

# SKILLING UGANDA: ITS HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND A SUGGESTION FOR AN EFFECTIVE INNOVATION FOR JOB CREATION

J.C.Ssekamwa,Ph.D.,Dip.Ed<sup>1</sup>

1- St Lawrence University, Faculty of Education, Mengo, Kampala

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## ABSTRACT

Skilling Uganda is not a new idea. It was explored in the past in many different ways by Faculties of Education. This study dug into the past of skilling efforts. Analyzed findings and came up with concrete ideas for discussion and recommendation. It is a summary reading material that those pursuing the idea of Skilling Uganda could read and update themselves to even to do skilling better.

Key words: Skilling, Education, History, Uganda

## INTRODUCTION

Prof. Asavia Wandira, one time Vice Chancellor of Makerere University (1972-1974), gave his inaugural lecture in 1972 with the title of "Fashion in Education".

The idea behind the above title is that important education issues tend to be given different terms or titles during different periods whereas they remain essentially the same education issues.

This is done either by people who may not know the history of education development regarding that particular issue, or they may be aware of the history of that particular education issue but want to give the impression that they have made an innovation. Or they want to dramatize that particular education issue so that society focuses its attention to it due to its importance at that critical time.

One clarion call today 2019 by the leaders of the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports is "Education for job creation and not for job seeking" or "Skilling Uganda".

This paper is intended to do two things. One is to show the suitability of Prof. Asavia Wandira's title of his inaugural lecture of FASHION IN

EDUCATION in regard to the present clarion call of “Education for job creation and not for job seeking” or “Skilling Uganda” (Wandira 1972). Secondly, this paper is intended to present a new model for an effective innovation of job creation to be used by graduates of “Skilling Uganda”.

### **The term “Skilling Uganda”**

“Skilling Uganda” means teaching manipulative skills to students with the view that many of them shall have an attitude for creating their own employment when they graduate from the education system, either at the end of the primary school section, or from the O-Level section, or from the A-Level section, or from universities and from other tertiary institutions.

### **METHODS**

The study was conducted as a desk review of the history of education in regard to Skilling Uganda. Various education documents were reviewed. Findings were synthesized and categorized. Views of various scholars were picked and presented to highlight areas of emphasis in regard to Skilling Uganda. An overall analysis was done and findings discussed to give a clear relationship to the current rolling out of the idea of skilling.

### **RESULTS**

#### **“Skilling Uganda” during the pre-colonial period**

In 1877 a number of British Anglican Missionaries belonging to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) arrived in Uganda. They were followed in 1879 by a number of French Roman Catholic White Father Missionaries. These two groups of missionaries introduced the present day school education system in Uganda. This school education system replaced the Ugandan indigenous education systems which existed before.

Before the arrival of the above daring missionaries, each tribe had its indigenous education system. But each indigenous education system had a common element which was central in all the different indigenous education systems. That common element was the imparting of manipulative skills to both boys and girls and adults for their survival.

The common pre-colonial indigenous education element of the numerous tribes in Uganda can be suitably given the term of “Production learning”. Learners produced as they learned or they learned as they produced. What they produced was used in the homesteads, and if there was an excess of it, that excess was bartered in the rest of the society. The skills so

learnt helped the learner to use them if employed by another person or to use them to initiate one's employment.

Equally important, is that the bartering of some products by learners of each family in the rest of the society, created a pool of earnings which were assisting the graduate to have what we can call "Seed Money" which would assist him/her in initiating his/her own employment if he/she decided to initiate his/her own employment. (Ocitti 1985).

In conclusion therefore the Ugandan indigenous education which is termed "Production learning" was "education for job-creation and not for job-seeking", or if we may use the current jargon, it was "Skilling Uganda" and it suits Prof. Asavia Wandira's "FASHION IN EDUCATION".

### **Education for adaptation to the environment: "Skilling Uganda"**

After passing the 1923 policy regarding social services in the British African colonies, the British government in London requested the trustees of the Phelps Stokes Fund in New York, USA to set up a commission of educationists to visit the British African colonies to advise the British governors as to how they should spearhead education developments in the colonies which they were administering. The trustees of the Phelps Stokes Fund accepted the request. They then set up the Phelps Stokes Commission in 1924. The members of that commission arrived in Kampala in November 1924 and left for Kenya early January 1925 (Report of the Phelps Stokes Commission, New York, 1925).

The members of that commission found the missionaries in charge of the education activities in Uganda. The British colonial administration was giving the missionaries some token financial support to carry out the education activities. The British colonial administration had only Makerere College which it had founded in 1922 to produce workers for its departments and also to prevent some Ugandans from going abroad for further studies whom they feared would return with views opposed to the British colonialism. The members of the Phelps Stokes Commission appreciated the missionaries for having established many schools all over Uganda with very little assistance from the British colonial administration. But the members were not happy about the curriculum which the missionaries were offering in their schools (Ssekamwa, 1996). The members of the commission observed that such a curriculum was

too academic, lacking the teaching of practical subjects. They warned that such a curriculum was bound to produce job seekers, graduates who would be interested only in seeking white collar jobs in offices. The members of the commission recommended that "Education should be for adaptation to the environment". Uganda was an agricultural country. Therefore its education should prepare students to acquire skills for living in an agricultural country (Report of the Phelps Stokes Commission, 1925).

Unfortunately however, the view of the Phelps Stokes Commission was not dynamic, that is it viewed Uganda as if it would not try to become industrialized. But the members of the commission made an important observation that the academic nature of the education in Uganda would not give students manipulative skills which they could use to initiate their own employment. They would always seek to be employed especially in government departments.

The members of the Phelps Stokes Commission advised the British colonial administration to establish a Department of Education to be responsible for directing the education developments in the country. That British administration set up the Department of Education in 1925 which became in 1962 the present day Ministry of Education and Sports.

I need to point out here, that the jargon "Education for Adaptation to the environment" was imported from the USA from where the Phelps Stokes Commission came. This kind of education had been initiated by Booker T. Washington an African-American educationist. He set up the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama State to educate children of the African Americans. That education was intended to give skills to those children with the view that they should be given skills to fit in the conditions of life which the whites had planned for them. However, if it was applied to Uganda whose people were aspiring to get away from their present environment, it could eventually not succeed.

### **Approach of the department of education to "education for adaptation to the environment"**

The Department of Education made the following arrangements to implement "Education for adaptation to the environment". At the primary school level, academic subjects continued to be taught. Besides, agriculture was taught theoretically in the classroom and practically on the school gardens.

After learning plant life in the classroom, the pupils went out to apply what they had learned. They cleared the bush and made gardens, dug the soil, planted seeds, weeded the plants and eventually harvested the products. Then they engaged in the exercise of selling the products. Indeed some of the products assisted in providing food at lunch time for the students in the primary schools.

Also at the primary school level, a subject named "handwork" was introduced in the curriculum. Through this subject pupils were trained to use local materials to make ropes, mats, baskets, carpets, simple chairs, simple windows, simple doors, simple beds and building small structures to serve as animal sheds and chicken habitation, sewing, making simple embroidery patterns and using a needle to fix buttons onto shirts and making patches in pieces of clothes, and making pots and vessels out of clay and charcoal stoves.

These materials graced "open days of schools" where also parents bought some of the products and traders buying some of them for stocking their shops. Also school administrators used to arrange the marketing of the products produced by the pupils. Indeed through the subject of handwork, primary school students learnt many practical skills for producing things and they carried these skills into their adult life after graduating from primary schools.

At the secondary school level, again in pursuit of "education for adaptation to the environment", the Department of Education established two categories of schools: Middle schools which had an academic curriculum and Central schools which followed a practical curriculum.

In the Central schools, students were taught practical skills through the following subjects: farming, poultry keeping, animal husbandry, brick making and brick laying, carpentry, tailoring, shoe making, plumbing, masonry, building, architecture, typing, pottery, bicycle repairing, vehicle mechanics, motor cycle repairing and smithing (kuweesa).

All the above efforts were geared towards teaching students through the education system practical skills which in today's clarion call is termed "skilling Uganda", with the view that many students who would graduate with these skills would be job creators for themselves and for other people. Again Prof. Asavia Wandira's "Fashion in Education" is vindicated.

During the pre-colonial period, training Uganda" was being called "Production learning". The recommended curriculum by the Phelps Stokes Commission was "Adaptation to the environment".

### **Fate of education for adaptation to the environment**

At the primary school level, "Education for adaptation to the environment" succeeded well. At the secondary school level through the Central schools, it did not succeed. For the following reasons:

a. The parents and students preferred academic education which was being offered through the academic Middle schools. Their reasons were as follows. The British colonial administrators and local government officials were recruiting the majority of their employees from graduates of the academic Middle schools for working in their offices. These white collar employees were even being paid higher salaries than those graduating from the practical Central schools.

b. Another factor for the failure of the Central schools arose from the selection system of students for the Central schools. The Department of Education was selecting for Central schools students who had scored low marks in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). The students who were scoring high marks in PLE were the ones who were being selected to join the academic Middle schools.

This selection system created an unfortunate impression in the Uganda society that schools which teach practical courses are for low achievers in the education system. That impression is still lingering in the minds of some Ugandans today.

This impression is really very unfortunate because it is people who have acquired technical and scientific skills who eventually become inventors in society.

The argument can be carried further that the education system of Uganda has traditionally created the attitude in the Uganda society that education which imparts practical skills is for students who are low achievers. Yet it should be the other way round. Students who are high achievers should be the ones by and large to attend practical skill oriented schools because it is from among such graduates who become inventors of all sorts of gadgets. Because of the wrong attitude which society got that technical subjects are studied by low caliber kind of students, Prof. William Senteza

Kajubi lamented in one of his quotable quotes thus:

“A student who remembers that John Speke and James Grant were in 1862 the first Europeans to visit the source of the River Nile at Jinja is supposed to be cleverer than a student who makes a chair.” (Ssekamwa, 2019).

c. Another factor for the failure of the practical Central schools was due to the failure of the Department of Education to train capable teachers who would fire the imagination of students in the Central schools as to the great opportunities which are in acquiring technical practical skills. It has been said that “no education system can be better than the quality of its teachers”. (Senteza Kajubi Education Commission Report, 1989).

Teachers in Central schools were not trained well. Many times the Department of Education recruited as teachers for the Central schools people who had shown some success in particular technical trades for example, if a man showed that he was a good carpenter, such a man would be recruited to teach carpentry in a Central school.

This would be the same for other technical trades such as tailoring, typing, vehicle repair, brick making and bricklaying, pottery and shoe making. Such people would not have even been taught psychology of learning and pedagogy.

Teachers who teach practical skills need to have mastered the technical skills which they are supposed to teach and who have gone through proper teacher education schools and have acquired the methods of teaching and the psychology of learning. These teachers should be able to make students excited as to what they can achieve in life with practical skills which they have learnt.

d. Indeed we need also to appreciate the factor of wanting to imitate the colonial officers and the missionaries. These two categories of white men and women were by and large doing work based on office work.

Thus one son of Sir Appolo Kagwa who dominated the political administration of the Buganda kingdom from 1900 to 1926, commented as follows: “We want education which prepares us to work in offices like the white men. But Reverend Canon H.M. Grace of King’s College Buddo is teaching us how to drive bullocks wagons for farm work “(Uganda Notes, December 1922) and (Ssekamwa, Ph.D. Thesis, Makerere University

1980).

e. The above comment of the son of Sir Appolo Kaggwa signifies the attitude of students in Uganda to "Education for adaptation to the environment" which was being offered through the Central schools. By 1940 these Central schools were turned into academic Middle schools because by then, they were being attended by very few students who went to join them with a feeling of being failures early in life.

### **Comprehensive education**

In March 1951, Uganda was visited by the Binns Study Group which had been set up by the British government in London. The British government was by 1950 convinced that the British colonies in Africa would be granted their independence in the fore seeable future.

But the British government wanted to see that before independence was given to these colonies, there should be a critical mass of well qualified Ugandans through their schools who would take up the positions which the British officials would leave vacant at independence time.

Therefore the Binns Study Group which was an education commission had been set up to visit East Africa and Central Africa to examine the education systems in the different colonies in the above two areas and recommend how they should improve their education systems and produce the required qualified African human resources before independence was granted to the colonies in East and Central Africa.

The members of the Binns Study Group found out in Uganda that parents and students did not like practical subjects. The members of the Study Group recommended that for the students to study practical subjects, future secondary schools should be comprehensive. From then the term for imparting practical education was "Comprehensive education". This then replaced "Education for adaptation to the environment". This then continued to vindicate Prof. Asavia Wandira's "fashion in education". Essentially "comprehensive education" was emphasizing the teaching of practical subjects in Uganda's education system for "job creation" or "skilling Uganda" (Report of the 1951 Binns Study Group).

### **Operation of "Comprehensive education": "Skilling Uganda"**

To implement the recommendations of the Binns Study Group, Sir



Andrew Cohen, then the Governor of Uganda, appointed the 1952 de Bunsen Education Committee to lay down strategies for implementing comprehensive education and many other recommendations which the Binns Study Group had made.

The de Bunsen Education Committee left the primary schools to continue with the system of teaching practical skills which had been established since 1925: teaching agriculture theoretically in the classroom and practically on the school gardens and handwork. This system was working well at the primary school level.

At the secondary school level, the arrangement for teaching practical subjects which had existed between 1930 and 1940 but discarded from 1940 was set up by the 1952 de Bunsen Education Committee.

The de Bunsen Education Committee did not seem to know that central schools had existed before which taught practical skills at secondary school level. It set up at the secondary school level, junior secondary schools and senior secondary schools. Both these two categories of secondary schools were teaching academic subjects. Just like the middle schools between 1930 and 1940. Students graduated from the academic junior secondary schools and joined the academic senior secondary schools. In comparison these academic junior secondary schools and the academic senior secondary schools were like the academic middle schools which had been set up in 1930.

The de Bunsen Education Committee went ahead and also set up another category of post primary schools but practical. These had to run side by side with the academic junior secondary schools. The practical schools were as follows:

- a. Rural trade schools: these mainly taught carpentry and tailoring.
- b. Farm schools: these taught farming, poultry keeping and animal husbandry.
- c. Home craft centres: these were for girls, teaching home keeping, tailoring and child care.

Then at the level of the academic senior secondary schools, the practical schools were called secondary modern schools. Students would graduate from rural trade schools, or from farm schools, or from home craft centres and join the secondary modern schools, if they wanted to continue studying.

The above pattern which was made by the 1952 de Bunsen Education Committee fits very well Prof. Wandira's contention of "Fashion in Education". That contention is that one and the same key education theme being given a different term or jargon at different periods in the development of education (de Bunsen Education Committee Report, 1952).

### **Fate of the Practical Schools set up by the 1952 de Bunsen Education**

There are two quotable quotes which are instructive regarding the practical category of schools which were set up by the 1952 de Bunsen Education Committee both academic and practical ones. One quotable quote reads thus: "History repeats itself". Probably Prof. Asavia Wandira would have said "Fashion in education". The second quotable quote is that "We study history but we do not learn from it".

The 1951 Binns Study Group had observed that parents and students at secondary school level did not like to study practical subjects. They preferred studying academic subjects. To make sure that students at the secondary school level studied practical subjects, the members of the Binns Study Group recommended that future secondary schools should be comprehensive. They should teach both academic and practical subjects to each student in the secondary school. This state of affairs had been working well in the primary schools since 1925. Indeed it was working well in Britain in secondary schools.

In terms of "history repeating itself", the very factors which made the Central schools to fail by 1940, were the same factors which made the practical schools of the 1952 de Bunsen Education Committee fail. Parents and students preferred both the academic junior secondary schools and the academic senior secondary schools.

There were particularly two reasons for this. It was more fashionable to work in offices of the government departments which recruited workers mostly from graduates from academic junior secondary schools and academic senior secondary schools. Secondly, wages for graduates from the academic secondary schools were higher than the wages for employees from the practical schools.

Moreover, private employers preferred to employ graduates from proper

technical schools which were in existence such as St Joseph's Technical School at Kisubi, or Mt. Elgon Technical School in Mbale than graduates from the general practical schools which had been set up by the 1952 de Bunsen Education Committee.

The selection system of students who had to join the practical schools still had a problem. Students who had scored low marks in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) were the ones who were being selected for the practical schools just like between 1930 and 1940. The same stigma followed the 1952 de Bunsen Education Committee practical schools. These schools were looked at in society as for low achievers. Students went to them unwillingly and feeling as failures. There was always a struggle for those students who would have failed to score the marks for entry into the academic senior secondary schools to go back to the primary school section, hoping that after a second attempt at P.L.E they would score the required marks for entry into the academic senior secondary schools. Many of them used even to change their names so that they would not be detected by the Officials of the Department of Education and of the Examinations Board (Ssekamwa 1996).

Just like during the 1930s, the Department of Education did not train competent teachers to teach in the practical schools that is in the rural trade school, in the farm schools, in the homestead craft centres and in the secondary modern schools. It was employing anybody who had shown competency in carpentry, or in tailoring, or rural trade schools, in some sort of farming for farm schools, and any woman who had shown competency in skills required in home craft centres for girls such as maintaining sanitation in the homestead, cooking balanced meals for the family, baking cakes, embroidery, tailoring, rearing of babies and home economics.

When it came to employment, the majority of graduates of the academic junior and senior secondary schools were the ones being recruited in government departments to do white collar jobs. Few graduates from the practical schools were being employed by the government, and when employed, they were being paid lower wages than those employees from the academic junior and academic senior secondary schools. This continued to emphasize that those graduates were treated as low achievers even in the world of work.

... , serious employers in the society preferred to employ graduates from proper technical schools and not those from either rural trade schools or farm schools or from home craft centres. This also sent an impression in society that the curriculum of these practical schools was lacking in substance.

Due to the above factors, by 1962 very few students were joining the practical schools which had been established by the 1952 de Bunsen Education Committee. The few who were joining them, went there grudgingly and with an inferiority complex because they had been tested and found incapable to join the academic junior secondary schools for high achievers.

In 1963 the independent Uganda government appointed the Castle Education Commission to channel a new direction of education for the independent Uganda. One of that commission's recommendations was to turn into academic secondary schools all those practical schools which had been set up by the 1952 de Bunsen Education Committee. The following were the words of the members of the Castle Education Commission recommending the closure of those practical schools and turning them into academic secondary schools: "Shall we build the nation on the backs of Ugandans who have been made to feel failures by our education system?" (Report of the 1963 Castle Education Commission) Indeed the adage is that: "History repeats itself". The way the Practical Central Schools were turned into academic schools in 1940. Is the way the practical schools of the de Bunsen Education Committee were turned into academic schools.

However, the 1963 Castle Education Commission did not make any arrangement for teaching practical subjects in the general education system from primary schools to A-Level secondary schools. One reason for this was that there was a very big shortage of qualified Ugandan human resources with academic qualifications to fill up masses of jobs which had been left behind by the majority of the British officials who had departed before 1962 when Uganda regained her independence.

### **Basic education integrated into rural development (beird): "Skilling Uganda"**

At independence time in 1962, the country had very few qualified Ugandans because the colonial / missionary education system had

produced very few of them. Sir Andrew Cohen who was the Governor of Uganda between 1951 and 1956 was a very progressive administrator and he had worked very hard to promote Ugandan human resources. But he never imagined that Uganda's independence would come sooner than it did. It is probably the reason why he did not hurry up the production of very many Ugandan qualified men and women who would take on the jobs of the British officials who would naturally leave the country at the time when Ugandan independence was approaching.

Sir Andrew Cohen was invited to the ceremonies of Uganda's independence on the 9th October 1962. He exclaimed thus, "We thought we had an indefinite time ahead of us", an exclamation which indicated that that progressive administrator had not done as much as it was necessary to produce high qualified Ugandan human resources. (Uganda Argus, 8th October 1962).

The second reason why there was a very big shortage of qualified human resources at independence time was the exodus of nearly all the British workers in the government departments.

By 1968 the schools and the University of East Africa had managed to produce a sizeable number of qualified Ugandans and the shortage of qualified Ugandans was reducing. The education institutions were each year producing very many qualified Ugandans. Yet the creation of jobs was not keeping pace with the production of qualified Ugandans. The result was the phenomenon of the "school leavers' problem" starting to show its ugly face which has escalated to gigantic levels today. This has led the Ministry of Education and Sports to coin the jargon of "Education for job creation and not for job seeking, as one of the strategies to reduce unemployment.

The government realized that the shortage of jobs was due to the education system which was not teaching students practical skills so that many of them could not create their own employment.

The government in 1967 requested the Directors of UNESCO in Paris to send education experts to Uganda to design a practical curriculum for the education system of Uganda.

The Directors of UNESCO accepted the challenge. Several education experts from UNESCO were sent to Uganda to design a new curriculum

oriented towards practical aspects. Those education specialists from Paris were stationed in the Primary Teachers College Namutamba near Mityana town, 72 Kms North West of Kampala city.

The UNESCO experts called their new venture, Basic education integrated in rural development (BEIRD). But the name which was locally given to the venture was known as the Namutamba Curriculum Project.

Ten years from 1967, the UNESCO experts completed the practical curriculum. Then General Idi Amin Dada then the President of Uganda launched the Namutamba Project Curriculum in 1977. The curriculum was planned to start in primary schools and in the Primary Teachers Colleges which train primary school teachers. After some period of time, the curriculum would be introduced in secondary schools.

Unfortunately however; the practical Namutamba Project Curriculum was launched at an inopportune time. From 1977, Milton Obote's guerrillas operating from Tanzania, assisted heavily by the soldiers of President Julius Nyerere intensified attack on Amin's administration, consequently Amin's government was much engaged in defending its position and had little concern on spending financial resources on the newly inaugurated practical Namutamba Project Curriculum.

Moreover stakeholders of the new practical curriculum had not been involved in its design and in its trials through the primary schools and in the Primary Teachers Colleges. These stakeholders were Ministry of Education officials at various levels, workers in the National Curriculum Development Centre, Principals of Primary Teachers Colleges, and a critical mass of vocal and influential primary school and secondary school head teachers.

Consequently when the practical Namutamba project curriculum was launched, all the above categories of people were not enthusiastic for its implementation. Indeed this should serve as a warning to curriculum designers and implementers. Stakeholders have got to be involved as much as possible to win their support and enthusiasm for the success of a new curriculum.

While the above apathy was going on, the fight against Idi Amin's administration by Obote's guerrillas from Tanzania assisted by Nyerere's soldiers was intensifying day and night. Eventually in March 1979 Amin

was toppled. He sought asylum in Saudi Arabia where he passed on in 1990). The new administrators might have not heard of the Namutamba Curriculum Project. Even if they might have heard about it, their immediate concern was how to consolidate their position in power which activity saw their appointing and overthrowing of two Presidents Yusuf Lule and Godfrey Binaisa in less than one year and half until Appollo Milton Obote was returned to power at the end of 1980. after which they took over power in May 1986. Between March 1979 and May 1986. When NRM government took on power, no word was heard concerning the Basic Education Integrated into Rural Development (BEIRD), or the Namutamba Curriculum Project.

### **Basic education for national development (bend): "Skilling Uganda"**

In 1987 the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government appointed the National Education Policy Review Commission. It is referred to now as the 1987 Senteza Kajubi Education Commission. Prof William Senteza Kajubi then Principal of the Institute of Teacher Education Kyambogo (ITEK) was its chairperson.

The members of that education commission were already aware of the need for education which would impart tangible skills to students both in the primary school section and in the secondary school section. This need was being expressed in society through the following jargon; "Education for job creation and not education for job seeking". In other words the jargon was implying "Skilling Uganda" according to the current jargon of today, thus justifying Prof. Asavia Wandira's contention of "fashion in education".

The Senteza Kajubi Education Commission set the aims of education to be those of producing graduates from schools who should have practical skills for self employment.

Consequently the members of the commission named the general aim of education to be Basic Education for National Development (BEND). To achieve the above ideal, the Senteza Kajubi Education Commission recommended the following general system of education in Uganda.

1. Primary school education would last eight years instead of the seven years which had been established by the 1963 Castle Education Commission.
2. The first four years of primary school education would be devoted

to teaching and learning literacy and numeracy. The next four years would be for consolidating literacy and numeracy. But much of the time would be devoted to teaching practical skills.

3. Secondary education would initially have three categories of schools namely:

a. General secondary schools. These would teach primarily academic subjects like the present secondary schools.

b. Comprehensive secondary schools. These would teach academic subjects and practical subjects. Each student would learn an equal number of academic subjects and practical subjects.

c. Vocational secondary schools. These schools would devote their time to teaching practical skills. They would be like the defunct Central Schools of the 1930's up to 1940.

The 1992 Government White Paper on education declared that after a few years, all secondary schools in Uganda would be comprehensive. The General Secondary schools and the Vocational Secondary schools would be phased out.

In conclusion, the Senteza Kajubi Education Commission under its jargon of BEND catered for "skilling Uganda", today's jargon and a justification for Prof. Asavia Wandira's "fashion in education".

The recommendations of the Senteza Kajubi Education Commission as shown above, were never implemented. The eight years for primary education were not accepted by the government. The comprehensive secondary schools were not introduced. What continued to exist are the General Secondary Schools which are by and large academic secondary schools. Similarly, the vocational secondary schools have never been established up to now in 2019 (The 1989 Senteza Kajubi Education Commission Report, the Government Printer Entebbe).

## Skilling Uganda

In reference to the title of the inaugural lecture of Prof. Asavia Wandira namely: "Fashion in Education", from 2015 the clarion call by the Ministry of Education and Sports is "skilling Uganda". This is a new fashion in Uganda's education system. But the idea behind it is not new. It was there during the pre-colonial period. During that period it was expressed through the jargon of "production learning". Students learned



as they produced or they produced as they learned. In the process they acquired practical skills for either being employed by other people or by employing themselves.

The 1924/25 Phelps Stokes Commission used the jargon of "Education for adaptation to the environment". The 1951 Binns Study Group used the jargon "Comprehensive Education". The UNESCO experts from 1967 used the jargon "Basic Education Integrated Into Rural Development (BEIRD), or The Namutamba Curriculum Project. The 1987 Senteza Kajubi Education Commission called it "Basic Education for National Development" (BEND).

Thus the contention of Prof. Asavia Wandira of "Fashion in Education" has been well vindicated when it is applied to the education geared to imparting practical skills to the students now called "Skilling Uganda". When all is said and done, the jargon "skilling Uganda" would have not been called for if Basic Education For National Development (BEND) which had been recommended by the 1987 Senteza Kajubi Education Commission had been implemented by the government.

That commission provided an arrangement for "Skilling Uganda" in the general education system. At the primary school level, the last four years of that section would have imparted tangible skills to the pupils. At the secondary school level, both the comprehensive secondary schools and the vocational secondary schools would impart many practical skills which could enable students to initiate their own employment after graduation.

## **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Challenges to the implementation of Skilling Uganda and the possible solution to them.**

Let us now look briefly at the challenges which face "skilling Uganda" through the general system of education. Challenge number one regards designing a new curriculum for primary schools which caters for both academic and practical subjects. Similarly, there is need to design a new curriculum for the comprehensive secondary schools at both O-Level and A-Level. This aspect has got far reaching implications. For example, the present line up of subjects in both the primary schools and in the secondary schools has got to be drastically reconsidered. This will mean retraining the already practicing teachers in the field and training the

aspiring teachers differently in the teacher education institutions. There will be also need to write new text books. Similarly, the method of examining shall have to change.

Challenge number two regards the expensive nature of teaching practical subjects. This needs to be looked through critically. There is need to see that practical subjects should be taught practically for the students to gain hands on practice of a technical subject for easy application in real situations.

Here the cost of providing materials needs to be worked out properly. For example, if a primary school which has got 500 pupils in the last section and all of them have to be taught carpentry, one can imagine the cost on wood, saws, planes, hammers, nails and tape measures. Yet the pupils will need to be taught about four other practical subjects with their attendant costs.

Challenge number three regards the traditional negative attitude to practical education of parents and students at secondary school level. This negative attitude still lingers on. But this can be removed by making all secondary schools comprehensive. Also the negative attitude to practical subjects will be destroyed if the graduates from Uganda's general education system shall be seen busy creating their own jobs.

Indeed the contention that students who will acquire practical skills will initiate their own jobs is also a challenge. Will those graduates really create their own employment to the extent that unemployment will be reduced drastically? This is a justifiable question when all the above steps have been implemented.

Challenge number four is the "job seeking syndrome" which is still lingering in the minds of many parents and their sons and daughters. This creates an attitude of still carrying one's skills to an employer as an easy way out.

Challenge number five calls for being realistic regarding the assumption that if a student has been taught properly tangible skills through practical subjects, such a student can initiate his/her own employment after leaving school. The feeling of the writer is that a student who has learnt practical skills needs some "seed money" or what has been familiarly termed in

Uganda "entandikwa" or a tool box after graduation at the end of any level of the education system.

### **An effective innovation for job creation through Skilling Uganda**

Let us go back to the Ugandan indigenous education system. That education has been termed "production learning". Students learned as they produced, or they produced as they learned. What was produced was used in the homesteads. If there was an excess of it, it was bartered in the rest of society. The proceeds were being passed to the students to initiate their own employment if they were not employed.

Let the schools themselves which teach practical skills adopt the above strategy. Through practical teaching and learning, the students will be producing materials and services. The school administrators together with the students should market the products.

Money realized from the sale of the products and the services should be banked in a special school Bank Account.

As students each year would be graduating, those who have decided to start their own employment shall provide a budget each of the requirements for "seed money". That money could also be given to the graduate as a loan which should be paid back to the school within a stipulated period.

The seed money shall be paid from the Bank Account where money from the sale of products and services which students produce as they study. Parents and benefactors of students should be encouraged to supplement the "seed money" which the school will provide to the student. Once "seed money" will be provided to the graduates who have acquired practical skills through the general education system, there will be a great possibility for them to initiate their own employment. It is not realistic to expect either a primary school graduate, or a secondary school graduate to create his/her own employment without any "seed money" having been provided to him/her or without a tool box having been given to him/her. We hear at every graduation ceremony, graduating students being advised by the heads of the institutions and the guests of honor to go out and start their own employment, using the knowledge and skills they have acquired. This is good advice but it needs to be backed with "seed money", whatever the source may be, but let the schools take on this responsibility of providing the initial "seed money" to the graduating young people

which is realized from the sale of the products and services which the students produce as they study. The schools can also provide to some categories of students "seed money" and a tool box.

Mere telling these young graduating people to initiate their own employment and also provide employment to others, will not help much. I beg the reader to look at the following scenario.

If a student has been taught computer and he/she decides to initiate his/her own employment, he/she requires a laptop, a printer and a photo copier which companies provide on hire basis.

Let the school provide the laptop and the printer to such a student and some "seed money" to hire premises and to pay for electricity and to pay for toner, to begin with. But if such a graduate is merely told to initiate his/her own employment using the computer knowledge and skills acquired in the school, it will not be easy. My suggestion is that while the schools teach students practical skills, let them devise ways and means so that those students engage in providing services and products to the community at a cost, then the money which the school collects is banked in a special school Bank Account. By the time the student will be graduating, there will be some sizeable amount of money. Then the school itself will provide to the student the minimum tools and "seed money" for such a student to start creating his/her own employment.

It is now fashionable for schools which teach practical skills to advertise themselves as producing students who create their own employment soon after they graduate. Many students are attracted to those schools and pay fees. Let these schools accompany their promises with providing the graduate with the basic tools and "seed money" on the graduation of the student.

Once this suggestion will be adopted by these schools, then, "Skilling Uganda" will produce a greater critical mass of job creators.

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