

Education– are we on the right track?

By Fred Wakhungu

Millions of people, young and old, still lack essential (adequate) levels of literacy to fit well with the world dynamic challenges. A huge percentage of pupils do not complete high school or even class eight of the basic schooling because they are not motivated by existing patterns of instruction, social economic challenges or worse still the teaching methodology. The progress and achievements of millions are constricted and retarded by the needlessly rigid curricula.

ECD

Clearly, what to be taught to learners right from ECD need re-examination in order to tailor it with contemporary requirements of education. During early schooling in Kenya, the curriculum was wide and flexible such that those who did not quite follow a subject had many alternatives to choose from.

In mathematics for example, there were alternatives A and B. there were subjects like handiwork, physical education, drills, music and home-science etc in the curriculum.

The early learners were motivated to join school because choices did exist for their favourite subjects that promoted their childhood talents fully. The significance of any educational arrangement can best be defined in terms of its purposes. For example what are the potentials for providing children, youth and adults with better education? These potentials are the fundamental reasons of schooling and particularly learning in schools.

Perceptions

Learning can be defined as any increase in people’s capability to live well through organized knowledge acquisition either formally or informally”. Perceptions of ways to improve living stimulate people to enlarge their capabilities. To the educators, this is called motivation. The perception of ways to improve living or live better is accelerated and enlarged by direct contact with economic, occupational, civic and cultural realities of life. This is called learning experience by the educators, this idea is used as a basis for experience-based curricula development. In the year 2003, following the introduction of free primary education by the Narc government, the country’s oldest pupil aged 84 years surfaced in Eldoret.

This was proof that education is highly valued even by the aged.

The global demand for education raises the following questions about treating students/learners as human capital; Should schools emphasize on broad and liberal education or preparation for a career?

Inequality

In labour market based on educational attainment; will inequality of educational opportunities cause economic opportunities to be based on high stakes-tests?

It can be argued that a broad liberal education enhances learning and thinking and provides the intellectual tools and knowledge of making decisions about quality of one’s life.

In contrast, preparation for career provides only a narrow education, which limits the ability to think about the broad issues related to the quality of life and happiness.

All in all, education is central to all human endeavours worldwide and governments are under obligation to eliminate all manner of impediments to the attainment of quality education by the citizenry without discrimination.

Dr. Wakhungu is an education consultant based at TAABCO.

“In order to adapt to a changing world- to make possible innovation and local creativity, to respond to the challenges of an increasingly interactive and globalised world- the education and training of people becomes fundamental” — Michael Taylor — author — Christianity, poverty and wealth

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Close look at the Free primary Education

By Sam Kiplagat

Quality has been the obvious casualty of the free primary education which was introduced by the Narc administration in 2003 and there are concerns on whether the programme is sustainable. When the government opened the school doors for all, the influx of pupils in class was so overwhelming that it seriously affected the quality of education offered. This is because the increase in pupils didn't go in tandem with the staffing levels in public schools. This state of affairs has ultimately impacted on the secondary education even though the government anticipated when launching the free primary education programme.

Strategy

The then Minister for Education George Saitoti, said the ministry was in the process of developing a secondary education sub-sector strategy. The strategy was to increase access to secondary education through expansion of existing secondary schools, establishment of additional day schools, introduction of alternative delivery modes including multi-grade teaching, distance learning and accelerated learning.

Besides, the government would provide incentives for the private sector to invest in the expansion of educational facilities for the post-primary level.

In some instances, cases were told where pupil teacher ratio spiraled to the ungodly level of 80:1 yet throughout this period, little was done to redress the situation.

Private schools became the obvious destinations for most pupils from the middle class who were wary of the quality of education offered in public schools.

The money people seeing an opportunity to make a kill invested in education, establishing private schools to respond to a demand that threatened to get out of the roof.

But even in this case, the privateers offered little solace in terms of quality. There doubts on whether privateers can handle the huge demand for quality education. However being business people, there are issues on whether their real motivation was quality or profit.

Obviously the private schools have won the war because they constantly outperformed the public schools even though there have been claims that the mode of teaching offered here is tailor-made toward passing exams.

Ideally public schools should be free of charge as the government remits to schools every other term. But owing to large number of pupils, the reality is different.

Evidence suggests that the difference in quality of education offered in both public and private schools is not considerably different. There are many 'illegal charges' levied by public schools that prove that they are as expensive as private schools, if not worse.

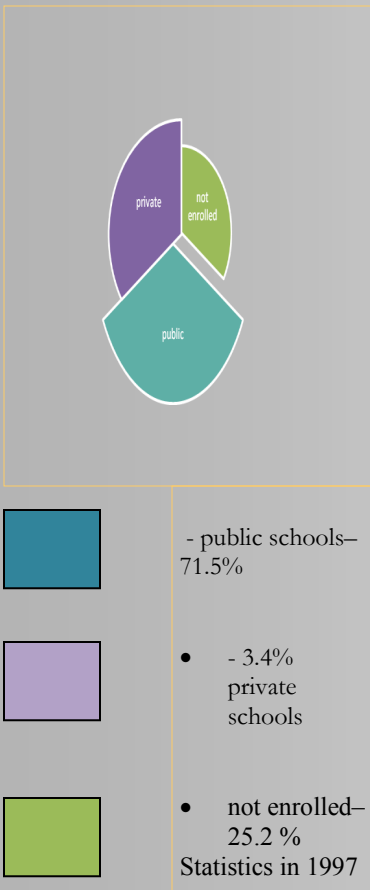
Tuition

Parents in public schools pay as much as Sh6, 000 per year in various, albeit illegal projects. The bulk attend tuition, where pupils are offered extra hours of lessons at a fee.

Attempts by the government to stop tuition has come a cropper because teachers see in it an opportunity to make a shilling and get even with those in private schools.

The truth is that the noble cause of offering free primary education to millions of Kenyan children, which is also part of meeting the Millennium Development Goals, shows the free primary education has become victim to the corruption that is deeply entrenched in Kenya.

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In 2006- three years after the introduction of FPE- the number of pupils in private schools had increased to 9.2 percent, those in public schools had reduced to 67.1 percent and those yet to be enrolled reduced to 21.7 percent.

Source- Ministry of Education.

News from WCC

Representatives of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Roman Catholic Church met in Malta from 31 October to 5 November in the final consultation of their Joint Working Group before the 10th Assembly of the WCC convenes at Busan, Republic of Korea in October 2013. The group is preparing a report on relations between Roman Catholics and the WCC since the 9th Assembly in February 2006. The Joint Working Group, created in 1965 by the Vatican and the WCC Central Committee, is the official forum linking the two world Christian bodies “to initiate, evaluate and sustain collaboration” between

the WCC and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. Prime topics of discussion in recent years have included spiritual life, shared values in ecumenical dialogue, the global economy, youth and migration. An account of the 2011 plenary meeting appears in the Communiqué of the Joint Working Group (JWG). It reports that in Malta “the JWG members witnessed a fresh spirit of ecumenical openness and cooperation on this predominantly Catholic island, not least because of a common response to the steady arrival of migrants.”

“Education is needed at all levels: at primary, secondary and pre-school levels for children; at higher level for young people and as a life-long process for adults... Many believe that education should have a strong vocational bias, preparing people for employment where new skills are now needed.” Michael Taylor.



Initiate meaningful negotiations to end the strike

Public universities were shut early last week as lecturers and non-teaching staff downed tools to push for a pay rise. Before proceeding with the strike, the lecturers rejected a last-ditch attempt by the Government.

The strike was jointly called by 7,000 lecturers, 6,000 non-teaching staff union (UNTESU) and 7,000 members of the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Education institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers union. The industrial action disrupted teaching and examinations in the seven public universities which has an estimated 80,000 regular and 90,000 Module II- or parallel students. Although the Federation of Kenya Em-

ployers (FKE) moved to court to stop the planned strike, the striking lecturers and their colleagues ignored a court order issued by an Industrial Court judge, which had termed the strike illegal. The court has also directed the parties to resume negotiations which stalled in 2009.

But as this happened, who is to blame? Members of Parliament have accused the government in its lackluster way it has been treating the lecturers. The Ministry of Higher Education too was on the receiving end for failing to engage the lecturers in any meaningful dialogue. Public universities include Nairobi,

Kenyatta, Moi, Egerton, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Maseno, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Pwani University College and their satellite campuses.

Before the strike took off, calls had been made to Inter-Public Universities Council Consultative Forum (IPUCCF) to resume the stalled negotiations. But the lecturers thought it was a ploy by the government. This time, the lecturers want money or the institutions of higher learning remain closed. The unions on the part seemed to have made up their minds and ignored channels of dialogue when they were still

available.

In the last agreement with the government, the lecturers were awarded a 15 per cent increase in basic salaries and 7.5 percent in house allowances. It is a prayer that talks will resume and lecturers will go back to halls. This should happen soon since graduation ceremonies in some universities and examinations, which are set to begin, would be disrupted.

Too much emphasis on the paper, but at what expense

By Sam Kiplagat

Average KCPE scores- public vs private

| Year | Public | Private |
|------|--------|---------|
| 2001 | 243.30 | 290.84 |
| 2002 | 243.02 | 293.17 |
| 2003 | 242.92 | 297.09 |
| 2004 | 243.86 | 298.56 |
| 2004 | 242.36 | 291.53 |

Some 775,839 pupils are writing the primary school examinations this year while 413,177 others will be busy doing the same in the secondary schools.

The examinations mark the end of one chapter for the candidates while opening another one. For the class eight candidates, they are aiming for better scores to enable them secure a place in the country's top secondary schools. And for those in secondary schools, it is another competition to get a slot in the few public universities. So much importance has been placed on the examinations that

teachers, both in public and secondary schools, are forced to grill the students to ensure that they get good marks.

Fierce is the competition that we have ended up creating yet another problem of repeaters as slow learners or those perceived to be lowering the schools' grades are forced to repeat.

Those who are more discouraged by the system drop out altogether. The more persistent repeat a year, in the hope of staggering on to usually on to the next hurdle in the race.

Promotion is rarely automatic and the proportion of those repeating is very high. The education system ensures that the children of the poor are also poor. And with its superficial appearance of objective testing, it provides a perfect excuse for the perpetuation of gross inequalities.

It may seem inexplicable why the rural and urban poor are willing to make such sacrifices for the children to go through a grueling exercise in disorientation, in which in any case most of them will fall by the wayside.

With hopes of getting admitted to the university, both certificates- Kenya Certificate of primary Education (KCPE) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) are seen as a one-way ticket out of the poverty and depression of rural life and the curse of manual labour.

Study

A recent study, titled *Recent trends in KCPE Participation and Performance and some Implications for Policy 2010*, repeating classes has been discouraged as it has no significant value in pupil's academic progression.

The report recommended that no pupil should be allowed to repeat a class at any stage. And to reduce the need for repetition, teacher education programs both pre-service and in-service, should devote more attention to developing their skills in providing remedial instructions for slow learning pupils, said part of the report.

Early this year, education minister Prof. Sam Ongeru warned that head teachers who force students to repeat class would be interdicted. He directed Provincial and district education officers, in liaison with the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), to interdict the culprits. According to the Minister, head teachers have abused class repetition to increase mean scores, a trend that has been noted among pupils in class seven and eight. Forced repetition has also been described misguided and unprofessional.

Too much emphasis on the examinations has also created another

problem- that of cheating.

Last year, the results of some 1,419 Form Four candidates were cancelled because of cheating. The previous year, some 1,875 candidates had their results cancelled.

And to curb cheating, the Ministry of Education introduced measures to discourage the unfortunate habit. The ministry said that all papers to be written by candidates will contain security features customised for each candidate. And each candidate will use question papers specifically meant for him or her.

Private

But measures aside, the education system in the country has led to huge disparities as students compete to score higher marks. We now have overstretched public schools and meager resources contending with better equipped and highly motivated teachers in private schools.

Part of the blame can be placed on the introduction of free primary education which introduced by the Narc Government in 2003. While it was a good gesture and a move in the right direction, FPE saw thousands of children who could not hitherto afford school fees, join school overstretching facilities and teachers.

There are many reasons why the poor fare so badly in the education race. Schools are further from them, and they lack the social pull as teachers struggle to teach with scarce resources.

FPE

With introduction of FPE, the number of private primary schools has reportedly tripled. And while fees in the public primary schools have been reduced to zero, cost in private education has more than doubled, more than 20 times expensive that public education.



ELRECO staff undergoing training on disaster preparedness recently in a training facilitated by Gordon Kojo of TAABCO.

Fighting to save an endangered language

Terik essential programme Agency for development (Tepad) is a community based organization, which was initiated in 2001. It has been on the forefront in trying to save the endangered Terik community from extinction by furnishing them with ideas, solutions and development for the benefit of its people. In the year 2000, the United Nations Education and Scientific Organizations' (UNESCO) declared in its report that

the Terik dialect was among world's communities under serious threat of extinction. A danger that warranted placing it in the Red book of the endangered cultures. The report noted that "The Nandi ethnic group influenced the social structure of the Terik people as well as their language. This process started in the 1920s and is likely to lead to the complete disappearance of Terik as a distinct linguistic form".

Coupled with diseases, poverty and lack of education, the community is under serious threat of extinction. One might say that all communities face similar threats but the Terik feel vulnerable, since their fewer numbers unlike that of their populous neighbours, will have lesser chance of withstanding the onslaughts of famine and epidemics.

“Education and jobs are closely linked in any attempt to overcome poverty by the need to invest in people- teach and train them- so that they are equipped to seize opportunities for employment if and when they come along.”

TEPAD on the forefront in fighting for the Terik community

By Petronila Goren

Education

“A child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started; he will assume control of your cities, states and nations. He is going to move in and take over your churches, schools, universities and corporation. The fate of humanity is in his /her hands” Abraham Lincoln. These words sum the importance of children in the society. It has been one of Tepad's objectives to take education to every child and provide them with necessary materials needed in the sector. The organization has seen the construction of classrooms, kitchen and stores for the Early Childhood Development (ECD) package in Nandi South District for at least five primary schools.

This project has benefited the community as more children join school unlike before. Most of the families live under difficult circumstances resulting from high poverty levels.

Most locals can hardly afford a meal for their families; one the major factors why children do not attend classes.

But with the school feeding programme under the ECD package, a huge number of pupils have been recorded. Former South African president Nelson Mandela once said “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart”. Mandela's words clearly indicate how one's language is vital. The Terik language in particular is being taught in Terik schools by retired teachers as one of the ways of saving the extinction of the dialect.

Scholarships

For Bildad Kibet, a former pupil from one of the seven schools earned himself the Dr. Ian Maclean Scholarship for secondary education where he was admitted to Maseno School, a national school. The four-year scholarship for secondary school education is awarded to top KCPE students in from all the seven schools in the area. At least five students

have benefited from the scholarship.

A 20-year-old student Abraham Kimutai at Kapsengere high school in Terik was this year's beneficiary of the Mentoring International Leadership Excellence through sports award to university of Manitoba. The award sees a student study a sports related course. It is worth noting that the community has rich talent in sports.

Challenges

Insufficient materials used in teaching the Terik dialect. Although there are books that have been written in the language, they have not been published due to lack of funds. The high poverty levels and hard economic times is hampering the derivation of saving the language



have bene-



A school block in Kaptama. Despite huge number of pupils being enrolled in public schools, the government had failed to construct more classrooms to accommodate the children.

It is not only about books and computers

By Reuben Inganji

It is very easy to explain importance of education. No human beings are able to survive properly without education. It is through education that one can know his potential and put it into maximum use.

Education tells men how to think, how to work properly and how to make decision. Just like basic needs such as food, clothes and shelter, education too is important. School-going children learn how to interact with classmates and teachers in class and during extra-curricular activities.

With further development, a child was faced with the sense of competition and desire and other such emotions and feelings; it is then that one able to learn to control these emotions and feelings. Such also helps a child act in different situations. Education is not just restricted to teaching a person the basic academics, say computers, mathematics, geography or history but it goes deeper.

To discern the impact of education, keenly observe the ways of a

well-educated man and compare him with an illiterate man. Education is one of the important factors which formulate the persona of a person. Education is a productive and beneficial factor in a person's life and it is everyone's right to get it.

The training of a human mind is not complete without education. Because of education, can a man can be able to receive information from the external humanity, to notify him with past and receive all essential information concerning the present. When one travels around the world, one observes to what an extraordinary degree human nature is the same, whether in India or Australia, London, Europe or America. Conservative education makes independent thinking extremely complicated.

If we are being educated merely to achieve distinction, to get a better job, to be more efficient, to have wider domination over others, then our lives will be shallow and empty. If we are being educated only to be scientists, to be scholars wedded to books, or specialists addicted to knowledge, then

we shall be contributing to the destruction and misery of the world. We may be highly educated, but if we are without meaningful combination of thought and feeling, our lives are incomplete and clashing. Education develops a meaningful outlook on life. The individual are different but to accentuate the differences and to encourage the development of a definite type education is must.

Education is not just a matter of training the mind. Training makes for efficiency, but it does not bring about completeness. Education should help us to discover lasting values; unfortunately, the present system of education is making us submissive, emotionless and deeply thoughtless.

Systems, whether educational or political, are not changed without explanation; they are transformed when there is a fundamental change in ourselves. The individual is of first importance, not the system; and as long as the individual does not understand the total process of himself, no system can bring order and peace to the world.

We may be highly educated, but if we are without meaningful combination of thought and feeling, our lives are incomplete and clashing. Education develops a meaningful outlook on life.

Too many qualified youths but no jobs for them

By Sam Kiplagat

Education is the keystone to development. In Kenya, the independent nation-state heavily relied on the people who embraced education in its development plan. Even before that, the legends who negotiated at Lancaster House Conference were among the first people to step into a classroom.

In fact, to show the importance of education, nationalist Tom Mboya started airlifts to the USA. Mboya in 1959 organized the Airlift Africa project, together with the African-American Students Foundation in the United States. Its first beneficiaries were 81 Kenyan students who were flown to study at U.S. universities.

The founding father of the nation-Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was categorical when he urged Kenyans to work hard and fight ignorance, poverty and disease.

But close to half a century after independence, education has been reduced to academic irrelevance, alien concepts and sentiments. Many children now go to school not to get education but to fulfill dreams of living large. The system has been reduced to conveyor belt where a few are rewarded while thousands others fall by the wayside while being branded failures.

This is what journalist Paul Harrison in *Inside the Third World* has to say on Education. "Instead of basic knowledge that is required in everyday life, about health and nutrition-they (children) are bombarded with information and alien thoughts while draining family's meager income and perpetuating poverty and inequality." Instead of giving students a mixture of skills, what is taught in schools has nothing to do with the real world of work and family needed to cope. A few years ago, what was offered in classroom and outside helped mould students wholly preparing them for the future. But that has changed as alterations are made here and there in the system.

In Kenya, the age of primary school children is between 6 and 13. It is only 47 percent of those who complete primary education that proceed to secondary education. Of these, the

number reduces as only 12 percent make it to the public universities while a few join middle level colleges.

What happens to thousands others who drop out? Do they acquire adequate skills to enable them earn a living?

A glimpse into the past reveals that subjects like art and crafts, music, agriculture, business education, home science helped instill skills to the students. It was easy to secure a job and put into use what students have learnt in school for example masonry or joinery in carpentry, a skill acquired in crafts lessons.

A look at the changes made in the last three decades shows that the system of education has undergone a lot of transformation but it remains a wonder whether these changes brought about are holistic and beneficial to the students.

In 1964, there was the Ominde Report, which not only recognized education as a basic human right but also a powerful tool for human resource and national development. The commission recommended universal primary education.

About a decade later, there was the Gathachi Report of 1976 and later the Mackey Report of 1981, which gave birth to 8-4-4 system of education, pre-vocational in nature. In 1983, there was the Wanjigi Report and later the Ndegwa Report of 1991.

The Mungai Report was commissioned in 1995 and lastly there was the Koech Report of 1999 but which was outrightly rejected by the government.

Recently, the government came up with Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005 which attempted to address the disparities and inequalities in education. The policy highlights the following goals: fostering national unity, preparing and equipping the youth with knowledge, skills and expertise to enable them to play an effective role in the life of the nation.

The policy paper also wants Education to serve the needs of national development, provide for the full development of talents and personality, promote social justice and morality, social obligations and responsibilities and the fostering of positive attitudes and consciousness towards other nations.

With all these reports, one might be tempted to ask why we still experience problems in the education sector. Where do we place the blame?

In the same book, Harrison says that the problem started way back during the colonial time. He says the colonialist

were at first not interested in educating the native children. "Colonial administrators became interested in education much later. Their problem was that, as colonial governments and economies expanded, they needed more and more junior staff to help them run things, and it was expensive to import Europeans for such humble purposes."

And with such a plan, the products of this government-backed education had to be loyal and disciplined and literate in the colonial language, so they could do the administrative chores required of them. Not much has changed.

The educated unemployed are, more than anything else, victims of the excessive expectations which the system has engendered in them. And the result? An oversupply of qualified people with exaggerated hopes, and the curse of educated employment. More and more of those who fought their way over every fence and finished the course found there weren't enough glittering prizes to go round, says Harrison.

A few months ago, the then Higher Education minister caused huge debate about the rethinking the higher education system in the country. According to Ruto, local universities were offering irrelevant degrees that are of no value to development plans of the country instead of improving their intake in science and technology programmes.

In the recent past, local universities have undergone significant changes, ushering sharp focus of competition between courses. Internally, competition is also rife between high and low-earning departments and faculties while externally, competition for students is intense among public and private universities.

In the cutthroat competition, emerges academic capitalism reducing some degrees and diplomas to mere marketable commodities.

For instance, programmes in tourism, leisure and hospitality, secretarial studies, information technology, entrepreneurship and small business management, which can be offered by colleges, are now offered in the universities. As this happens, we are short of plumbers and mechanics yet every year, thousands of students graduate to a hopeless future with no jobs for them.

The government cannot escape blame because there are no clear guidelines on marketing of higher education while there is little or no support from the government to the public universities.

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Sino House, Rose Avenue,
Off Argwings Kodhek Road
P.O BOX 10488-00100.
Editorial Director;
Dr. Agnes Abuom
Editor; Sam Kiplagat
Contributors; Ms Petronila Goren, Mr
Reuben Inganji and Dr Fred
Wakhungu.

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TAABCO Research and
Development Consultants

Transforming Organisations

TAABCO Research and
Development Consultants
SINO HOUSE, Rose Avenue,
Off Argwings Kodhek Road
P.O. Box 10488, 00100

Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254-20-2712698,
2712700
Fax: + 254-20-2712980
Email: taabco@taabco.org,
Website: www.taabco.org

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The whole business of education and the need to readjust to changing reality

By Sam Kiplagat

Before the advent of schooling in Kenya, child rearing was a communal responsibility. It was the task of every adult to teach a child how to behave and what to do in certain circumstances. During the initiation period, young men learnt more about their culture and traditions. Creative thinking was encouraged.

It is argued that even for women, the elderly practiced circumcision so as to immobilize young initiates but with a bigger view of instilling certain values upon the young girls. They were taught how to bring up a family among many other things.

Respect

Respect for elders was highly placed as young dreaded a curse. But several years after the introduction of formal schools, the arrangement turned as the elders instead

respected the educated.

In the process, the elders failed to control their egos and as result the "educated" adopted lifestyles that corresponded with their "educated status". To this end, the culture that had been preserved over the years started eroding as family values went to the dogs. With the number of high school and college graduates increased, the economic value of education decreased.

The method of teaching ensured that the local traditions and customs are stamped out as others were convinced that they were the works of the devil or at best, the products of benighted ignorance.

Academic esteem

An education expert with TAABCO Fred Wakhungu says that the youth respected the elders and took orders without question until the advent of quality education and realization of academic esteem.

He adds that the system of education is slowly but surely drift-

ing to corruption where the wealthy are given preferences in career courses selection against the meritorious poor.

"Most opportunities at high school, university, colleges are bought with money. Professional institution like the medical training colleges for primary are no go zones for the children from the poor economic backgrounds. Schools are purposed for economic development yes; but not with corruption because this disadvantages the neediest students," he argues.

Parallel

The introduction of parallel programmes in 1998 has further watered down the strict academic requirements and what we have now is now the paper chase. In the selection of desirable, better-paid jobs, competence and intelligence are not measured by the skill on job or performance in special tests related to the job. They are, however, assessed simply by the number of exams one has endured and the marks he has managed to score.

"In the process, the elders failed to control their egos and as result the "educated" adopted lifestyles that corresponded with their educated status,"