.

On behalf of Government of Ghana I wish to express our deepest gratitude to the Government and People of Japan for their continued assistance to our Education Sector.

INTORODUCTION

All countries in Africa are now Politically independent but today's world is characterised by diversified economic development and low international trade barriers, which unfortunately leave African countries marginalised and trailing behind in this competitive race which requires sophisticated production systems, more educated labour force and competent managerial leadership.

The problems of Africa have been compounded by civil strifes, conflicts, dictatorships and political instability resulting in the derailment of political systems, economic collapse and loss of legitimacy in the face practising democratic countries.

Sierra Leone, Somalia, Niger, Nigeria, Togo, Rwanda, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo and lately Losotho are examples of conflict ridden countries. Namibia and Uganda have made some dramatic changes. Others are moving from oppressive dictatorial regimes to more liberal governance-these include Ethiopia, Mali and Malawi; Nigeria is on its way to join that group. Ghana, Guinea and Senegal are making progress in reviving their economies. Botswana, Swaziland and South Africa have made steady economic progress since independence.

Rapid population growth in Africa countries is another setback which limits the effect of available resources for the development of education.

POST INDEPANDENCE EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION IN AFRICA

Realising the potential of education as an instrument for modernisation of their economies, African countries invested heavily in the expansion of their educational systems after achieving political independence. From a situation in which most of the top positions in the public services, for example, were run by expatriates, in many African countries, graduates largely from local institutions now occupy such positions. The authoritative 1988 World Bank Report on Education in Sub- Saharan Africa aptly

described the phenomenal expansion that the education sector had seen since control of African education passed on to African governments. The following are excerpts from the report:

"Between 1960 and 1983, the number of students enrolled in African institutions at all levels quintupled to about 63 million. Enrollments increased at about 9% annually during the 1970s, double the rate in Asia and triple that in Latin America. At the primary level, the number of students enrolled in African institutions had reached 437,000 by 1983, growing from 21,000 in 1960. The substantial expansion of education since independence has increased the participation of some groups who had previously little or no access to formal education."

"This massive educational expansion has substantially improved the human capital stock. The adult literacy rate in the median country rose from about 9% in 1960 to 42% in the early 1980s."

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN GHANA BEFORE AND AFTER POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE IN 1957

Seen from the perspective of one African country, namely Ghana, some of the policies that were implemented to achieve those giant strides are worth noting. The period saw many new policies to develop education and to confront underdevelopment. The University College of Gold Coast was established in 1948. The Kumasi College of Technology, Science and Arts came into being in 1951. Two developments were particularly significant during that period. In 1952 an Accelerated Development Plan launched a policy of fee-free primary education for all. This was followed by the school education. Vigorous implementation of these initiatives increased enrolments and access to education throughout the country. Many new secondary schools were established and new Teacher Training Colleges were also put in place to produce teachers for the enlarged educational system. By 1973 Ghana had three full-fledged universities. Generous Ghana government scholarships and scholarships funded by the Cocoa Marketing Board sent many Ghanaians abroad to study for professional qualifications in foreign institutions throughout the world. A Special Northern Education Scheme enabled students from the more educationally backward Northern parts of the country to enjoy scholarships which catered for tuition, boarding and lodging in secondary schools and universities. These initiatives together with state-sponsored mass education and community development programmes increased literacy levels in the country beyond levels known in most other African countries. They gave education such a boost that by the middle of 1960s the number and quality of educated

manpower in Ghana had risen to high levels.

OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES MADE SIMILAR GAINS IN EDUCATION

Ghana's progress in education mirrors the changes that took place in other African countries. In Anglophone West Africa the educational systems were brought closer together by the establishment of the West African Examination Council, a common examination body which unified examination standards throughout the region.

In higher education African countries which had only few universities could boast of many newly established universities. The Association of African Universities(AAU) was established in 1967 to bring these universities together to provide a forum to advance higher education and to enhance the role of the universities in national development. By 1996 the AAU had a membership of over 100 universities.

ECONOMIC DECLINE AND EDUCATION

The economic decline in Africa which started in the mid 70s hurt education and reversed many of the early achievements. The physical infrastructure of educational institutions deteriorated. Educational standards were seriously eroded because educational materials could not be supplied to schools in adequate quantities. Many teachers vacated their posts and fled to neighbouring countries. Untrained teachers were 44 percent of Primary and 33 percent of Secondary School teachers. By 1983 recurrent expenditure on education had fallen from just under 5% in 1976 to slightly above 2% of GDP while capital expenditure had fallen from 1.5% to less than 0.5%.

POLICIES WHICH REVERSED THE EDUCATIONAL DECLINE

Donor Support and implementation of educational reforms helped to reverse the decline. The Economic Recovery Programmes which in Ghana's case began in 1987. Reforms changed the structure and duration of education at the pretertiary level from 17 years of Primary, Middle and Secondary education to a new structure which consists of 9 years Basic education and 3 years Senior Secondary education.

THE PRESENT POSITION

(a) Mass Literacy and Basic Education For All

Low levels of literacy still plague many African countries. Projection made by UNESCO in its report on education in Africa for 1991 estimated literacy rates at 61.7% for males and 38.5% for females. These figures compare to 76.6% for males and 56% for females in Asia. With high population growth rates African countries will have

to devote considerable public funds to non-formal education. Africa may have much to learn from Asia on the successes achieved in expanding basic education in spite of the much larger numbers they have had to educate.

(b) Participation in Secondary Education

Participation in secondary education is very low in many African countries. Gross enrolment ratios increased in sub-Saharan Africa from 7.1% in 1970 to an estimated 17.5% in 1990. In Asia it increased from 85.2% in 1970 to an estimated 96.8% in 1990.

What chance do African countries have to address this problem? Mass participation in secondary education was achieved by the developed countries of the world in this century. This happened at the time when many of them had highly industrialised economies which can contain large populations in the urban areas away from agricultural pursuits. What is the relationship between technical/ vocational education at the second cycle level to economic development? Perhaps there are relevant experiences from Japan and the newly developed countries of Asia which African countries can learn from!

(c) Participation in Tertiary Education

In Ghana, participation in tertiary education is not more than 2% of the age group.

The current population in tertiary education is just under 50,000. This includes about 25,000 for five universities. The rest of the enrolment in the sector are in polytechnics, teacher training colleges, agricultural colleges, nursing training colleges, etc. A much larger number of potential students, who are also qualified, cannot find places in these institutions. Indeed only two out of five qualified students find places.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The last two decades of the 20th Century have seen growing awareness of the need to provide early childhood education to infants and children to prepare them for life long education. During the early years infants learn the basics of human behaviour. By the age of three, child's character and personality are largely formed. Many of the social and moral values that will guide them through the rest of their lives have already been transmitted. Attention to children in the early years is therefore essential, not only for their sake, but for the future development of society a whole.

Nurseries and kindergartens serve most useful purposes in shaping the lives of infants but those are mostly privately owned and are therefore costly. Communities should therefore be encouraged to provide Day Care Centres for infants in their localities at reasonable costs. Most government in Africa are presently concentrating on Basic Education and have very little or on funds for early childhood centres.

Local communities and international agencies are in partnership with national government in Lesotho and Namibia in providing effective ECD programmes. Again the Government of Kenya with the support of international donors has established a National Centre for Early Childhood Education. In Ghana in addition to Nurseries and Kindergartens there are several Day Care Centres run at reasonable cost by the 31st December Women's Movement, a Non-Governmental Organisation.

BASIC EDUCATION

Basic Education has really been given priority in the majority of African states. In Ghana the provision of Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education for all children of age 6 to 15 must be at school.

The FCUBE programme has three major goals.

- (a) Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Basic schools.
- (b) Improving the management efficiency of the education sector and
- (c) Improving access to, and participation in basic education especially for girls and other disadvantage groups.

THE GHANA EXPERIENCE

(1) Aid Coordination

Prior to 1993 the various Funding Agencies which were operating in the Education Sector had bilateral relationships with the Ministry of Education in Ghana. Each Agency had a project implementation unit in charge of its projects. These units had separate and distinctive facilities and staff, some of which were under-utilised or had poor capacities.

In 1993 the units were merged into a single Projects Management Unit (PMU) with proper management procedures. A hierarchy of authority was established with a Director General in charge who reported direct to the Minister. All funds from Funding Agencies are channelled through the PMU which has specialised divisions for procurement and disbursement.

The next step was to involve the funding agencies in the policy making process collaborating with them in writing a strategy paper and producing a national plan for basic education.

The Coordination enable the Ministry to:

- (a) define its own priorities and strategies for national development
- (b) utilise agency contributions to the sector programme in an effective way and
- (c) put an end low priority projects that reflected exclusively the directives and

priority areas of the funding agencies.

In July 1994, a Joint Ministry of Education and Funding Agency Forum was held in Accra. That began the process of developing Ghana's basic education reform- The Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) Programme. This was the keystone of a long term success story in the Ministry/ Agency collaboration.

The creation of Oversight and Top Management Groups and Units for the implementation of operations as well as the decentralisation of functions have facilitated a sense of ownership and commitment on the part of all stakeholders, systematic consultation and consensus building.

The inauguration of the Government and Funding Agency Consultative Panel Semi-Annual Meetings in February 1997 provided a sector forum as well as a role for funding agencies in policy implementation.

Because the Government has made it clear that FCUBE is the ONLY programme for Basic Education over the ten year period(1996-2005)all external funding support for Basic Education is now being channelled through the Ministry for that programme.

Ghana's successful experience is trend- setting because it is an effective participatory development model that clearly shows how African governments can take a leadership role in coordinating the assistance of funding agencies. Country- led rather than agency-driven aid more likely to lead to a more equitable and efficient distribution of funds.

(2)Community Involvement

A Government Policy of devolution of authority the 110 districts in Ghana is being implemented in the education sector as part of the FCUBE Programme. Decentralization of education management and control has been initiated with the setting up of District Oversight Education Committees with the District Chief Executives as Chairmen.

At the School level, School Management Committees have been established. The School Performance Appraisal Meeting(SPAM) initiative which brings the local improvement strategies involves communities even more in school activities and strengthens their sense of ownership of the schools.

THE CHALLENGE

What are the challenges facing Africa today in Education?

First-National Education Policy

Democracy generally requires that the people vote a party into power every four or five years to form a Government and run the affairs of state. A Government has

therefore the authority to change educational policies when it is in power. Change of Government should not necessarily mean change in educational policy of a country.

We need to define a framework that will lead to a long term commitment that transcends the next general election and goes beyond party politics. That consensus will ensure continuity in educational systems and changes of government can take place without disrupting the systems. Educational Development is not just the business of Ministry of Education or the political party in power. It is the business of the entire nation.

Second- **Strategic Capacities**

Most countries in sub- Saharan Africa lack the strategic capacities needed for the formulation, the development and implementation of effective policies based on in-country processes.

Curriculum managers, administrators, educators, supervisors and specialists should have jobs. The Universities in Africa need to develop specialised knowledge base to support the professional development of such personnel.

Third- **Education Statistics**

The quantity and quality of research- based data in Africa is extremely low compared to that of the developed countries and most of the educational policies do not have such imperical- based support.

Well managed and responsive statistical information services are essential to viable policy formulation and efficient investment in education.

Fourth- **Teaching Profession**

Teachers' conditions in most African countries in terms of management benefits and professional support are poor and teacher motivation and performance low. This situation has been detrimental to the quality of basic education in those countries.

Fifth- **Female Education**

Several millions (approximately 30 million) African girls are out of school either because they have never enrolled in school or because they have dropped out of the education system.

Access to schools must be improved and discriminatory practices against girls should be eliminated. Social and cultural practices should not stand in the way of girls' education. Recruitment of female teachers must be encouraged and incentives provided.

Cost of educating girls should be subsidised- scholarships and uniform for girls may help raise enrolment. Above all parents should be made aware of the benefits of girls education- greater earning ability for families, reduced fertility, reduced infant mortality and increased levels of public health.

Sixth- **Science and Technology**

Without a strong science and technology base no country can develop in this modern era. African countries are really handicapped in this field. New techniques and products are emerging in the information sciences, communications, biotechnology, space science and aeronautics, medicine and many other areas.

Our Universities and Research Institutes should take up the challenge. They should be more flexible; they should shed off the excess baggage carried over from the colonial era and re- equip themselves with learner more efficient resources.

Seventh- **Non- Formal Education**

No developing country, seeking accelerated development in all spheres of its endeavour can do so, with a population that is predominantly illiterate.

Mass Education, Literacy and Functional Skills programmes properly organised and well funded produce fruitful results.

In a number of African countries non- formal basic education, literacy and post-literacy activities have emerged. Non-formal schools offer more flexibility and are more accessible to rural population, adults, girls and young adults deprived of education.

Eighth- **Distance Education**

Africa has a predominantly youthful population. Presently the median age in Africa is 17.3 as against 33.7 in more developed regions and 22.0 in the less developed regions.

It is estimated that nearly two- thirds of the population in Africa will be 24 years and below in the 2025.

The 21st Century will therefore see many young people as youths and young adults demanding education, employment, basic services and other citizen's rights.

The education sector must be ready to provide the necessary social, economic and technological skills for productive existence while at the same time offering the cultural and spiritual dimension necessary for an integrated and fulfilled life.

Our educational institutions cannot contain all the qualified candidates especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. Certainly more schools and universities will have to be opened but a viable and ultimately cost- effective alternative to formal delivery will

have to be pursued with added vigour to meet the serious challenge of access to education in the next century.

Distance Education lends itself to full utilisation of technological and scientific advancements and meet the diverse human and social needs. It incorporates into its basic correspondence teaching methods, educational broadcasting, audio- visual aids, and recently tele- communication and computer based technologies. The development of interactive computer- mediated communication systems in particular, provides educational institutions with a means of both delivering education to individuals when and where they want it, and being receptive to students' views and queries.

Ninth- Vocational and Technical Education

African countries paid little attention to Technical and Vocational Education during the early periods of their independence vis a vis purely academic education. The emphasis then was to train more clerks to man offices left by the expatriates.

Presently technical and vocational education has become a top priority in Africa along with Basic Education as a path to youth employment. Pupils should be exposed at the Basic Education level to range of practical activities in the vocational field in order to make them familiar with and stimulate their interest in vocational subjects and occupational skills for further training.

Technical and vocational training provides personnel with knowledge and skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development matching the supply of skilled labour with demand. It also provides the operatives, artisans, craftsmen, technicians and other middle- level technical personnel and prepares them for self employment.

Tenth- Economic, Social and Political Constraints

The education system in Africa is fraught with a number of problems which permeate the economics, social and political lives of Africans. These problems which include low per capita income, poverty and diseases, high level illiteracy in several parts of the continent, brain drain, unemployment, poor sanitation etc. present several challenges which should be tackled with all seriousness if any meaningful development is envisaged by the 21st Century.

Africa in the 21st Century will be a region in need of direct physical, social and material reconstruction from the ravages of war and political violence. There are several millions of refugees in Africa. These have to be resettled and integrated indicating pressures not only on the economic resources but also on political will and

tolerance.

Eleventh- **Education Financing**

Education costs money. Providing access to Education in countries with rising population requires more money. Giving children good quality education in such circumstances is most difficult without aid. Well qualified teachers are required to give quality education in the schools.

Learning materials, books, stationery and library facilities must be available if quality education is to be provided.

Many African countries are presently giving priority to education. Education's share of recurrent budget is comparatively high in most countries. In Ghana it ranges between 35% and 40% of the National Budget. Governments alone cannot provide all the funds for good quality education in Africa. Governments should therefore create a conducive environment to enable communities and parental organisations to be involved in the financing and management of education at all levels.

The challenge here is how to find funds to expand while maintaining quality as well. What alternative arrangements for education are available for the many who are currently kept off institutions but are qualified to enter them? Cost- sharing measures and income generation methods should be applied by the tertiary institutions in particular to show what we can do for ourselves before looking elsewhere for help.

FUNDING AGENCIES AS PARTNERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

The new trend is to involve funding agencies as partners in the formulation of national policies for education and in the preparation of strategic plans for implementation. The Ghana example is worth emulating. The Funding Agencies are ready and willing to be invited to be part of the solution of our difficulties. But we must first show that we mean business. A national policy should be formulated with all agency partners as well as the local stakeholders participating fully. The strategy for implementation of policy should then be formulated and "supported by a coordinated multi- agency commitment and sustained by an agreement among all on a stable and long term basis. Such a strategy should hinge upon supporting the nations of Africa in building and sustaining their national capacities; financial, human and institutional" (United Nations System- Wide Special Initiative on Africa).

THE ASSOCIATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN AFRICA

The Association for Development Education in Africa is the best thing which has

happened to Africa in the field of education in recent years. From its small beginnings as forum for consultation among funding agencies, it has grown into a partnership between African Ministries of Education and Funding Agencies for policy adjustment, revitalisation and expansion of education in Sub- Saharan Africa. Through its Biennial plenary meetings, Steering Committee Meetings and Working Groups meetings and the Caucus of African Ministers of Education with its Bureau, the Association deals with all issues and themes considered crucial for development of Education in Africa.

All the funding agencies with which African countries have been working in their countries are represented on the Steering Committee of ADEA where deliberations are held in a frank, friendly and professional atmosphere.

There are presently ten Working Groups dealing with specific issues, carrying out researches and publishing reports and findings and opening up country working groups to assist African Countries.

These are:

1. Working Group on Female Participation
2. Working Group on the Teaching Profession
3. Working Group on Higher Education
4. Working Group on Finance and Education
5. Working Group on Education Statistics
6. Working Group on Books and Learning Materials
7. Working Group on Sector Analysis
8. Working Group on Research and Policy Analysis
9. Working Group on Non- formal Education
10. Working Group on Early Childhood Development

A Working Group on Distance Education will also be established.

THE CAUCUS OF AFRICAN MINISTERS OF EDUCATION

The Caucus is the forum for African Ministers of Education in Sub- Sahara Africa and is one of the two Partners for the development of education in Africa. Its Steering Committee is the Bureau which presently comprises of 10 Ministers from the five sub-regions. The richness of the deliberations by a large representation of Africa countries enable exchange of a wide spectrum of experiences.

The Development Partners- the Funding Agencies, with their rich expertise in the field, give guidance and encouragement and contribute to the implementation of decisions of the Association.

The Quarterly Newsletter of ADEA and the various publications sponsored by it

together with publications by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) which hosts the offices of Executive Secretary of ADEA are most useful aids for African Governments in the field of Education.

CONCLUSION

What should African Governments therefore do to further the development of Education in the region towards the 21st Century?

1. We must educate our people on the need for practising birth control to reduce the rapid growth of the population.
2. We must eradicate illiteracy through Non- formal Education and Functional Literacy Programmes.
3. We must ensure that all children of school going age enrolled in schools by making Basic Education Free Compulsory and Universal and pay special attention to girls.
4. We must provide Technical and Vocational Training and Education to the youth for gainful employment and self employment.
5. We must intensify Science and Technology Education at the Universities and Polytechnics to cope with the rapid global advancement in the field.
6. We must develop National Education Statistics Information Systems (NESIS) in our countries to assist the formulation of data- based policies and strategic plans.
7. We must open up access for further education through Distance Education technologies.
8. We must train more teachers to cope with the growing population of pupils and students and provide motivating packages for them to enable them to give of their best.
9. We must involve communities in the educational process from policy formulation to implementation and monitoring.
10. We must encourage private participation in education by individuals and organisations.
11. We must exchange experiences and information in the field of education among the African states.
12. We must build up institutional capacities in effective and efficient programming, financial management and budget execution and enforce cost- sharing and cost recovery policies.
13. We must give full support to the activities of the Association for Development of Education in Africa and its Working Groups, and involve our Development partners

and Non-Governmental Organisations in our planning and implementation.

14. We must support the activities of Non- Governmental Organisations in the field of education such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) who's principal objective is to champion the cause of the girl child and women in education.
15. Above all we must have the political will and the leadership to be fully in charge of our national programmes and never again leave the driver's seat.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all know that a lot needs to be done if Africa is to move forward with the rest of the world in this scientific and technological era. We in Africa will continue for sometime to rely on the experiences of the developed countries as well as on their financial support if we are not to be left behind.

I am therefore looking forward to the outcome of this Symposium to guide African countries in their endeavour to establish sound educational systems to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.