A Critique and Rethink of Modern Education in Africa's Development in the 21st Century

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Abstract

There has been an educational reform in Africa which has included the opening up of educational systems to market liberalisation. In this paper, we will illustrate the ways in which these reforms have been negative rather than positive for African education. The paper will critically analyse the reasons why the reforms have been inefficient. We will show how increasing social inequity and poverty are related to decreasing educational quality and increasing dropout rates. The African continent has the highest illiteracy rates in the world. The educational system is not contributing adequately to the development of Africa's human capabilities. Africa's knowledge has been omitted from the standard education curriculum. We claim that as long as local knowledge is not included, Africa will not develop on its own terms. We will conclude with some suggestions on ways in which to correct the problems created by market reforms and to move towards an education which is relevant to the social and developmental needs of Africa.

Introduction

Achieving the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the field of education has been an endless challenge for most African countries. The education sector is in a particularly difficult situation in most of Africa where poverty and its consequences, including voicelessness, disempowerment, illiteracy and a deteriorating environment, are part of people's daily lives. These challenges arguably have made the last decade for Africa one of the most significant periods for education and development in Africa. There has been a complete overhaul of education policies across the continent.

The significance of education in the development process or in economies taking giant strides towards market liberalisation and integration into the world economy cannot be over-emphasised. Increasingly, empirical evidence shows that education matters, not only for poverty reduction, human development, social inclusion and the job prospects

of individual learners, but also for the broader socio-economic performance of nations experiencing the impacts of globalization (OECD/UIS, 2006). Education is also said to play a crucial role in improving health and reducing fertility (Schultz, 2002). There is also substantial evidence for the crucial role of education in promoting the struggle for lasting peace, poverty reduction and sustainable development. These claims about the importance of education are supported by researchers, academics and policy makers (UNDP, 1999; World Bank, 2005). In other words, the power of education to transform societies cannot be underestimated, as it breaks the generational cycle of poverty and serves as a key to a nation's development and prosperity.

Unfortunately, the impact of education has been minimised, as educational reform has been carried out in the context of either market liberalisation or decentralisation without devolution of knowledge. The consequences for welfare of this market-based policy are seen in the lack of impact of long-term sustained efforts by governments and international aid givers on development. As such, current education policies in African countries (see nothing wrong and do nothing to change the system) have led to much greater inequality and poverty that are part of larger socio-economic problems. This has led to the nations of the West garnering all the benefits of globalisation at the expense of Africans, who have experienced a sharp deterioration in their well-being and educational access, equity, and quality. Reforms intended to stabilise, restructure, and transform African economies to make them efficient and competitive have thus far only resulted in social and economic negative outcomes, which have spread all over Africa, similar to what was experienced during the colonial period. Reversing this negative development will require solid economic and educational reforms, with a comprehensive investment in people that will expand the opportunities to which they are entitled, as well as the nation's asset base.

This article will briefly review educational reform in Africa. The review is neither comprehensive nor focused on a particular country's experience, but it does focus on the causes of the current state of education in Africa, how it has intensified the plight of poverty, exacerbated income polarisation, and influenced the level of development through the denial of human rights and development on countries' own terms—their sovereignty to determine a desired development path. Succinctly, the review is aimed at provoking a serious debate on educational policy and reform in Africa. Given the mismatch between education and the complex African environment and development challenges, the review will provide recommendations for the way forward.

Education Policy Outcomes in Africa

Education is a major component of well-being and is used as a measure of economic development and quality of life, which is a key factor in determining whether a country is developed, developing, or underdeveloped. But the process of "commodification" of education in African countries, through the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), is said to have accelerated the erosion of traditional networks. In sum, non-localised education, with its alien curriculum, conceptualised in market and weak government mechanisms is an instrument of domestication and indoctrination, rather than that of ensuring social justice, as well as economic and cultural rights. Brock-Utne (2002:58) suggests that, in recent decades, the power of UNESCO relative to the World Bank in education has lessened, as the World Bank has virtually taken over its policy and design role in the education sector. This shift of power has allowed the World Bank to link education to its neo-liberal economic orthodoxy in developing countries. As Brock-Utne (2002) noted passionately, development assistance to education has created dependency and undermines indigenous educational patterns. Such tied aid includes insistence on the use of textbooks written and published abroad and of examination systems devised in Europe or North America. The result of this cost-sharing reform process has been the creation of losers particularly in global South countries, where internal efficiency indicators are the lowest, in particular the education index.

Not only is the continent the poorest in terms of education index rankings in the world, it was also the only continent with negative growth in income per capita during the 1980–2000 period. The United Nations Development Programme shows that Africa has an education index of between 0.45-0.49, with an adult literacy rate of 60 percent, and a combined gross primary and secondary enrolment rate of 42 percent (UNDP, 2008). Clearly, this constitutes a serious threat to Africa's global integration and competitiveness as well as social stability. For instance, 340 million people, or half the population, live on less than US $1 per day. The mortality rate of children under five is 140 per 1,000, and life expectancy at birth is only 54 years. In Africa, only 58 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water. There are only 18 mainline telephones per 1,000 people in Africa, compared with 146 for the world as a whole and 567 for high-income countries. These statistics are in stark contrast to the prosperity of the developed world. In addition to having the lowest education index in the world, Africa's health indicators are by far the worst on the planet. Among all of the countries struggling to confront socio-economic insecurity globally, countries on the African continent have been those most affected. We do not intend to explore all of the reasons for these social-economic costs, but two facts are worth noting.

Africa's insecurity is based on more than being excluded from the wealth of globalisation that results in income and educational poverty. It is also based on human

rights violation and denial of the right to "own" its development (see Sengupta, 2002). Rather than being on the same upward path, its countries are behind other nations, and its development has been deliberately held back to the advantage of developed nations through the lack of relevance of the curricula that is largely knowledge-based rather than skills and attitudes based to meet the needs and desires of Africa. In this sense, modern schooling cannot change African societies, and neither can individual learning nor social equality or social cohesion be facilitated by such schooling.

The impoverishment of Africa has been accentuated primarily by the legacy of colonialism, the Cold War, the workings of the international economic system and the inadequacies and shortcomings of the education and development policies pursued by many countries in the post-independence era. Brock-Utne (2002:60), asserted that, when policies inform that instruction should be given in a language not normally used in the local environment, which neither the learner nor the teacher understands and uses well, the major obstacle to learning or achievement becomes linguistic. In this vein, the aim of 'education for all' becomes a completely empty concept if the linguistic environment of the basic learners is not taken into account (Brock-Utne, 2000). On the basis of their experiences as consumers of African education and as Africanists, the authors assert that Brock-Utne is completely right to allude to this policy as the re-colonisation of the African mind (Brock-Utne, 2000). Such reforms in the past and today have led to greater disparities between social groups and regions, as well as to the non-localisation of the curriculum.

Consequently, the inadequate mastery of educational programmes, the application of rigid teaching practices, the lack of teaching materials and insufficient teaching time are some of the factors hindering the achievement of quality education. In fact, the integration of Africa into the world economy, mainly as a supplier of cheap labour and raw materials, has meant the draining of Africa's resources rather than their use for the continent's development. Thus, Africa remains the poorest continent despite being one of the most richly-endowed regions of the world. In Africa today, no culturally sensitive education system exists that responds to its socio-economic challenges. This is evidenced in the low and falling quality of education, pedagogical methods centred on memorisation and regurgitation, major social issues (in particular, civic instruction and ethical values) not being given sufficient consideration, and the lack of a linkage between education and working life. More significant is the fact that the needs of rural communities and of the poor, or those located in more isolated areas that need Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) in a rapidly changing world, or job markets that require people to improve their qualifications and constantly renew their knowledge, are rarely included in policy reforms (see Geo-JaJa and Azaiki, 2010). In fact, the shortcomings noted in the education system persist in the form of

overcrowded classrooms, especially in urban areas, unsuitable training programmes, the lack of quality education materials, and a shortage of quality teachers.

These shortcomings in the education sector, as well as the lack of internal and external efficiency that some scholars have observed, are not the main factors hindering the development of the continent and the reduction in poverty. The lack of resources, though extremely important, is not the crux of the problem. Some authors attribute the falling quality of education to flawed externally imposed reforms (Hanushek, 1995; Hanushek, 2003). It is this mismatch between education and the flaws of the liberalisation reforms of education, which has subverted hitherto traditional structures, institutions and values or made them subservient to the economic and political needs of the Western powers, that has led to the results described above. The drastic situation prevailing in Africa will not be reversed unless we find solutions for halting the deterioration in its educational system. It is, therefore, urgent to find answers to the key questions that arise when analysing the state of education systems in Africa.

What have been the External Impacts on Education in Africa?

Prior to the 1884 Berlin Conference, Africa was as advanced or even more advanced than any part of the world, with a combination of empires and village societies with highly advanced governance systems, education and agricultural methods viable for the location and period. The continent was first disrupted by the developed nations' search for resource inputs and subsequently by the slave trade, with its own people as the slavers, but future industrialists as the buyers of slaves. With industrialisation, the countries of Europe competed with each other for raw materials and new markets in Africa, resulting in the imposition of trade barriers against each other to protect their shrinking markets. The need to exploit African resources and markets influenced the development of education and transport systems that served European interests. Similarly, the building of roads and railways financed by European industrialists aimed at conveying raw materials and marketable goods from these colonies to provide for the development of the colonising powers. However, this did not do much to encourage relations between and among African nations. The scramble for raw materials and markets by the colonial powers of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal is similar to today's G-20 developed country-African relations. As was the case in the colonial era when pre-existing governmental structures and ethnic relations were ignored, powerful nations demolish these structures today for their selfish pursuit of raw materials, surplus labour and export opportunities. As we can see, the pattern which has not changed since colonial times, demands the same type of education system.

Although Africa has increased her political power and representation in international forums since the inception of the African Union (AU) in 2001, this has not translated into control of her education system, nor has it brought about the desired positive results. In terms of poverty reduction and global social equity, poverty rates among the African population are now higher and fall more slowly. In terms of education, according to UNESCO, only a little more than half of African adults are literate and less than 60 per cent of children go to school, the lowest enrolment rate of any region, and over 80 per cent of African children who do not attend school live in rural areas (UNESCO, 2007). But by liberating the mind and giving *"self-reliance"* through *local* autonomy, defined by *local* knowledge and *local* people in *local* production and grounded in *local* belief is the natural path to a sustainable *Education for All* (Babaci-Wilhite, 2009).

Clearly, this demonstrates that stakeholders (internal and external) should work to keep education relevant and high on the agenda of both governments and development partners working in African countries. Thus:

- Curricula should emphasise African needs and African institutions. Thus, meaningful educational reforms cannot be left to the interests of external stakeholders;
- As quality and standards in education must be consistent with the needs of Africa, curricula left by the colonial masters must be restructured;
- The low priority assigned to culturally-sensitive education is particularly vexing for a continent which has set its sights on meeting the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty and achieving full literacy by 2015; and
- If any significant effort by African countries is to be translate into their being higher in the Human Development Index, countries must focus on improving human capabilities and human capital by investing in education to reduce the gap between those who receive schooling and those who do not.

The core of success in this new arrangement is greater involvement of parents and the community, as well as by having clear goals and a vision for the system.

Social Realities of Contemporary Africa

In this section, we show that the colonial heritage is a good predictor of primary school enrolment in Africa. The previous section showed that colonialism's impact on education has not diminished since independence. Rather, this result has important implications for the study of colonial-related reforms and political institutions, and their impact on educational poverty and economic development. Even after colonialism

ceased to exist, the colonial legacy has continued to have substantial lingering effects on important socio- economic developmental outcomes in Africa. Colonialists had restrictive selective educational systems, and it is evident that the same is true of education in the era of market liberalisation. The consequences of the Washington Consensus were that:

- Education was given to very few (at independence, no colony had more than 60 percent of the elementary school age population in school; for most colonies it was less than 30 percent, and even lower for high school and tertiary education).
- The curriculum was heavily biased towards the interests of the developers rather than to localisation. This bias in creating new challenges (and new opportunities) for education systems, particularly in Africa, holds back real learning and the achievement of the goal of quality. In addition, because of the international competition that currently prevails in the education sector, standardisation of curricula in science, maths, and English is considered essential in the globalised world.
- Extensive expansion in the primary school system took place (58 percent enrolment), but less than 10 percent went to secondary school and only 2 percent went on to university! Upon closer inspection, however, the tremendous variation in enrolments at all educational levels in African countries is associated with the contrasting educational and administrative policies adopted by countries (Geo-JaJa and Mangum, 2003). The increasing gap in enrolment implies that the effect of political institutions can continue to grow well after the formal institutions cease to exist.
- African countries have followed the policy of either "*progressiveness*" or "*assimilation*"— targeting a small percentage of the population with a relatively good education system, but providing the vast majority with little or no schooling. A case in point is the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Currently, this policy is carried out in the form of cost-recovery or the introduction of user fees or just "education dumping".
- Then there is the further fear of loss of cultural diversity as educational reform is seen as leading to cultural homogeneity, or Westernisation.

This spread of factors influencing culture is unbalanced and heavily weighted in one direction, from Western countries to Africa.

Education in Africa: A Critical View of Conventions and Challenges

Does education matter in Africa? First and foremost, education that has become an *elusive human right as regards equity is* enshrined in the declaration as documented below:

> Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free …. Education shall be directed to … the development of human personality and to the strengthening of human rights and fundamental freedom (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, Article 26).

This commitment to the provision of education to all was recognised as a fundamental human right for the multifaceted development of individuals and of society. In particular, it was declared that basic education should be free and compulsory and that the higher levels of education should be accessible to all on the basis of merit (United Nations, 1948, Article 26). The two most recent conventions provide very strong guarantees of children's right to education. The reality is that, despite the evidence that education is an important tool for the formation of citizenship and for nation-building, the conventions have failed to address or deliver on any of its stated objectives.

Therefore, central to our debate on rethinking or developing new directions in every sphere of the education system are concerns in relation to the curricula, management and the resources of the educational system and institutions.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) published in 1948 declared that the provision of education was a fundamental human right for the multifaceted development of individuals and of society (United Nations, 1948, Article 26). This shows that the level and spread of education is not only an important factor in the quest to achieve national development goals, including the MDGs, but that investment plays a crucial role in encouraging and enabling communities to participate in development efforts. Investing in education is, therefore, the best way to develop and sustain the level and pace of development. Indeed, education generally increases the chances of attaining equality in society. These and other reasons are why education does matter for Africa. For instance, with a low level of development, in some cases expanding education might possibly increase inequality, but with a high level of development education does seem to have the effect of reducing poverty and marginalisation. These reasons are supported in many studies analysing the rates of return (Psacharopoulos, 1994; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2002). However, with the slowing down of economic growth due to unfavourable trading conditions, most African countries have found it difficult, if not impossible, to provide the resources to continue the rapid expansion of their educational system, thus further slowing down the pace of social transformation. Clearly, declining public expenditure on education, coupled with the design of curricula modelled on Western countries (and to some extent consistent with

what was provided by the former colonialists), has prevented an improvement in well-being and increased agency (the ability to achieve desired goals). Thus, Africans were not "properly" educated or, even if they were, no concessions were made in relation to their culture and needs.

This assimilation and homogenisation created tension and conflict, as well as the intensification of educational poverty, marginalisation, and economic poverty. In this vein, such schooling, which is reminiscent of culturally-insensitive colonial education, rather than promoting an understanding of sustainability in relation to the stewardship of resources, the environment and health, resulted in cultural and linguistic homogenisation and selective distribution of opportunities. Furthermore, under colonial rule, access to education in Africa was restricted, as were curricular offerings and the length of study. African children were prepared for the roles deemed appropriate by those in power, thus minimising equity and equality in access to education.

The new era of educational imperialism in contemporary Africa is still designed to exalt the image of Europeanism, just as the colonial path prevented Africans from developing intellectual skills consistent with the local mindset and indigenous learning. This form of educational policy has created horrific inequities and unspeakable poverty, and, in re-ordering the world's socio-political, educational and cultural relationships, it continues to interfere in nation-building and state legitimacy, economic development and productivity, as well as in social and cultural development—the (re)production of 'Traditional Culture'[1]. The analysis above shows that economic growth has only minimally resulted in economic progress as regards meaningful participation in education and sustainable human development, and it has not ensured the right to self-determination in the region. Indeed, for Africa to benefit from market-driven education in an increasingly integrated world economy, the capacity of local and national institutions to provide inclusive quality education through an increase in social budgeting is urgently needed.

In fact, education has continued to suffer as a result of the above challenges, with a deterioration in educational provision and education systems, as well as the psychological conditions faced by both teachers and students, coupled with the declining capacity for planning and management (*ADEA Newsletter*, April-September, 2003:14; UNESCO, 2000:24). In the light of these challenges and having enumerated some of the problems that have arisen due to declining resources and liberal reforms,

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[1] Otherwise termed 'indigenous African culture'

the sections that follow describe some of the interventions that have been implemented in the quest to attain quality education and halt inequity in access.

What Lessons Have Been Learned?

The authors believe that education should be part of the struggle against the colonial past and its on-going legacy of globalisation. As overt colonialism ended in the 1950s and 1960s, the authors note that, in the post-colonial setting, the complicated and often misunderstood politics of structural adjustment crippled Africa's infrastructure and educational institutions. This means that because of Africa's unsatisfactory results and exclusion, which are rooted in its colonial history and now made worse by globalisation and market liberalisation, educational reforms require social policies and programmes that go beyond achieving universal access to education to ensure its quality and equality of access, especially by the disadvantaged. These imperatives for sustained growth and sustainable development will mean emphasising the creation of capabilities, the production of comprehensive programmes to improve coverage and the provision of quality education, with policies and systems designed to improve equity and well-being, to generate productive activities and to ensure that funds are used effectively. The positive effect of efficient spending on social indicators is also supported by Psacharopoulos (1994), Bidani and Ravallion (1997), Lopes (2002), and Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2002). This supposition has major implications for the aid policy of external stakeholders in relation to African countries, such as, but not limited to, simplifying aid procedures and putting an end to the policy of "conditionalities" prescribed by the Washington Consensus. This would provide the foundation for fulfilling the hopes and ambitions of the continent and would need a "strong" government with a focus on educational outcomes. It would also mean that governments would have to forge new partnerships with external stakeholders so as to pursue learning opportunities which best meet each country's needs.

Leon Tikly's recent review shows that the educational crisis undermines the objectives of sustainable development and poverty reduction (Tikly, 2003). Geo-JaJa and Azaiki (2010) also provide evidence that governments that have a multi-pronged social welfare strategy for reducing poverty ensure that poor school-age children get education and the necessary material assistance. They add that the advantage of such a system is that more children from under-privileged families are enrolled in school and continue to get ongoing assistance from various local institutions and the local government. Under this arrangement, the government provides free education and school materials to all children.

On the contrary, it is generally believed that the drastic cut in public expenditure on education in Africa has reduced the accessibility and effectiveness of education. This is reflected in the fact that about half of the pupils in Africa have not achieved the minimum skill level defined by the authorities in each country. In some countries, less than a third of the children have the skills necessary at the end of secondary school to perform at tertiary level. In some countries where lessons have continued to be taught in a colonial language, three decades later three-quarters of the students were functionally illiterate after finishing secondary schooling. Brock-Utne (2007b:526) points out that "the use of an unfamiliar language as the language of instruction appears to be a strategy to keep the masses down, to stupidify [*sic*] them and make it difficult for them to rise out of poverty".

The complex educational problems of poor retention and low achievement—as indicated by the high repetition and school drop-out rates—are no longer seen as strictly "internal efficiency" problems but as symptoms of deeper problems that must be better understood if education in Africa is to improve. Article 5 of the World Conference of Education for All, quoted in Jomtien (1990) says: "Literacy in the mother-tongue strengthens cultural identity and heritage". Language policy has, therefore, an important place in the educational system but it is often underestimated, even if research has proved it to be effective. Evidence from many cultural settings indicates that a child learns best when s/he understands the language of instruction (Brock-Utne, 2007a; Makelela, 2005; Qorro, 2004; Prah, 2003; Vuzo, 2007).

Consequently, we state that African education systems, while expanding quantitatively, have generally failed to bring about the desired higher employment rates, more equitable societies, or the promotion of human rights. We further assert that the narrowing of educational reform agendas in Africa, and the tailoring of these agendas to fit the neo-liberal economic policies prescribed by outsiders, has generated increased dissatisfaction among Africans, who are supposed to be the beneficiaries. Because of the failed reforms mentioned above, African countries need to reform their educational systems in order to ensure the realisation of the ideals to which they have committed themselves. To be consistent with the UNHDR of 1948, educational revitalisation in developing countries must take the following key constraints into consideration in localising the curriculum, namely:
- Indigenous programme design must match the local characteristics of learners; and
- The manpower and skills that are indispensable for individuals to be functional citizens in their environment must be developed.

It is argued and supported in the literature that an emphasis on efficiency comes at the expense of equity and accountability to insider stakeholders—i.e. the citizens who include students. According to Joel Samoff, educational complexities need to be appreciated and better understood if education in Africa is to improve and if education is to perform its role of social transformation, as well as being an engine for development and a foundation for self-reliance in order to end dependence on aid by targeting human capital development formation (Samoff 1999a).

Africa must take new steps to ensure that it becomes an active partner in West-African relations and/or in Sino-African relations. In this respect, Africa must adopt a new vision for its development and translate this vision into appropriate education programmes. This emphasis on an education system designed by and for Africans is considered to be the key to progress, and will place Africa in a position to fully participate, as a credible partner, in these relationships. In this new engagement, Africa will be able to promote its interests and will suffer less from deliberately imposed reforms that leave it underdeveloped. To this end, there can be no true economic development without quality education. Neither can there be sustainable democracy nor peace without a population prepared to be both self-governing and committed to Africanisation, leaving behind the 'divide and conquer' practices of colonialism—the source of so much current internal strife. In short, an African curriculum should stress local needs and skills founded on local particularities. It is in this sense that the universal encompasses what is common to mankind, to all societies and civilisation, including countries at all stages of development. What is needed is a stronger sense of the welfare state that promotes social solidarity and ensures that development is sustainable.

Rethinking Education in Africa

Beyond the influence of family and religion, education is the key to the prevention of insecurity, to inclusion, and to the protection of human rights, as it plays a major role in self-determination and human emancipation. Education, of course, has a special responsibility to help people develop traditional academic culture. Ultimately, education should facilitate the development of the belief that the reigning vision of culture and its canon is adequate. The primacy of education that is fundamental to the sustainable and equitable development of Africa must, therefore, be maintained in all economic and social policies. The literature again provides ample evidence of the direct links between localised education and poverty reduction, human capital formation, economic growth, human capability and advancement (see Tikly, 2001; 2004; Samoff, 1999b).

From the perspective of Geo-JaJa and Yang (2003) in rethinking African education, the curriculum needs to reflect the way of living and acting to make sense of experience, building on students' and society's own cultural capital. Consciously, schools need to be more thoughtful about culture, cherishing and building on the webs of meaning, value and community which students bring to education. For education to assume an active rather than a passive role in African societies, schools must be seen as building bridges between traditional academic culture, the culture of the region, and global culture. It is a gross understatement to say that little of this view informs schooling or educational practice in the Africa of today. It is, therefore, erroneous to assume that effective education can only be based on the Western paradigm. Within this all-encompassing view, education is a proven weapon in the fight against poverty or the denial of human rights, as it helps to break down barriers that exclude or marginalise Africa in its relationships with the West, as well as its role in restructuring political and economic entitlements. According to Tilak (2002) and Geo-JaJa (2006) 'ensuring the right to education is a matter of morality, justice and economic sense'.

In a nutshell, the complex implications of education for Africa and the need for a new strategy, as highlighted in this piece, have been well documented in previous publications (see Geo-JaJa and Mangum 2003; Geo-JaJa, 2004). According to Leon Tikly, current African education and training projects represent a series of policy tensions, the resolving of which requires strategies specific to individual countries and the continent (Tikly, 2003). In this vein, the primacy of education to the sustainable and equitable development of Africa must, therefore, be maintained in a localised economic and social policy. Consequently, in this connection, education and training systems that are key to socio-economic development should be adapted to the needs of African societies, with an emphasis on increasing Africa's capacity-building to implement its own development plans.

Finally, African countries with different economic histories and at different stages of economic development have implemented the same economic liberalisation policies, in particular structural adjustment and market liberalisation, which have negatively affected educational outcomes. However, we are convinced that Africa, with its immense human and natural resources, can be made an economic power and the continent's exacerbated educational poverty and income polarisation, coupled with instability, will be overcome if/when the education and training system is adapted to the needs of African societies, with an emphasis on increasing Africa's capacity-building to implement its development plans. We suggest that education in African must be centripetally-oriented and based on the principles of respect for human rights and dignity in order to eradicate poverty in Africa and place African countries, both individually and collectively, on the path of sustainable development and integrated

into the world economy, thus halting the marginalisation of Africa in the globalisation process. This approach must give consideration to local realities and direct its intellectual efforts and curriculum towards the achievement of freedoms that are consistent with education as a human right.

Conclusion

The significance of this paper lies in the contention that any attempt to formulate indigenous education and an African response to globalisation needs to be linked to a clear agenda of human rights, social protection, poverty reduction and social justice. It is also crucial to bear in mind that education needs to be linked to a clear agenda which recognises human distinctions. Without that education will fail, if and when it is applied in communities with different sets of manpower and skill needs (UNESCO, 2004:231), as it will have negative repercussions as regards the overall quality of human capabilities, as well as well-being.

Based on our findings and experience, it is recommended, among other items, that a bottom-up approach to educational reform and planning should be encouraged in all African countries, and that every effort should be made to sensitise people to the effect that the basic educational system and its organisation belong to all stakeholders. It is also recommended that more conscious efforts be made to include communities at the level of school management and administration. We note that this is quite different from the decentralisation prescribed by neo-liberals (Geo-JaJa and Mangum, 2003). Finally, Africa should continue to work in close co-operation with partners to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are integrated into the educational systems of the countries in the region.

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