

Tertiary Education and the Place of Education in Society - Requiem to Western Tertiary Education in Africana societies to transcend Plantocracy, Coloniality and Neo-Coloniality

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Education

Our concern in this discussion is to clearly exhibit the failure of Western tertiary education as a system and as process for the development of Africana societies. In this regard, we must take a number of issues in hand, of which the question of the meaning of education, purpose of education, tertiary education, purpose of tertiary education of paramount. It is when we are apprised of these simple matters that we will be able to say whether or not Western education and tertiary education has failed the world and Africana societies.

We wish to start by noting that there is no doubt that all societies place great stock in the education of the young, and such stock is necessary if existence as it is known or anticipated is to be assured for the present and for posterity. To this end, all societies invest resources in the upbringing, teaching and training of the young over a very long period of time. But whether all societies are in the situation where they are able to choose the educational processes and systems that would elevate their peoples is not that clear. What has happened in the case of Africana societies is even more embarrassing, to the point where even the understanding of what constitute education is mired in confusion. This is why we would need to suggest from the beginning that Africana societies are recipients rather than initiators of educational parameters that determine their existence; which will suggest that even the meaning of education is probably not very clear to Africana peoples.

Thus, while a lot has been written about the meaning of education, tracing its etymology to various ancient European languages, our interest is not merely an academic distraction of the opulent, but one that indicated the need for urgent practical attention to effects of Western education and Western tertiary education on Africana societies. To this end, our asking: “What is education?” is only with a view toward finding a meaningful explanation for the parlous, dangerously deteriorating, and all-encompassing depressing situation of virtually all Africana societies in the post-slavery, post-colony and in the twenty-first century.

In our judgment, education is both a process and a system. In the first sense, it is the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, through study, training, teaching, instruction, observation, experience and apprenticeship. In this regard, to educate, then, is to teach someone over a long period of time about all aspects of reality relevant to their existence and survival, so that the person acquires not only knowledge, but understanding, of issues relating to all aspects of reality relevant to their existence and survival, including the specific contents, ideas, materials, skills and attitudes that

facilitate the survival. This is the sense in which to be educated is to have, display, and be able to show knowledge, understanding, culture, taste and attitudes that are self and other affirming in society. It is the sense in which humans (and probably other animals with the capacity to learn things) use their experience and the experience of others to benefit their existence in the universe.

In the second sense, education is the totality of the system, methodologies, structural institutions, instructional facilities and personnel that combine together to ensure, enhance and eventuate the educational goals of society. In this sense it would be important to not only appreciate the existence of levels and layers of educational attainment, but also the numerous details of curricular, measurement, certification and development through which the educational system must pass, in order for the end product to meet the first test that we observed in the definition above.

But, base on the above, this is where we could see education beginning from cradle and ending at the grave; and it is where we are able to distinguish between formal, informal and non-formal education, such that we are able to identify some as early childhood, elementary, secondary, higher, tertiary, and continuing education, within the formal system. While in the informal system Western society does not adequately appreciate the position of family (especially the mother), relatives, community and society in the education of humans; thereby creating a disconnection between the formal and the informal systems of education, instead of coordinating both to enhance the overall product of the process and system.

Compounding the disconnection is the further failure to appreciate the growth of the non-formal educational system and how much it impacts on the overall development of the kind of society and humanity which has evolved in Western societies over many millennia. In this regard, the youth are left to the various unregulated sources of information as they contend with existential issues in a world in which resources have become more difficult to access, leading to the abandonment of filial responsibility for the informal education of youth. To this extent the forces that education the youth now are cable, internet, and other media whose goals and objectives need not necessarily be in consonance with the virtues and values that society may consider worthy of embrace and preservation.

What makes the failure of Western education more poignant is the fact that the two aspects of what is officially regarded as education, the “process and system” conception, when embraced by any society, not being mindful of the limitations of the two to transform knowledge into understanding, is the fact that attention is not paid to the culture that must underwrite education and the overall goal of education in terms of humanity and human society at large. What I mean here is quite simple: when you look at the conception of education in purely mechanical terms – process and system – then the nature of education as a necessary feature of human existence; that is, the fact that whether human beings like it or not, and whether they choose to embrace it or not, humans must educate and be educated as they go along in life. In this regard, the non-formal and the informal systems of education have proven to be the most critical elements of education in society. The reason for this has been the fact that humans learn

what they live and experience – either through imitation or avoidance, or through imposition or envy. This has accounted for the fact that humanity is tottering on the perilous verge of destructive homogenization – humans around the world are being forced to become consumerist robots, who go through life yearning for more and more of the most unhealthy and dangerous lifestyles.

On a more serious note is the fact that having being told that civilization began only 2600 years ago, when the Western man became human, and that all else before then was naught; having been enslaved or colonized by superior brutality, and having been dependent for so long on the pittance that the oppressive West has ever been generous to drip and trickle down, the only thing that the Africana human being could aim to become is Western. We not only do this by wearing three piece suits in 35 degree Celsius weather, we also do it by buying into the political party contestations of greedy cabals in the name of democracy, and we top it up by toning up our skins so as to attain what is regarded as high colour (browning) or marry up to gain acceptance for our humanity within the group of those we consider superior on account of their complexion! And even when science tells us that there is no superior or inferior humans anywhere, and even when apostles of freedom in the West celebrate equality of humans, Africana peoples still out of self-hatred prefer the rejects of the foreign societies as expatriates in their own societies. All of this add up to a rank failure that we must speak of, so that, maybe, just maybe, someone in the quarters of power and authority would say “Waite a minute! How did we get to this sorry state so quickly? We who were descendants of great ancestry; what happened to turn us to collective beggars that no one wants to see?” And probably then someone would do a more serious analysis of the diet of rubbish that we call education – Western education – the purveyor of Western barbarism, and then seek to redirect our mode of upbringing to more civilized and African paths, and then our humanity may be restored and the rest of the world may come back to learn from us again, as the masters who made humanity possible in the first place!

Elegy to Western Education in the West

The time has come for us to celebrate the final demise of Western Education as the tool, methodology, instrument, system, practice and resource for underwriting civilization and development in universally and in Africana societies especially. There are many barometers for determining and illustrating this failure. These cannot be exhaustively detailed in a discussion of this nature, but we will mention some, as these are critical to the argument that relying on Western education, especially tertiary education as practiced in Western societies, would only lead to Africana perdition.

The most critical measure of success or failure of any system that proclaims itself as education must be the extent to which its products appreciate that if only for self interest purposes, survival of the self should indicate enlightened decisions regarding such survival, but there is no doubt that a critical matter is the failure of the products of Western education to be educated to appreciate the need to ensure the continued survival of homo sapiens, in a habitat that supports such survival. The height of Western civilization is to be found in the United States of America experiment, the United States

of America power and United States of America leadership of the world. But, while it is true that the population of United States of America is minuscule compared with the rest of the world, less than One Hundredth of world population, it is even more poignant that USA consumes over half of world power generated. But given the vulnerability of United States of America topographically and geologically, the matter of global warming is less taken seriously in USA than it is in other less vulnerable countries. Rather, USA goes all over the world wrecking havoc, in the search for more resource domination to feed its glutinous and insatiable demographic and military appetite.

We will mention a few measures to show this failure. In the first instance, humans, as observed by Aristotle, are to be defined as rational beings, as it is this apparent rationality that seem to separate human beings from other sentient beings in the universe. But hundreds of years of Western education, either in the West or in societies on which the system have been foisted, have not shown any special capacity at the use of reason. What I mean by this should be clearly explained: it is not just developing and using technology to facilitate ends that constitute rationality, there has to be a rational choice of what goals are enduring, worthy of approbation and empowering of humanity generally. That is, while it is a historical fact that the Chinese developed explosives before the West, they never used it a means of destruction of the humanity of one human group by another. This could be said to be a product of their realization that violence for the sake of injustice can never be an instrument for the attainment of enduring greatness. This is contrary to Western social and political objectives of violence as instrument of oppression, suppression and destruction for the sake of subjugation of others – which in the end only lead to the further erosion and demeaning of the common rationality and humanity of all humans.

When we mentioned earlier the fact that all societies invest in the education of their young, we intended that this investment is not in vain, but arise from the nature of humanity. Hence, we can say without fear of contradiction that the reasons for such investment in education in all societies are numerous. In the first instance, the human young is one of the most unprepared of animals for the great challenges of existence and perils of survival that await both it in nature and as contrived by other humans to warrant its destruction or for the deliberate compromise of its wellbeing. It is only through careful, deliberate and concerted education that this young being can begin to develop survival aptitudes, learn to live meaningfully with other humans and sustainably with the environment. Such learning is very perilous and rewarding at the same time – it is perilous as it goes against the simplest instincts of humans to want to accept direction and guidance except as a means of averting disaster (though even this is not so clear to many who self-destruct because of unwillingness to be educated), but it is rewarding as those who patiently and perseveringly embrace education find that there are clear benefits of survival and wealth to be gained.

Secondly, the complexification of existence, through the overreaching of the immediate circles of being means that with the destruction of the immediate local means of survival and the forced interconnections of human existence globally, there is greater need to understand the traditions of our societies and those of the various societies which must

now interface, master the knowledge deriving from these traditions as well as understand the various technologies that are necessary for existence and survival in the new globalized environment. But because the playing field is not a level one, there must be inequalities that attend the learning process as well as the end results. To this end, education cannot be uniformly presuming of content, method and process; for to make this one size fits all assumption would be to commit the error of assuming that the same practice of education in the West is the necessary modalities of education needed in the Africana societies. Later on, we will see that this is one of the crucial errors in the embrace of Western education, as Africana leaders have assumed that since education is “education”, it should be possible to transfer whole hog the systems, content, processes and methodologies of Western education to Africana environments and have as outcomes humans versed in the cultural and social sensitivities that are affirming of Africana humanity!

Thirdly, given the way in which Western education is structure, there is so much competition between various existents and among them which indicate that the ones that are most adaptive and proactive would be the ones that survive and prevail; thus, it is through the development of skills, talents and capacities for such adaptation, for which only education is capable of preparing the individual, that success can be assured. This means that to achieve means to meet the criteria of passing the measures set up to weed out and destroy the failing humans, so that the sieving and straining of “talent” determines access to sources of humanity-affirming resources, while the opposite is the case for the left behind. This leads to the degradations of existential angst suffered by almost one-fifth of the official United States of America population, who have no health insurance, or who live literally from hand to mouth! The kind of buffer that is insured from the common humanity of humans is not the case in Western societies, as the consumerist commercialization and commodification of existence leads to the utter desperation of the poor, whose only means of demonstrating still “being-there” is through ostentatious and unaffordable luxurious life-styles.

Fourthly, so many events have exhibited the failure of Western education in the West. The decision-making process in positions of power which allow power-holders unfettered capacity to drag countries to war, regardless of what the people of the countries want is a direct indictment of Western education. It was this recklessness that allowed for the Whitehouse in 2003 to drag United States of America to a war predicated on falsehood, and which made those segments of the country not star-struck by the new unipolarity of the world power structure impotent while the majority of ignorant Americans could only chorus to the drums of destruction that American enemies must be killed before they can kill Americans wherever they may be. This is also very obvious in the range of terribly inhuman destructions that Americans wreck on other Americans – killing each other in churches, schools, supermarkets, and anywhere. This makes it clear that there is something fundamentally wrong in the social, political, cultural and even human ideas that underwrite Western society which rational humans everywhere must be wary of emulating!

And fifthly, but not exhaustively, any society that allows for freedom without responsibility, power without accountability, action without reflection and luxury to the few without recourse to the masses must foresee the kinds of inebriating disasters that frequently occur in the USA. These range from devastating hurricanes which have minimal effects on even the most vilified of small islands, tornadoes that ravage states with deadly effect on life and property, emplacement of sports-persons and entertainment parasites as role models, and the undervaluation of intellectual effort in the determination of achievement. Take the effects of tornadoes: why does a country with resources, construct homes with flimsy boards when it is clear that because of the topography of large tracts of land, tornadoes would make mince meat of the homes? Or why would a civilized society insist on the right to bear arms when you are not living in the 14th century with deadly animals on the prow in the neighbourhood?

Dirge to Western Tertiary Education in Africana Societies

Our concern in this discussion is an evaluation of the imposed Western tertiary education, as a system and as process and the effects of this (mis)education on Africana peoples and societies. We would also have to indicate the collusion of Africana peoples in this systemic and processual effort to corrupt beyond redemption the Africana mind, so that we all become advocates of/for Burger King and MacDonald, Nike and Puma. This is why we need to note what is commonly supposed in official quarters in many Africana countries that “education” is no more than classrooms, teachers, syllabuses, examinations, certificates and certification, ministries of education, inspectors and inspectorate divisions of education, education officers, education budgets, matriculation and convocation ceremonies. This equates a small aspect of education with the totality of education. This is what I regard as a minimalist conception of education. It is very lopsided and inadequate.

After a minimalist conception of education which fails either to approximate the etymology or the evolution of what one can call the equivalent of the concept in Yoruba language, *eko*, which includes not only what we have observed above in the Western understanding of education, but which also embraces the social, spiritual, and cultural aspects of education to make the individual male or female member of society an *Omoluabi* – a well cultured, humane, and civilized person, not just a trained, skilled, academic, intellectual or certificated person whose only business is taking her society to ransom for perceived wages – the supposition is then made by official Africana societies that the ‘education’ so minimally conceived can and should be the sole instrument for the attainment of national goals of development, production of responsible and patriotic citizens, forging national unity and harmony in a hetero-ethnic environments, evolving Western style democratic institutions and practices in all sections of life (aping the master to the hilt!), creating a productive work force that is self-sufficient, and promoting moral, ethical and humanitarian values in citizens.

The paradox of the minimalist conception of education that we have mentioned above is clearly reflected in the Ugandan approach, for example. On the one hand, there is the wishful thinking that a narrow and minimalist conception of education can provide the

broad spectrum of cultural, social and spiritual results which education as it was traditionally practiced by the Buganda, leading to greatness; while on the other side, the emphasis on the development of a solely instrumentalist conception of education, geared toward the sole inculcation of skills and competences that people would use to earn a living, regardless of what kind of society the new breed human would live in never become an issue for the planners of education in Uganda. The national policy on education formulates this paradox as follows:

A national policy on education is Governments strategy for achieving some of its objectives with education as a tool. In this context, education has several basic function: it transmits societies' traditions and cultural heritage, it provides a core curriculum of basic skills on which individual development is based; it provides opportunity to students to study in a wide variety of fields which they find useful and of interest and which are beneficial to society as a whole.

Clearly, a minimalist educational concept cannot effectively address the various goals set for education such as in the above. In fact, any perceptive educated person is able to recognize that such a conception is misguided and superficial, because what the so-called experts and consultants to the Ugandan government have don is to make contradictory recommendations in spite of their initial insight. This is articulated clearly in the following way by Edmund King (1965), speaking about education in the United Kingdom:

That adds up to education in our own country is as confused a tangle as any to be found in those other countries where we more easily assume the role of critical advisers. Much of it is habituation, and much is emotionally bound rather than rational. Advice and rational planning that do not take account of these actual influences on education at any one place and time are unscientific as well as failing in humanity. From a practical point of view, too, they will fail, because they lack a sense of the local and topical dynamic.

What the above shows is that Africana governments and educational planners are totally off base in their erroneous equation of education with literacy and the attendance at Western format tertiary educational institutions for an extended period of time to attain a certain formal level of training and certification. When society abdicates the responsibility to engage in moral, ethical, religio-spiritual dialogues from young ones from very early in life, leaving the young ones to their own devices, misguided by various deficit systems such as sports-stars, rock-stars and televangelists whose only interest in the bottom-line, then it would not be surprising that Africana societies are destined for perpetual mendicancy. Because of the nature of poverty in Africana societies, the ephemeral and rarified aspects of education in such nebulous things are social gatherings and performances have become unaffordable – when parents are struggling to find two square meals for the day, how would a son or daughter in a higher institution be able to afford a concert or cultural festival that has little to do with what class of certificate would be received at the end of the years in college. For this reason, most of the co- and extra-curricular activities that make up the informal and non-formal

educational systems and processes, especially those derived from the indigenous local environment are beyond the reach of the young adult – just as it was to him/her when she was young. The substitutes are those superficial presentations of life in the West, which neither reflect the truth about Western life or experience, but which he/she has no way of knowing to be false!

What this implies is a scenario such as the following: a child starts school at about two or six (where nursery and kindergarten is available and the parents are workers in the former, while the latter is the case where the environment is rural or nursery and kindergarten are unavailable) and graduates with degree or diploma (in ideal cases) at the age of between eighteen and twenty-two, after undergoing a course of general and specialized instruction in reading, writing, calculating, fixing, flying, preaching, teaching, demolishing, drawing, stealing without being detected if possible through various accounting fraud tactics, parasiting on the labours of others through various subterfuges, etc. With this type of conception of (mis)education, it is clear that it is possible to be “educated” and yet to remain uneducated. One would have attained a level of formal education that is devoid of the necessary though nebulous component that King has identified. This component is not easily formulated in a curriculum, yet it is all too important to be left to chance, or to be marginalized and destroyed as was done on the advent of the imposition of Western models of education as the only rational and valid ones for humanity.

It is this that accounts for the fact that there are many non-literate persons who exhibit a culture of the mind, humaneness and person-hood that is unquestionably superior to that of the very best that the formal system has produced. Part of the reason for this was the emphasis within the formal educational system on certain technical criteria for determining attainment levels and success at these levels. These criteria are also not related to the domestic tradition of measuring success without disrespecting the humanity of those who may not have attained the standards set. In any case, Western educational structures does not brook competition for validity or rationality; and for this reason, all the indigenous educational media and cultures are derided and disrespected, leading to the destruction of the indigenous cultures of human development which sustained life for millennia. What then happens is that at the end of the day, the educated Africana human is neither African nor American, neither a Yoruba nor a Scot.

What is most important in the new educational format is, on the one hand, the ability of this new hybrid student to reel out information learnt, pass examinations, possess all kinds of certificates and diplomas as qualifications for good jobs which they are only fit to apply for but not knowledgeable enough to create, seeking promotion and recognition as educated, and on the other hand, measuring the educational advancement of nations in terms of how many doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountant, teachers, bankers, librarians, etc., are produced. These factors indicate that it was possible for countries to make progress measured along these lines, like Nigeria did in apparent terms, while the country is incapable of generating mentally enlightened leadership that will carry forward the national objectives that have been formulated.

I will conjecture that culture can be regarded as the embodiment of the ways of life of human beings within the collective that society enshrines, as evolved through their interaction with each other and with nature. Historically, the culture of each society has shaped the education of members of the society and educational theory, system, process, content, and practice have been instruments for the transmission and propagation of these ephemeral cultural dynamics – in changing or modifying or perpetuating the culture.

Thus, each society envisions a perception of the universe, their interpretation of nature as they interact with it and other societies and cultures, as they trade with each other, and as they make sense out of their relatedness, and as they make at times deliberate and at other times non-deliberate efforts to pass on the values they regard as ultimate and worth-while in all departments of life to their posterity. This fact was true of the ancient Nile Valley civilizations as it is true of the West African states of the pre-colonial period and the other states in other parts of Africa before the advent of colonialism. It is also true of societies of today, especially in the ways in which the moulding of humanity, as this is expected to be in each culture must be a reflection of the perception of the realities of these societies, as well as of the cultures that are considered cherishable in these societies.

And each traditional society had devised means of integrating formal, non-formal and informal forms of education, making education a collective process of developing a cultured individual who is skilled in specific area of need of society, but who is ultimately more useful to society than the narrow skills that he/she has to offer society. This form of integrated educational system created respectable men and women who were respected because of their ability to function as *members* of their societies. They are persons who know the difference between good and evil, appreciates justice without undertaking an elaborate legalistic and sophistical analysis, respects the rights of others both in war and peace, values the humanity of others without dependence on abstract irrelevance of speculative contractarianism, and does not suffer some depressed existentialist angst because she is swimming alone in a shark-infested sea of perdition (this is partly why European existentialism is difficult to appreciate within the indigenous Africana context where humans are not just thrown into the world without the cushion of society to share, assist, defend, and protect her in the process of her humanity as she journeys along in happiness and in pain.

In these societies there was an all important equivalence between being educated and being cultured. The various trades and professions are learnt in society not outside society in artificially contrived environments insulated from real life situations as now happens in the tertiary institutions inherited from the West. There was, therefore, no conscious need on the part of the student to feel superior to his peers even when he has attained a higher formal educational standing. Nor can he/she turn around to hold society to ransom for the education that he/she has derived from society, as many of us do, demanding a certain wage level, a certain fringe and benefit, certain status, etc.

Examples of the failure of Western Tertiary Education in Africana contexts

Let me use a few examples to illustrate what is being suggested here. I will use a few instances for the first one – **non-appreciation of indigenous knowledge, resources or culture**: The Yoruba culture values the fact that charity begins at home – *ile l'a ti n ko eso r'ode*. For this reason, it is only the bastard who points out his parents homestead or yard with the left hand, and when you fail to understand the value of what you have, they you would have the disastrous rashness of selling your relative for cheap. What is being adverted here relate to the fact that we Africana peoples would pay top money for the third-rate, fourth-rate and no-rate technicians from other lands as expatriates while our own professionals who are by far superior would not be given a chance to prove herself, even though she knows the problems personally in a way no expatriate can even become aware or be able to provide a culturally sensitive solution. In Nigeria, for example, for many years so called engineers, consultants and experts who were merely technicians in their own countries were hired at hundred times what indigenous but superior persons were paid because of the colour of the skin of the foreigners. In Jamaica there was a time that a governor of the Bank of Jamaica was recruited from “foreign”, borrowing money to pay the governor to borrow money to finance the profligacy of the novo-riches. And recently, even a football coach was hired on more than a million US Dollars a year, to coach a team for the World Cup in South Africa, when Jamaica has no business looking for the feel-fine situation on borrowed money. When the coach was to be retrenched for non-performance, his severance pay ran into millions of dollars, and to cap the insult, another was brought from another ‘foreign’ to perform the miracle. Yet there are many Jamaican coaches who, if paid one tenth of what they foreign coaches are being paid, would deliver the expected miracle! What is clear here is that while we undervalue indigenous knowledge and expertise, because we have bought into the syndrome that blacks are eternally inferior, all we do is then send the signal to the larger society to look outward, instead of inward in the solution of problems.

Second, there is the fact that we need to understand **the false nature of the so-called objectivity of science and technology**. After appropriating the knowledge and science developed from other parts of the world, the impression is given that science, knowledge, technology and development are totally devoid of subjective, emotional and cultural ideologies. In this regard, Africana peoples are sold on the belief that when they buy into the science and technology, their societies are going to become better. Believing this, they play the fool by asking for, paying for and importing all kinds of gadgets which would make their societies better, instead of moving steadily and systematically toward knowledge indigenization and appropriation. It is when they have bought these “fads” that they begin to see that what they have embraced is no more than a façade, as at every turn they have to bring in the expert from “foreign” to fix the most basic built-in defects, malfunction, breakdown, and glitch – after all, as Rumsfeld would remind us after dragging the world to war in America, “stuff happens”! And if you have the audacity to believe you can transcend the bounds created for you by the “masters”, like Iran, North Korea, Libya or Cuba have attempted, then your wings will be clipped and you will be put in your proper place!

Another example relate to our consumption pattern and the addiction we easily cultivate for foreign goods, services, entertainment, pathologies and phobias. There are many examples of this, but suffice to simple mention the fact that the indulgence is pernicious, as it destroys local industries, while ultimately benefiting the foreign economies. Take the appetite of the Africana people for luxury, and you begin to see the failure of tertiary education on Africana leadership. It is arguable that a “normal” Africana college graduate wants to live way above his means, thereby exhibiting his “arrival” and new found wealth. The latest fads must be acquired, and the ones yet to be manufactured must be booked in advance, even if it means working three jobs and dying prematurely of stroke. In Nigeria, when you combine that with the protracted distraction of ceremonizing virtually every even – birthdays, new jobs, promotions, deaths, funerals, chieftaincy titles, church chairs, etc. etc. ad nauseam, ad infinitum ... then you begin to fathom the absolute culpability of Western tertiary education in Africana societies.

Let me use one last illustration. Jamaica has been a country in recession for almost two decades now. Every time we in Jamaica do well to make sure that we service the debts borrowed by the government, so that we can be rated by Standard and Poor (sic) and Moody’s (sic), so that we can be able to borrow more to service our debt – that is, pay the interest on the loans we have borrowed, not talking about paying the principal. Yet we, in Jamaica, seem to have the taste for the best in everything, as we must “live it up”, from the best cars to the latest television sets and mobile phones. There is nothing to show in the lifestyle of Jamaicans that this is a country that has had consistent negative growth for nearly two decades. And we, as Jamaicans led by our bright tertiary level ‘educated’ personages, are not averse to borrowing money to build a huge stadium for 50,000 in a community of 5,000 people, hoping to truck people to matches and events there as we have done in political rallies for so long, nor do we balk at the idea of building super high ways when the feeder roads to the few remaining farming communities are in tartars! And we make sure that in a technological age, one arm of government cannot facilitate another arm of government to collect monies owed to the government because of some laws regarding individual privacy and human rights. All of these add up to an “educated” leadership without real education in the traditions and issues that matters in nation-building and human development. It is for this reason that the murder rate in Jamaica is only next to Columbia and South Africa – the one a drug infested country and the other a post-apartheid society!

It is clear that contemporary Africana tertiary education has not fundamentally developed beyond where it was in colonial period. It has retained its Christian content, purpose and orientation in its servile deference to the voice of the master from the colonial metropolises – only with the shedding of the little pretence that this education ever had to having a moral foundation. The Christian colonial educational agenda was mostly negative towards the colonies and their inhabitants in many respects, dedicated as it was to converting the heathen African to becoming a half human being acceptable to salvation only out of pity, and not because of intrinsic worth of her humanity. It was aimed at producing “People of the Book”, who were serviceable toward the Christian colonial goals of making Europeans out of Africans who were regarded as uncivilized persons and

who needed the magnanimity of the missionaries in order to translate concern for the souls of Africans into emancipating efforts.

The invalidity of Western Tertiary Education in Africana contexts

Without going over well beaten grounds it is necessary to understand that Western tertiary education, as practised in Europe and America for the development of these societies, cannot be regarded as what takes place purely in the classroom environment. That was the point made eloquently by Edmund King. But in our colonial and post colonial experience, Western tertiary education has come to be regarded as something to be gained solely in the classroom. Because of this there has developed a variety of problems:

- a) the production of Africana peoples who live in two mutually incompatible worlds, which Ali Mazru has described variously as cultural captivity and cultural schizophrenia,
- b) the creation of Africans who look down on their traditional heritage as a consequence of their ignorance of this heritage and the intellectual and cultural captivity engendered by the insidious indoctrinative brainwashing occasioned by the new educational exposure,
- c) the perpetuation of a destructive cosy relationship between the state and religion that was dying out or in some form of remission in many indigenous African societies before colonization and slavery, and that had been rejected in most European societies,
- d) the de-moralization of education and de-socialization of Africana educational systems, based on the weakness of the single leg on which western tertiary education stands in Africana societies, by contrast to the multiple legs on which traditional Africana educational systems and traditional European educational systems stood in their respective native environments,
- e) arising from the fact that Western tertiary education was an alien education to many Africana societies, many people of prominence in these Africana societies did not originally send their children to the schools, or when they were compelled to, they sent children of hated spouses or children whose abilities were in doubt, mainly because there was no trust in the new educational system,
- f) the creation of denominational schisms among educational protégés, such that the conflicts that existed in Europe and that started in the Middle East where the sibling religions of Islam and Christianity developed, were transplanted wholesale into the continent of Africa, thereby sowing the seeds of religio-political discord which has claimed the lives of millions of African peoples,

- g) there ensued the creation of a leadership vacuum in many African societies as charlatans gained ascendancy and prominence in statecraft or were entrusted with responsibilities they were ill-prepared for, and
- h) the creation of an ingratiating African intelligentsia, who are forever grateful to the Western (mis)educationists and they are now dedicated to the task of forever deriding and disrespecting their own cultural heritage, even to the point that they, in ignorance, lie about the traditional and cultural educational merits of African societies. A stark example is found in the work of Balogun et al., where they argue that:

The impact of the West has also largely done away with practices like cannibalism, the killing of twins and human sacrifices. These practices were not common, but their occasional occurrence provided enough grounds for western societies to look down upon African culture. Western education also created a new class of educated people who could understand each other's point of view and could overcome tribal and local differences more easily than those who were not educated. By mastering foreign ideas and concepts, communication with foreigners became easier. Even the struggle for freedom in many countries, including Nigeria, was helped by the acquaintance with the western concepts of democracy, equality and justice.

- i) and in the African Diaspora, there were situations in which theories of the non-educability of Africans gave way to paternalistic condescension, creating peoples on the fringes, who have, through forcible mental liberation become revolutionaries, like Walter Rodney, Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, etc. But the paroxysm of the empty baggage syndrome has only given way to a people with a fractured psyche, with dependency extremities that prefer the expatriate to the indigenous competence, thereby living in an intellectual limbo, neither capable of understanding the socio-cultural and politico-economic traditions that produced the ancient African kingdoms and empires of old, nor the religio-metaphysical presuppositions that have given birth to the numerous religions and metaphysical ideas that have now been used to hound their forebears and enslave themselves in the contemporary world.

Hence, we can now ask the serious question: Has the content of education changed significantly since independence and emancipation in the various African societies to the ones that could lead to the real development of humanity in these societies beyond the ones foisted on them by ex-slave masters and colonists? In my judgement, the answer is an emphatic NO. Using the Nigerian and Jamaican examples, there have been cosmetic changes in the content of the tertiary curricular, which have not resulted in smatterings of self-consciousness and often myopic nationalism of the football fever kind, but the important changes have been very elusive, as having to contend with eternal survival existential issues have distracted from the important matters that could lead to self-emancipation and development.

The important education issues and ideas have remained parochial and discouraging to creativity and initiative. While the peoples of West have continued to celebrate only Western creativity and reflectivity, the Africans have failed to see the import of historical perspective in education. We continue to teach that African societies in the pre-colonial period was preliterate and without any serious formal educational systems. If we cannot take pride in the achievements of our forebears, how can we get the courage to move forward in greatness? If we do not know that we are descendants of great cultures but believe in inferiority of coloureds, how are we to be inward looking when it comes to solving our national problems by ourselves? It has never occurred to any of these thinkers that it was not possible for cities of one million people to exist in sub-Sahara Africa (that odious word – sub...) if there was not means of documenting ideas, resources, transactions, etc.

Our collective myopia is clearly reflected in the way in which substandard expatriates are employed to key, sensitive and policy formation positions in African societies, as we have used the Nigerian and Jamaican example to illustrate, at gargantuan costs that are so exorbitant that it is scandalous to make any comparison with the income of the top echelon of similarly qualified persons in our different societies. In the same manner our curricular still celebrate the inventiveness, creativity and discovery of Western persons – including their discovery of our lands and our humanity. There have been serious attempts in United States of America to obtain royalties in respect of inventions that were made by African slaves approximated by their owners. But such efforts are destined for naught when we continue to create conditions that make us collective slaves in the contemporary world, thereby forcing us to become economic migrants and refugees because of the incapacity of our “leaders” to facilitate development rather than destruction of their societies.

If we continue to pay false debt of gratitude to others, without finding out what was our own, if intellectual property rights are never acknowledged to the black persons to whom they are due, and our tertiary educational curricular continue to encourage and teach these as incorrigible truths, then the future continues to remain bleak. There is no longer any dispute in the fact that ancient Egyptians had serious writing systems and that various forms of writing have been found among other African societies, apart from the Yoruba. Yet we continue to teach that only other regional humans had enough creativity to engage in documentation of their ideas. We continue to teach the falsity that Mississippi is the longest river in the world, that Mungo Park discovered the Niger and that Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas - convenient lies that only serve the interest of the West.

Added to these we continue to teach semblances of foreign religious values and virtues, when we teach any values and virtues at all; these are ideas and ideals that are concretely inferior to the religio-ethical values of Africans. The virtues that we now teach are escapist and pacifist, ethics which celebrate that of all humanity only African peoples should turn the other cheek when struck on one. We continue to teach ideas that spread intolerance of other religious view-points, as if all religions are not aimed at serving the

same end in the long run - a conclusion that many African societies had deduced long before the Europeans arrived (Bewaji 2007). Thus the virtues that we now teach are the impracticable ones that show us to be hypocrites, preaching one sermon and living another.

Thus we have over time perpetuated a false and mythical inferiority of peoples of colour, until the Japanese miracle. But we even forget that coloured peoples are by far larger in number than the so-called “pure” peoples. And why was Japan able to stave off the cankerworm of Eurocentric educational pollution? We marvel at the Japanese educational achievements, without raising serious questions of why. We look at the, evidence of an inward looking society and wonder what accounts for the success of these people who were defeated in the war – even with the deliberate effort to assist the recovery of Japan as a way of sanitizing the conscience of the West for the savagery of the atom bomb. Merry White celebrates this Japanese achievement in the following terms:

The visible outcome of Japanese education and child rearing include stunning literacy rates, a highly sophisticated general population, and a well- socialized and committed work force. Less than 0.7 percent of the Japanese population is illiterate compared to 20 percent in the United States. An example of the uniform effects of education may be seen on ordinary television news broadcasts: the level of discourse, sophisticated analysis of facts and figures and the general tone of reporting is striking, approximated only on some American “educational television”. Furthermore, this sophistication is not restricted to the upper socioeconomic strata. A worker on the factory floor can understand graphs, charts, and other symbolic notations and work with complex mathematical formulas.

If we ask why the Japanese miracle happened, the answer is not farfetched. As White says,

We need to understand the Japanese schools and the experience of the Japanese child as rooted in deep psychological and cultural realities; in borrowing European and American models of schooling Japan did *not* borrow Western conceptions of learning and childhood. In Japan, to be modern is not, in any pervasive sense, to be Western peoples who understand that they originate from a tradition of greatness do not borrow regardless of what the interest is. You cannot gratify today to jeopardize the future.

This is a lesson our leaders in Africa and the African Diaspora have failed to understand. Mazrui reflects the same point that White articulated above in a more poignant manner, because only the one with the tight shoe on knows the point of impact. White is remonstrating with a deaf American and European class, in the same way in which Mazrui has been trying in vain to articulate a necessity to the African leadership. He compares Japanese and Uganda educational systems in the following words:

A comparison between the Uganda and Japanese versions of westernization reveals significant differences in levels of acculturation. It may well be that the Uganda borrowed more of the *values* from the West than the Japanese and fewer of the *techniques* from the West than the Japanese.

Why has it been difficult to separate western education from western religion and culture in its adoption by Africans and her Diaspora? This last question is of great moment. One may hazard a rider questions: Could it be because the testament of the church came *pari pasu*, with the gun in one hand and the bible in the other? Hence, could it be that the message of double jeopardy has been effective, such that while threatening eternal damnation in hell at death it threatened misery on earth? Could it be that the soul of the coloured person is better saved by destroying his\her sense of justice, fairness, historical heritage and culture greatness? Why did the leadership of the African societies that obtained independence not see the need to rewrite the bastardized history of the Africans in a fundamental way outside of the rubric of United Nations sponsored half-way house documents hastily put together, in order to correct the warped understanding of Africans by the rest of the world and by future generations of Africans? Was it because of ineptitude or because Western colonial masters have succeeded and need not raise a finger again before we are perpetually constrained to destroy ourselves, out of a sense of duty to remain subservient?

Conclusion

I cannot claim to be able to answer all or any of these questions satisfactorily, yet I regard it as my duty to challenge us all to peruse the issues involved and make our choices, whether as students of philosophy, history, education, science or technology; otherwise we shall continue to watch and allow the destruction of the human heritage and the duty we owe to allow the world to see the truth from our perspectives also. The failure of Western tertiary education in African societies, is very obvious in various ways that we have enunciated. But our effort has been mainly to start the ball rolling, so that collectively and individually we may begin to attend to the causes of our impoverishment in the world.

In concluding, it is clear that it is not only in African societies that Western education has failed. It has woefully failed in the West as the many disasters that have befallen Western societies, and humanity as a consequence of that, has shown in the tragedies of greed, war and destruction that humanity now faces. But the reasons for the failure and the type of failure are dissimilar. In United States of America, for example, what has caused the failure of Western education is the attempt by Americans to attain an inhuman utopia - a society where people appropriate liberties but fail to be alive to the responsibilities that attend such liberties. This is what accounts for the savagery that subsist in the American psyche, both officially and individually, leading to the wanton acts of destruction that individual and collective Americans can wreck on others with no feeling for the humanity of these others. While in Africa, the failure of Western education and its tertiary apogee is a consequence of a cognitive dearth - a lack of understanding of the complexity of Western education and Western tertiary education,

leading to the belief that attainment of formal Western educational certification is equivalent to being educated in the real and most important cultural sense of the word.

This has led to the leadership in Africa and her Diaspora selectively embracing the conventions and norms of behaviour of the West wherever these are convenient. Hence, what would be regarded as scandalous in traditional indigenous societies in Africa and contemporary European and American and Japanese societies such as bribery, corruption, graft, and theft in high places, equivalents of the highway robberies by the criminals of lower pedigree or/and robberies of state treasuries using the pen type are now regarded as normal or quasi normal having become the daily diet of the people. And matters are not helped much by religion, as the Western religion of Christianity conceives of the Supreme Being as a long-suffering God, slow to anger and quick to forgive.

The conclusion reached from this discussion is that for Africana societies to transcend the current state of mendicancy, dependence, and collective self-hatred and self-depredation, we need a re-education of our leadership, ourselves and our youth, on the one hand, before we can move on to re-educate the rest of humanity concerning ourselves and our traditions and civilizations, on the other hand. As educationists, academics and scholars we cannot continue to be sanguine about the state of what we call education, and we cannot continue to be ostriches for ever, burying our heads in the sand of shame while pretending out of ignorance that all is well with our societies, for the failure of one is the failure of all, just as the failure of Nigeria as the richest African country mired in the worst kind of kleptocracy, has remained the failure of all black peoples worldwide. For Africana societies to transcend plantocracy, coloniality and neo-coloniality, the real situation of our humanity in the committee of humanities must be appreciated, and we must collectively make amends for the weakness of our social and political institutions and structures which permit the constant recurrence of impoverishing, destructive collective and leadership acts in our polities. And we could start that process of healing and correction through the overhaul of our tertiary educational processes, structures, systems and curricular – retraining our teachers to become innovative thinkers who know what is at stake, that is, what is to be permanently lost if we continue to accept the rejects of the world as the benchmarks of our ambitions, and motivating our students to search for excellence and greatness in all their endeavours.