

## **THE EDUCATIONAL REFORMS-ANOTHER DIMENSION**

Our educational systems should not be viewed as merely consisting of content structure, physical facilities and those human beings who formulate, manage, and administer our educational policies and programmes but more importantly it should be seen as the outgrowth of the wills and aspirations of the citizens and for the moral political, social and the country.

The first people in the world who were believed to have pondered on the meaning of education and its method were the ancient Greeks. The Western European nations traced the origins of their educational thoughts and methods to the ancient Greeks. Of course, the ancient Greeks were not the first people to have developed an educational system.

## **EVOLUTION OF SCHOOLS**

Before the evolution of schools, mothers, fathers and relatives directly carried out the education of the child through to adolescence. It was through imitation and experience and was purely practical. However, when later circumstances made it practically impossible for parents to directly carry out the training and instruction that is education of their children, they began to entrust part of the education of their children into the hands of men of wisdom.

Men who were known to have demonstrated evidence of some skills and knowledge in some areas of desirable human endeavours. These men of wisdom were later called sophists. Socrates was said to be the first ancient Greek sophist. In the bible Solomon as well as Joseph was examples of the sophists. Solomon was proclaimed a wise man because of his wise counseling and Joseph, because he had the skill of interpreting dreams. The concept “wisdom” was synonymous with skills and knowledge.

The modern schools system sprang from the ideas and practices of sophists in imparting knowledge and skills to children for a fee. Some were said to have done this without taking a fee. This system in time came to be regulated and streamlined into what is today called school. In ancient Greece, schooling started at the age of seven and continued, in some cases, to the age of 18 years, before the first exit point.

The ancient Greek believed that the education of the child should start with the body, then the mind and the hand. Education to them was to provide equal opportunities for both the boy and the girl. But they did not believe that everybody should have access to higher education.

The children of the rich started school earlier than those from the poor families. Those from the rich families exited from the school system latest. Greek educational thought showed that education should concern itself with knowledge and skills as well as making the individual a good person.

Education was tailored to closely suit the interests and aptitudes of the individual. This meant that each individual had to receive a type of education that could make the individual develop his/her potentiality. Education, in its true sense, is not to supplant but supplement nature.

One significant fact to note at this point is that before our school education was evolved, the training and instruction the individual received was practical. There was no dichotomy between theory and practice.

Since the introduction of the Western schools into the shores of the geographical area of the present day Ghana, we have not ceased to question it's relevance to our needs. The irrelevance of schools to the needs of majority of schools to the need to majority of our people and Ghana became more perceptible after the attainment independence, hence the persistent education reforms. In September this year, we have started another round of education reform.

On 17th March 1966, barely a month after the 24th February coup de tat the government of the national liberation council appointed a 31 member education Review committee headed by prof. Alex A.Kwapong, the then vice- chancellor of university of Ghana. It was a high-powered committee made up of some of the best-educated people in the country at that time. The composition of the committee testifies the seriousness that the government attached to education. It was also indicative of the government's abhorrence of the state of education then in the country. The belief then was that the standards of education before 1951 had fallen to the lowest level possible and there was an urgent need to arrest the trend.

The recommendations of the committee, in totality, did not amount to reform, since the underlying philosophy of the then education system was not changed, notwithstanding the many good recommendations of the committee, in totality, did not amount to reform, since the underlying philosophy of the then education system was not changed, notwithstanding the many good recommendations the committee made to the government. Some of the recommendations such as the establishment of a unified education Service, council for higher Education, etc were later implemented. The Mills-Odoi commission also recommended a unified Education Service in 1967.

### **THE 1951 ACCELERATED EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT**

The 1951 Accelerated Education Development plan of the Convention peoples' party regime did not constitute a reform of the then education system in the sense that the main essence of the development plan was to expand the provision of Educational infrastructure to provide an opportunity for more pupils and students to have access to formal education. The programme was said to have marked the beginning of the deterioration in the standards of education. The plan made government responsible for paying the salaries of teachers and other education workers. The local Authorities were to provide school buildings and furniture. Thus the state assumed responsibility for education. However, the content and structure of education remained the same.

### **GOVERNMENT TAKES OVER SCHOOLS FROM CHURCHES**

In 1961, Government made primary education fee-free and also took over the running of the schools from the churches. Government in 1963 introduced the supply of free textbooks to pupils, a task which it was unable to discharge well

All these programmes were intended to bring about mass education in

the country, instead of education for the few, and made the state through the Government, the representative of the people, responsible for the primary education and also provided public educational facilities.

Since independence, the first attempt to overhaul the structure and content of pre-university education was made in 1974 with the introduction of the New Structure and Content of education published by the Ministry of Education based on the Dzobo Education Committee Report. That attempt constituted a Reform because the underlying philosophy was different from that of the then existing education system. The Government at the time implemented the programme on a pilot basis.

### ***Implementation of Junior Secondary School Concept***

In 1987, when the Provisional National Defense Council decided to implement that programme in a dramatically modified form, the country then had 118 such pilot Junior Secondary Schools throughout the country. The implementation of the Junior Secondary School programme was not preceded by a public debate. There was no sufficient preparation. As of now, the generality of the Ghanaian public is skeptical about the soundness of the Reform. Notwithstanding that the Reform was good. All what most people knew about the programme was that it was designed to produce artisans. The 1987 Educational Reform made basic education nine years, six year primary school and the three-year Junior Secondary School. Before that time, the country had a ten-year basic education; six years primary education and four-year middle school education as the first exit point from the formal educational system.

However, an opportunity was available for those who could pass the Common Entrance Examinations to go to secondary schools after either six years primary school, or before the completion of the fourth year of the middle school.

With the 1987 Education Reform, the earliest time a pupil could enter secondary school was after 9 years basic education. ‘At the conference of African States held in Addis Ababa in May 1961 on the development of education in Africa, a six-year primary course was accepted to be achieved by African States before 1980.’”

### ***Structure of 1967 Education Reform***

On the structure of Educational System, the 1967 Education Review committee recommended as a long term: ‘[v] ..... a six-year primary school course followed by four years of secondary school education with two years of Sixth Form work leading to a three-year University degree course [ specialized degree courses take four years or more to complete]’” page 45 of the Report.

The evidence so far clearly showed that a number of pupils with six-year primary school course passed the Common Entrance Examination and proceeded to secondary school and thence to the University. If that was so, why waste the time of such gifted children by insisting that they pursue a three-year Junior Secondary School course before having an access to senior secondary school?

As said earlier somewhere in this article, the PNDC drastically modified the New Structure and Content of Education on which the Junior Secondary School concept was based. There were to be lower and upper Senior Secondary School courses after Junior Secondary School but these were surprisingly abandoned and instead only a three-year senior school was introduced.

### ***Introduction of Continuation Schools***

The main problem of the ten-year elementary school programme that the country was used to was what to do with the pupils who could not continue formal schooling to the secondary schools. The solution was to introduce in 1962/63 a Continuation School to cover the last two years of the ten-year programme. This Continuation School concept was endorsed by the Education Review Committee [1967] as stated, in part, in paragraph 72 at page 51 of its Report. ‘The committee considers as sound the idea of rounding off the elementary course with two years of pre-vocational work [for those not entering secondary schools] patterned on the farming and industrial needs of the country’.

The 1987 Educational Reform, especially the senior secondary school, was a blend of the study of the ordinary school subject with pre Vocational and Technical subjects.

After almost twenty years into the Reform we are being told that the Reform did not achieve its intended objectives. This assertion is contained in paragraph 1.4 of the White paper on the Report of the Education Reform Review Committee.

“With the nation-wide implementation of the junior secondary school (JSS) concept since the latest reforms in 1987, the country has faced the specter of a large number of late teenage school leavers majority of whom are deficient in basic numeracy and literacy skill, as well as the purported craftsman and technical skills, and therefore ill-prepare for either formal second cycle education of good standard, or for a life of work and continuous learning for self-improvement”.

Education is about business of life

The idea of blending the ordinary school subject with pre-vocational and technical subjects is not a bad one; after all, true education must not and ought not draw a line between theory and practice. Education after all, is about business of life. However, the big problem is the teaching and learning of pre-vocational and technical subjects require

qualified teachers, expensive equipment, machinery and other consumables for a practical work.

Because these facilities are not easy to obtain, it has been normal for elementary school education to be limited to the study of ordinary school subject, leaving pre-vocational and technical training to apprenticeship outside the school system or to the vocational and technical institutes.

If after twenty years of the introduction and the implementation of the junior secondary school concept we have not been able to provide enough qualified teachers for pre-vocational and technical subjects, equipment, machinery n workshops for pre-vocational and pre-technical subjects at the junior secondary level.

I will urge the government t continue to make determined efforts to make the teaching and learning of those subjects more beneficial to the pupils especially those who have the natural inclination for the study of such subjects. The junior secondary school concept needs to be maintained. It is a system that caters for both those who are gifted for brainwork and those for practical work.

### **RE-INTRODUCE COMMON ENTRANCE EXAMINATION**

Whilst I urge that the system is maintained, I will recommend as another dimension of the reform the re-introduction of the common entrance Examination to be taken at the last year of the six year primary school course by pupils for selection to the senior high school. Those who fail to gain admission into the senior high school will be proceed to the junior high school but with a further right to take the common entrance examination for selection into senior high school. Those pupils who are not able to gain admission into senior high school before completion of the junior high school course will exit from the formal education system.

Senior High School should be of four years and courses that should be available should be almost the same as stated in the White paper. However, it should be called lower senior High school. At the end of the course students will take an examination and those who will be selected will continue their education at Upper Senior High School for two years for preparations to Tertiary education courses.

Tertiary Education Institutions should be free to determine their own admission criteria. We should ultimately aim at getting every pupil to have access to Lower Senior High School.

I also propose that we abolish integrated science and social studies as core subjects; instead every student should be made to study some science and arts subjects. For example, a science student should at least study two arts subjects, like geography and

history. In the same way an arts student should study two science subjects like biology and chemistry.

With the absorption of Kindergarten into the main school system, it will be easy for a pupil at the end of the six- year primary course to pursue a four-year secondary school course and with further two-years preparatory course for selection to pursue a tertiary education for four years or more (for specialized degree courses).

This proposal will save the state substantial financial resources. Again it will offer an opportunity for pupils who can be described as “Academic Winners” to proceed to the tertiary Institutions in a shorter time than we have at the moment.

The education system should change the method of teaching that are normally used in basic and second cycle schools.

### **GES should be transformed and re-focused**

The District Assemblies should be encouraged to own and manage all basic and second cycle institutions within the policies determined by the Ministry of Education. Ghana Education Service should be transformed and refocused to essentially ensure compliance with nationally determined educational standard and provide the needed professional support to the District Assemblies in the management and administration of their school.

Government should re-define the role of Educational Units in the present scheme of things since currently they only duplicate the function of the District of the Ghana Educational Service.

The educational system should enable its direct beneficiaries-pupils and students, to contribute towards their own well-being and ultimately to the well-being of the society.