

## Development of Education in Kenya: Influence of the Political Factor Beyond 2015 Mdns

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### Abstract

This paper provides a critical appraisal of development of education system in Kenya. Education of any country is an important tool for the developmental process of that particular nation. There are various factors that influence national systems of education. They range from social, economical, technological to political influences. In this article, a critical examination of these factors that have influenced Kenya's education system in both colonial and post-colonial period will be made. The paper however, specifically examined political influence of Kenyan education system and its implications for national development. Kenya, like any other country of the world is controlled by politics. Kenya's education system is mostly influenced by the political factor. The political factor dictates the type of an education system a particular country can have. It is important in determining administration of education. Subsequently the influence of political factor is critical for educational policy formulation, adoption and implementation. The paper further analyses education commissions constituted politically to influence the education system. Their influence on educational policies was assessed. The study adopted historical design in reviewing educational development in Kenya and the subsequent influence of political factor on education. This paper is significant to the field of comparative and International education, since it provides data on what the Kenyan government is doing in promoting the development of education. . The policy planners would understand and appreciate education policies within which they are supposed to operate in providing effective leadership and management practices in the development of education. In order for education to foster development, this article recommends the need to separate educational policies from national politics, clear stipulation of educational policies and their role in national development and a sound implementation of educational reforms.

**Keywords:** Educational system, education commissions, educational policy and political influence

### Objectives:

- Assess factors that influence educational development
- Analyze education commissions constituted to politically influence the educational development
- Determine the influence of politics on educational development

### 1. Introduction

A national system of education of any country can only be defined from the perspective of formal education system. This incorporates early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, tertiary education and university education. In light of this Michael Saddler (1886-1943) , noted that in studying foreign systems of education we should not forget that "*the things outside the school matter even more than the things inside the schools, and in most cases they actually govern and interpret the things inside the school*". In simple terms he meant that for one to understand a national system of education, it is important to note that, behind every system of education, there are factors that influence and shape a particular education system. These factors include geographical, historical, technological political, economic, language, religious and socio-cultural. However, some of these factors are more dominant in one particular system while in another system, they would be less dominant. In this paper we shall survey the political factor.

The political philosophy of a country has impact on education. The political factor dictates the type of administration the system of education will adopt. It also underlies the content and component of the education system. It determines how the system is to operate and function. For example, a political philosophy on economics emphasizes that there is exploitation of labour by capital and this resulted in class mass. As a political philosophy, socialism recognizes property as the basis of the economic structure of the state which results in the concentration of civil and legal power in the hands of the property owning class. In such cases, the details of the curriculum are often decided by the state authorities and involve functional training of citizens. The curriculum may also involve scientific training for social utilization purposes. countries that have practiced socialist system of education include Mexico, Bulgaria and Cuba. The education system incorporate the state control on education, secularism, physical and military training political indoctrination in and out of school and also more emphasis on science subjects. In these states, freedom of individuals and the idea of tolerance are not accepted. Other countries like France have centralized systems of education based on its political philosophy. In France, everything to do with education is controlled by the central government. USA and Japan, have got their

education systems highly decentralized, and are often based on the democratic influence and the capitalistic political philosophy of these countries.

Isaac Kandel (1881-1965) emphasized the importance of a country's national character in shaping national system of education. There is close relationship between the national character and the national system of education. For example, the national character of USA is democratic as such her education system is democratic in most of its aspects. Kenya's national character and education system were inherited from Britain. The British colonial policy was based on the principle of decentralization. Hence there is a close relationship between national character and national system of education. Due to economical problems in 1980s, Kenya had to turn to Canada in establishment of a second university which led to introduction of the 8.4.4 education system. With the advent of second liberation in Kenya, ties with china were enhanced and china's influence in education can be realized. Chinese language has now been introduced in Kenyan schools. Thus the political system of a country is closely related with its educational programmes.

## **2. Statement of the problem**

Factors that influence educational development in any country include historical, geographical, technological, religious, political and ideological. Though in Kenya these factors are considered, the political factor is seen as the steering wheel of education in the country. Development of education in colonial Kenya was politically directed. The same trends were realized in post independent Kenya. It is in this view that the study surveyed the influence of politics in development of education from the colonial era to the present period. The study revealed the positive and negative attributes of politics to educational development.

## **3. Development of education in colonial Kenya**

In Kenya, genesis of education can be traced back to the missionary activities of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. After the partition of Africa, Christian missionaries had a mission of making and training converts. It was through Education that this goal could be achieved. With introduction of formal Western education in Kenya, church missionaries were charged with the responsibility of providing education to Africans. According to studies conducted by Otiende, Wamahiu and Karugu (1992), the first mission school was opened at Rabai near Mombasa by church missionary society (CMS) missionaries; Ludwig Krapf and John Rebmann in 1846. The school taught students general rudiments of reading, writing and arithmetic. The turning point for development of education in Kenya was in 1903. This was when Charles Elliot, the Governor encouraged many white settlers to settle in the colony. The white settlers had a big say on politics of Kenya. They demanded for better education of their children. As a result the Fraser commission of 1908 had to be constituted. This led to introduction of education on racial lines. Industrial education in East Africa protectorate had to be introduced in 1909. A department of education had to be established in 1911 and Mr. Orr was appointed as the first director. The policy enacted in 1909 became a guiding principle for African education being offered in British colonies. Further studies conducted by Barasa and Ngugi on the 1919 East Africa protectorate education commission, revealed that between 1846 and 1911 the Missionaries managed the schools with little or no assistance from the Government. According to these studies, grant in aid system was established to help mission schools only after the 1919 commission. According to its terms of reference, the commission was to look into unsatisfactory status of education for all races in the protectorate. The commission recommended that while the provision of education would remain a major responsibility of the missionaries, the government should increase its role in the provision of education. In light of this Bogonko and Otieno (1988) noted that early British policies on education in East Africa and elsewhere in Africa were inspired by racial debate concerning the educatability of African natives. The debate concentrated on the study of cranial capacity of Africans. The study concluded that Africans were not educable. The aim of this policy on African education was to provide labor for the white settlers to promote agricultural production. This type of education also promoted missionary activities. Missionaries were able to produce catechists who would assist them in their pastoral work in Kenya. Early technical education centered on trades mainly building and carpentry. This colonial education policy led to establishment of Thika, Sigalagala, Machakos and Eldoret technical schools in the early years of colonial rule. The schools offered courses that trained Africans to become artisans.

The Indian unrest also contributed in determining African education. Indians had been offered academic education leading to resentment of European activities in India. As a result, the colonial government felt that academic education promoted radicalism amongst Indians. Hence to avoid emergence of such uprisings, industrial education was seen as the best for Africans in Kenya. Vocational education would also pre-occupy the Africans and there would be no opposition to European policies. Vocational education would also produce artisans to work on European farms. Although the colonial government was interested in education of settlers' children, it was not until 1923 after the Devonshire white paper which considered the interests of Africans as paramount that the colonial government began participating in African education. Consequently in 1924, the Phelps Stokes commission for East, Central and South Africa was constituted. In its terms of reference the

commission was to formulate plans designed for educational needs of Africans. In its recommendations, the commission recycled theories developed on Negro education at Hampton and Tuskegee institutes in United States. The theories stressed that education must be related to the needs of people with character training being an important education objective. In application of the theory, the commission recommended establishment of Jeans school at Kabete. The school was established in 1924. The school was to train school supervisors who were in turn to train school teachers for vocational education. According to Bogonko, Africans opposed the school. They did not like the type of education the school offered. The school promoted vocational and rural based education while Africans wanted academic education. The commission also recommended participation of the government in promotion of African education. Local native councils had to be established by 1925 and collect a tax of kshs.2 per adult for expansion of educational institutions. Consequently the government set up schools in Narok 1922, Kericho 1925, and Kajiado 1926, Tambach 1928 and Loitoktok 1929, Kakamega 1932 and Kagumo 1934 (Furley and Watson, 1978).

The imperial government also came up with the white paper of 1927. It was a policy paper on running of government business in Kenya. The white paper recommended Europeans as co-agents of safeguarding African interests. The paper did not address grievances of Africans. The missionaries on the other side renounced the traditional female circumcision by Africans. In 1929, the Church of Scotland, gospel missionary society and the African inland mission ordered their followers and teachers to renounce female circumcision. Those who did not comply lost employment and were expelled from churches. Subsequently in 1930, the colonial power had to come up with another policy paper referred to as the black paper of 1930. The paper reiterated that African education should aim at making Africans participate in affairs of the local areas in which they lived. The black paper of 1930 recommendations coupled with the denunciation of female circumcision by missionaries led to establishment of independent schools after 1930 in Kenya. Kenya African teachers college (K.A.T.C) was established at Githunguri on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1939. The college aimed at producing teachers for independent schools. Bogonko (1980) notes that by 1946 there were 300 kikuyu independent schools educating some 60000 children. He further observed that during the same period residents of Nyanza demanded for their own schools. This is an indication that by 1946 there were many independent schools being sponsored by African themselves. The expansion of independent schools was as a result of the outbreak of the second world war of 1939-1945. Otiende et al (1992) observed that European teachers returned home to help defend their countries and African teachers were attracted to the army because it offered better salaries than teaching. This led to lack of teacher in secular missionary schools. The shortage had a positive impact on independent schools. Africans had to promote their own independent education. Demand for more and better education was undertaken by war veterans. They had travelled outside Kenya and shared with their colleagues from colonies like India on the type of education offered by the colonial government. This type of education came in handy in the liberation struggle against European suppression.

After the Second World War, there were opposing forces in Britain demanding for education that would lead to self rule in colonies. Subsequently the Beecher education committee was appointed on 18<sup>th</sup> march, 1949. In its terms of reference, the Beecher commission was to examine and report on the scope, content and methods of the African educational system; the existing system of financial aid from the government and the local authorities, with special regard to African primary education; and the operation of the present grants in aid system. They strongly opposed recommendations of the Beecher commission. However, recommendation of the Beecher committee led to the establishment of the royal technical college in 1956. The college offered advanced courses in engineering, scientific and allied subjects. In 1952, Binns Commission of education was set up through the secretary of state for the colonies and the Nuffield Foundation. In its terms of reference, it had to examine educational policy and practice in British Tropical African territories. The commission was concerned by the high level of wastage within the education sector. The commission was a landmark in Kenya's education because it expressed concern regarding the internal efficiency of African education and its ability to address their needs (Sifuna, 1992). It made recommendations that influenced the development of teacher education both in the colonial and post-colonial period. The colonial period therefore experienced provision education being dominated by policies from the government.

#### **4. Development of education in post independent Kenya**

Immediately after independence, the minister for education Hon. J. Otiende appointed the Kenya education commission. The commission was chaired by Prof. Ominde, a renowned Kenyan scholar. In its term of reference the commission was to survey the existing educational resources of Kenya and advice the government in the formulation and implementation of national policies for education. In its recommendation, the Ominde commission recommended unified education system. It further embraced the notion of harambee (self help ) schools were to be built through pulling together. The commission report endorsed free primary education as an important objective for educational development. On the secondary segment, the commission recommended expansion of education at this level. Secondary schools had to be constructed through pulling together.

According to Anderson (1970), harambee(self help) secondary schools outnumbered government aided secondary schools in seven out of eight provinces. By 1970 there were 498 unaided secondary schools to 331 government aided secondary schools. The expansion of secondary schools was due to participation by the private sector. Unaided schools did not receive any grants from the central government. It was the responsibility of the local communities through harambee spirit that the schools were established. The Ominde commission had recommended involvement of central government in provision of education to Kenyans. At the same time there were educational administrative and management changes in independent Kenya. The 1964 constitution made the government to be responsible for all sectors of education. Hence in 1968 the Kenyan parliament enacted the Education Act. The Act empowered the minister for education to be responsible for all national education policies. The Ominde commission did however receive criticism for not addressing basic issues that related to expansion of education. According to Anderson (1970), Furley and Walton (1978), the commission did not offer projections for educational expansion. Though the issues had not been addressed by the commission, inclusion of harambee schools was of paramount importance.

The expansion of education in 1970's and 1980's was motivated by both internal and external factors. The UNESCO sponsored conference of African states on development of education in Africa held in Addis Ababa in May 1961 endorsed universal primary education to be achieved by 1980 by all. In 1966 the international convention on economic, social and cultural rights recognized existence of private schools (UNESCO 1995:196). Private schools, were seen as an avenue for expansion of education. There were also educational policy changes introduced to cater for classes one up to four effective in 1974. Earlier, the government had revised fees payment in hardship areas. Due to external factors, the program was short lived and could not be effectively implemented. Global economic trends had far reaching effects on development of education in Kenya. Among the economic trends then was, decline in coffee market and high prices of oil to inflation worldwide. Due to these trends, the World Bank introduced structural adjustment programmers' (SAPs). The programs were aimed at assisting countries to counter inflation and cut down their expenditures. As a result educational budget in Kenya was reduced and the public had to spend more on education.

In 1975 the national committee on educational objectives and policies was formed. The terms of reference of the committee were to examine the country's educational objectives and policies, endorse the ILO report of 1972 on basic education and the restructuring of education system. The committee regretted that the ILO report of 1972 had not been implemented due to financial constraints noted earlier in this study. The government accepted lengthening of primary course and created a ministry of basic education to steer the implementation of a nine year basic education programme. According to Sifuna et al (1986), schools were urged to collect funds through self help (harambee) and construct new classrooms. However before the programme was implemented, the country began preparations for the 8-4-4 school system. In 1981, a commission of the presidential working party for the second university was constituted. The committee was chaired by professor Mackay from Canada. The terms of reference were to examine the feasibility of setting up a second university. The working party addressed itself to the need to restructure the entire education system. The working party diverted from the terms of reference of the commission due to political influence and recommended the introduction of 8-4-4 education system. The primary segment was to take eight years, secondary to take four years and university four years. The Mackay commission paid special emphasis on technical and vocational subjects. The programme was out rolled in Kenya in 1984. Some of the Kenyan elites were opposed to this educational system. Examination of the rationale of introducing the 8-4-4 system provides a hidden agenda. It is evident that the change of the system was more political than educational. Amutabi (2003) notes that the system was introduced due to political self-actualization by the government. The 8-4-4 system of education was therefore politically driven and there was no crises in the old system to warrant the change of the system. Subsequently those who were able opted for the old educational system which was familiar to the British system. They took their children to private schools that offered curriculum of the old system of 7-4-2-3.

Within the same period, the United Nations general assembly adopted the convention on the rights of the child on 20/11/1989. Under article 28 of the convention, it was stated that every child shall have a right to education and primary education shall be made compulsory and free to all. Member states were to establish structures for implementation of this resolution. The Kenyan government and private sector had to be involved in provision of education in order to achieve U.N.O's goal. World conference on education for all met in Jomtein, Thailand in 1990. The delegates reaffirmed that education was a fundamental right for all people. They unanimously adopted education for all. The member's states were to ratify the resolution. Kenya had to come up with structures to ensure achievement of the goal. Thus in 1994 the Kenyan government tried to abolish payment of building levies in schools but could not manage as the 8-4-4 system of education was too demanding. The public had to be involved in provision of education. It was from these shortfalls that the education stakeholders realized the need to review 8.4.4 system. The Government had to appoint a Commission of Inquiry into the Education system of Kenya (Koech Commission) in 1999. The commission was expected make recommendations on ways that could be used to provide quality education (Republic of Kenya, 1999). The

commission recommended Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQUET) to reflect the vision of Kenyan education. TIQUET, embraced the values and substance that characterized the education system. It focused on quality delivery and outcome of the education process. The report was rejected by the government.

### **5. Development of education in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium**

The African charter on the rights and welfare of the child was adopted in July 1990 at the 6<sup>th</sup> ordinary session at the assembly of heads of state and government of the O.A.U. The African charter ratified the U.N.C.R.C. Kenya was the last signature to African charter and ratified in 2000. Kenyan parliament enacted children act in 2001. Section 7(1) of the act states that every child has the right to education, the provision of which shall be the responsibility of the government and parents (children act, 2001). As a result the government of Kenya re-introduced free primary education in 2003. This was due to proceeding political events. In 2002 there was political transition from K.A.N.U to N.A.R.C. In its manifesto, N.A.R.C had promised free primary education. In order for the ministry of education to implement the program, national conference on education and training was convened in Nairobi in November 2003.

The theme of the conference was meeting the challenges of education and training in Kenya in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the objectives of the conference was to strengthen partnership and collaboration in management and provision of education and training. The conference recommended the enactment of a legal framework that would engage both public and private sector agencies in provision of education and training. Sessional paper number one of 2005 was developed. The policy framework for education, training and research adopted the theme of the national conference. The sessional paper number one of 2005 recognized involvement of non-governmental organizations and the entire private sector in provision of education and training services (G.O.K.2005). Jubilee coalition ascended to power in 2013. In its manifesto, the public were promised that lower primary pupils would be issued with laptops. This would have revolutionized education through ICT. However, due to corruption, procurement process was not done as per laid down procedures. The laptops have not been secured. This has interfered with the education process in the country.

### **6. Conclusion**

Education is key in any nation's developmental process. For it to be effective, it should be clearly defined, legislatively protected, owned by stakeholders, financed and reviewed to ensure that it is in harmony with both local and global needs. For this to be realized, it is essential that a fundamental theory of education is conceived. This is realized in the education system of a country. forces that shape national systems of education vary. However, the political factor play a key role in shaping national systems of education. In Kenya, political factor has influenced development of education since colonial period.

During this period, the colonial government appointed the first education commission in 1908. The commission was chaired by Professor Fraser. In 1909, the commission released its recommendations. The policy enacted in 1909 became a guiding principle for African education being offered in British protectorate. Department of Education had to be established in 1911 to help in the development of education provided by Christian missions. The other two education commissions appointed were the 1919 education commission and, Phelps-Stokes Commission of 1924. The reports of these two commissions formed the backbone on which Kenyan education was cemented during this phase. Equally important during this period was the passing of the education ordinances in 1924 and in 1931. Other commissions appointed by the government that were undertaken to review education during this period included the Beecher report of 1949, and the Binns Commission of 1952. A Ten Year Plan had to be enacted. It sought to provide 50% of school age children with an education lasting six years and to offer within ten years a full primary course for undergraduate teachers to ensure that there was adequate supply of trained teachers. In addition, a satisfactory number of pupils of both sexes were expected to receive education up to the certificate level (Bogonko, 1992; Sifuna 1990). the colonial Kenya education was organized on racial lines. It was politically motivated. The purpose was to have superior education that would not be matched with that one of the Indians and Africans. the curriculum for European children was modeled on that of British public schools. By 1940 education for Europeans children was compulsory. And by the end of Second World War, the minimum education European children were to have was secondary education. European children would further their university education in Britain and South Africa. Educational policies were politically motivated and had to favour the Europeans. The Indians and Africans had to be disadvantaged and had to be offered technical education that was considered to be inferior.

At independence in Kenya the education system inherited from Europeans was discriminatory. It favored Europeans and Indians. To Africans, it was geared towards production of clerical officers and craftsmen. During the post-independent Kenya, emphasis was on quality improvement in education and have been closely linked to Kenya's developmental processes. In the first two decades of independence, according to Eshiwani, curriculum reforms played a pivotal role in directing the expected quality of education in Kenya. Major changes introduced in the curriculum included the new mathematics, agricultural, industrial and science education

Project for Africa (SEPA), the SPP based science programmes and New Primary approach. educational reviews undertaken in Kenya in the post colonial period indicate that they operated under the framework of the country's national goals. The goals of Kenyan education exhibit the purpose of Kenyan education today. It is important to note that in post-independence Kenya there has been a lot of political interference in the education reform process. Some of the educational initiatives that illustrate political interference in Kenya's education sector include presidential decrees on: Harambee school system, free education, school milk programme, quota system, 8-4-4 system of education, model schools, the National Youth Service, higher education and the proposed laptop programme. Many of these initiatives according to Amutabi are introduced without consultations from stakeholders. As a result the programmes are resisted by stakeholders. Implementation of these programmes is ineffectively done.

Because of political interference in the education process, policy environment has been characterized by lack of popular consultation, with decrees, circulars and political rhetoric replacing policy-making apparatus. The education development of education beyond 2015 MDGs is expected to be influenced by the political factor.

## 7. Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are forwarded to the government of Kenya for facilitation of proper development of education:

- Despite heavy investment in education by the government and various players, there is internal inefficiencies in schools. In order to redress this challenge, it is important to separate the management of the education from the national political process. Above all, it is pertinent to develop a clear educational policy and to correlate it to national, societal and global demands.
- The Kenyan government should tie its educational planning to its developmental agenda. Currently, there is widespread misalignment between the two which is a major source of ineffective use of existing resources.
- Since political interference emanate from political party manifestos, it is necessary for theory and practice of education being considered before such interventions.

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