

Exploring the Gaps Inherent in the Current University Education in South Africa: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT Although many educational pragmatists hold that education is key to open development, a light to chase away darkness and a driver of modernization, civilization and globalization, the aim of this paper is to look at the gaps inherent in the current education system in South Africa, and also to discuss the benefits. The paper has used a review of literature methodology. Findings indicate the following gaps: The education has been found to embrace the following perfidious factors: lack of creativity; suffering from the apartheid residuals; inadequate link between education and self-employment; mismatch between education quality and job market; and its impact on the erosion of cultures. However, education possesses the following benefits: widening the scope of education; acting as a driver of globalization and a tool of investment. The paper recommends: succinct policy implementation in university education; making university education both locally and globalization compliant; having the university education curriculum to match developmental needs of people in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, education acquisition remains a panacea and a driver to many countries' social-economic and political development. This is why the quality of education in development has always been a topical issue for debate. This is because of validated and empirical contention of an inextricable relationship between the quality of education and development. However, the relationship would also be influenced by other factors. For example, a very qualified person may not accrue great dividends if he/she is working in an environment devoid of motivation and unreasonable managers. South Africa, just like many other African countries is not immune to this problem. Delving into the spectrum of South African education, first the country is one of those doing well in its war to fight against illiteracy. The country is fast fulfilling its constitutional obligations and promises it made after dismantling apartheid in 1994 (Republic of South Africa 1996). In fact, the country's literacy level is 89.3 percent, one of the highest in Africa (United Nations 2010). To this end, the constitution

of South Africa section 29(1) (a) guarantees everyone the right to basic education although the constitution does not specify what it really means by basic education. This has seen the country investing heavily in the education development (Berger 2003). However, these efforts and resources do not appear to be accruing the expected dividends. This is because the higher literacy levels are not translating into job creation. Observably, most of the graduates appear to believe they can only wait for white collar jobs, with no any other option. In fact, poverty appears to increasingly become a permanent feature of a huge segment of the South African population. Comparably, when the global community gives very heartbreaking statistics that more than one billion people lives below the global bread line or what used to be called poverty datum line, South African statistics are also heart bruising to indicate that 53.3 percent of its whole population are below this global bread line (Armstrong et al. 2008: 8). The above narrative tells much about the possible development gaps. This is because poverty is anti developmental. Incontrovertibly, many poor people are likely to spend most of their precious time thinking of where their children and themselves will get food, not how to be assets or drivers of economic development. This is why many developmental pragmatists urge governments to first invest in human capital, or human

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resource as a pre requisite for takeoff in development (Todaro and Smith 2006).

Some scholars argue that university education is linked to development. Thus it is a means and an end in achieving meaningful development. Perhaps this is supported by the fact that most developed countries after developing a stronger human capital through training were able to achieve economic take off and economic revolution (Todaro and Smith 2006). However, this also is debatable because some of these countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal have in the recent period been undergoing serious economic malaise sparking questions whether education through training is really a factor of development, and if so to what extent (Manyeruke 2012).

On the other hand, some scholars argue that education is passing down exploitative, uncreative, ill conceived, colonial ideologies which keep on tying Africa to the its former colonies as superior lords (Rodney 1972). Perhaps critically looking at a few countries for example in Africa and evaluating how education addresses the countries problems will attempt to answer, or support the allegation above. To further corroborate the preceding argument, some scholars argue that ineffectiveness in education failing to achieve development is due to internal forces such as failure to implement meaningful education policies, mismatch between education and work place skills requirements, oversupply of skills which are not on demand and undersupply of skills which can move hand in hand with globalisation and a blind eye on self-employment (Bidzakin 2009; Fourie 2013).

Furthermore, scholars who are at par with Becker's human capital theory conjecture that education is an investment which is improving people's occupational status and opportunities in the labour market. Embedded in this notion is the fact that, education improves social and economic development and therefore spurs poverty and improves the wellbeing of the people (Rahim 2006: 856). On the other side of the coin, scholars who are in the same boat with Maslow's hierarchy of needs see nothing wrong with the current education since it is a basic need which is unlocking human potential and at the same time satisfying national development needs (Maslow 1964).

As a result, there is a growing debate about the effectiveness of education on development.

Various theorists and researchers have come up with conflicting conclusions regarding this phenomenon. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to the debate by exploring the effectiveness of university education on development in South Africa.

Problem Statement

It is these researchers' contention that despite the fact that many development pragmatists have shown an inextricable relationship between education, or the quality of education and development, this could be a misleading fallacy that needs to be invalidated through debates and discourses that these researchers would like to embark on. This is because in many cases education has failed to transform the social, economic and political fabric of the society. Observably, education is failing to rearrange society in a way which is immune to oppressive elements and social ills of the society. Rather than being a means and an end in fostering meaningful development, it is misrepresented as an instrument of the labour market which in turn is dehumanising people by treating them as objects of the labour market. South Africa, just like other African countries cannot be immune to this catastrophe. Despite the phenomenon of South Africa investing immensely in education, the society, especially the previously disadvantaged communities are still reeling with poverty and other social ills. To say the least, South Africa, despite being the biggest economy in Africa appear to face challenges of lack of entrepreneurship skills, high levels of unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity. To this end, this research paper aims to contribute to debates and discourses on critiquing the benefits and gaps inherent in the current education system in South Africa.

Operational Definition

Youth

According to the South African National Youth policy (NYP) and the National youth Act of 1996's youth is people between the age of 15 and 35 (Republic of South Africa 2008b).

Panacea and Perfidy

While in real world the word panacea means or implies an answer or solution to all present-

ing difficulties, it is in this paper operationally taken to mean a situation which is satisfactory and desirable. Also, while in real world, the word perfidy refers to a state of deception, disloyalty or treachery, it is operationalized in this paper to mean a bad or undesirable state of affairs.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses document analysis. Document analysis is whereby the study use facts or information which is already there which may have been used for other purposes (Shepherd 2002: 44). Text books, internet, government records, newspapers, education websites, journals and reports have been used to explore the effectiveness of education on development. Document analysis has been used because it is inexpensive in the sense that it uses readily available information at little or no cost (Bartels and Pizzaro 2011: 57).

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The Perfidy of Current Education System on Development in South Africa

Lack of Creativity

Statistically, education is improving and hence countries are advancing, although at a snail's pace to achieve the Millennium Development Goal number two that envisages seeing countries achieve universal primary education (United Nations 2012). Despite immense investment in pursuing the policy of massification of education, effectuating the merger of formerly technikons into the well established universities, or making them autonomous universities, the production of many graduates does not appear to alleviate the challenges of improving service delivery in the society, or creation of the jobs. This means that the education system is failing or has failed to engineer creativity so that the graduates could adequately tap the resources for their employability or to contribute to national development. Therefore, the situation has not been able to change the lives of the formerly marginalized communities. Expectedly, the increase in the number of graduates should be seen to overthrow the development ills especially in South Africa. This points out that there is a fundamental problem or a mismatch between

the improvement or the development of South African's education system and the development of social and economic dimensions of the country. These authors point to the fact that the curriculum may not be effective enough to spur the creativity of the graduates of the system. This has created a situation in which if a graduate cannot secure a white collar job, he/she stays desperately at home in the same manner the one who has not gone to school would do. This is a big flaw of the current education system (Centre for Development and Enterprise 2008: 17). For instance, some graduates cannot even organise creative events at their work places. This is one of the reasons which is causing high rate of unemployment because employers are interested in creative employees rather than uncreative paper qualified graduates (Olaniyan and Oke-makinde 2008). In these researchers' contention, education without creativity is a recipe for disaster in development.

Incontrovertibly, acquisition of education should be expected to mobilize the creation of jobs and therefore change the lives of people who have acquired education, especially at the degree level. People who are adequately educated should be able to be creative and therefore create employment for themselves and others. This would help address of the worst global challenge of spiralling unemployment happening in both developed and developing countries. For example in 2012, youth unemployment rates increased to 75 million from 71 million in 2007 (Ortiz and Cummins 2012). Currently, global youth unemployment rate is at 43.7 percent and about 152 million youth are surviving on less than \$1.25 per day or what is being referred to as breadline. In fact global statistics indicate that over one billion people in the world live below this global bread line (Chen and Ravallion 2008). In Europe, for example, youth unemployment is two times higher than adult unemployment (Quintini et al. 2007). In Zimbabwe, youth unemployment is at 90 percent, Egypt, 24 percent, Pakistan 10 percent, Uganda 6 percent, Bulgaria 39 percent (Fares et al. 2007). One in every four youth in South Africa is unemployed (National Treasury 2011: 11). This implies that there is lack of creativity in current education system. Unemployment is a development ill and wastage of resources because people who are supposed to be contributing to economic development end up being idle (Mwinga 2012).

Instead of concentrating on paper qualification, university education should create critical thinkers who can transform and solve development problems of Africa in a sustainable way. In South and in the contention of these researchers, uncreative education seems to have its root causes from apartheid.

Apartheid Residuals

Despite the re-education efforts after apartheid, residues of capitalism are still present in the South African education system. During apartheid, the Bantu Education Act number (47) of 1953 officialised the offering of low quality education to African youth so as to bar them from competing for quality jobs with whites (Republic of South Africa 1970). In other words, low quality education, poor education facilities, foreign curriculums and use of Afrikaans as medium of instructions for Mathematics, Social sciences and Geography were instituted as a way of lowering the education standards for Africans which in turn lowered the African's capabilities. This led to many students turning violent with the result of the police killing 23 students (Ndlovu 1998).

According to the constitution of South Africa section 29(1) (a), everyone has the right to basic education. However, the constitution is vague in that it does not define basic education. Furthermore, the term basic education is artificial in the sense that it was adopted from the Jonntien conference in 1990 under the influence of international giants such as United Nations (Calderhead 2011). To this end, it has been excessively argued that using education system which was successful elsewhere which does not meet the local conditions will not solve local development problems of South Africa. Though South Africa has tried to reverse the education imbalances of apartheid in one way or the other, the residuals of apartheid and the malfunctioning of the post apartheid education system dovetail the murky and moody waters of education quality of post-apartheid in South Africa.

Inadequate Link between Education and Self-employment

Education which train people for self-employment has a potential of creating jobs but self-employment is inadequately catered for in the education curriculum of South Africa (Fourie

2013). Deeper exploration of the education system of South Africa shows that misrepresentation of education as a tool for formal employment has exacerbated the unemployment problems of people, but mainly youth in South Africa. For instance, currently, the country has over 600 000 unemployed graduates (Mbanjwa 2012). This implies that the education system has reduced youth to objects of the labour market. Instead of the education equipping the youth with meaningful self-employment skills to facilitate starting their own ventures, the education system only glues the graduates to thinking only of white collar jobs. The minds are never made flexible to consider various options of tapping and exploring the indigenous resources (Kang'ethe 2011). These are some of the serious gaps inherent within the academic systems of many countries of African continent. Countries need to restructure the educational curricula so that they may be responsive to the needs of the people as well as facilitating the exploitation of the natural resources (Kang'ethe 2011).

Though entrepreneurship is being encouraged and courses related to entrepreneurship are being introduced in various disciplines of a sore of the universities, the knowledge acquired is still more theoretical than practical making it still difficult to motivate the graduates to go the route of venturing into the business world. The million dollar question which needs a million dollar answer is why the government is not introducing meaningful practical courses that will change the South African mindset on white collar jobs. In these researchers' contention, a paradigm shift is necessary to make the youths open and flexible minded about employment options. The countries and therefore education system need to prepare people to make their jobs to employ themselves and possibly others. Perhaps also the government needs to change some of the policies to discourage the approach of mechanization and instead have the investors adopt a less mechanized form of labour. This is pertinent to solving employment challenges. But even if people are encouraged to pursue business and self employment, and this could be a panacea because these people are likely to possibly run away from social ills such as crime, unfortunately the contribution of those in self employment in South Africa has been very low (Kerr et al. 2013). Regrettably also, small scale entrepreneurship creates low quality and short term jobs. But

people of South Africa need quality and sustainable jobs, not just jobs. However, the education systems seem to be concentrating on the symptoms instead of solving the problem of employment from the grass roots (Centre for Development and Enterprise 2012). However, education which is linked to formal employment and small scale entrepreneurship is a step in the right direction.

Mismatch between Education Quality and Job Market Requirements

The existence of a mismatch between education system and the workplace skills requirements is the other challenge in South Africa that make South African education to be crucified, or open to serious examination (Siwela 2011). Embedded in this notion is that, what people learn does not go hand in hand with the labour market requirements. This is because of probably the fact that as modernization and technological advancement, creativity and globalisation, and market liberalisation take toll, these have demanded huge skills development and versatility. With the curriculum restructuring and development taking a snail's pace in South Africa and many other countries of the developing part of the world, many graduates have been incompetent to handle the imperatives of the job market (Subotzky 2000; Kraak 2001). This has been further worsened by oversupply of degrees which are not on demand and undersupply of skills which are on demand. For instance, there is undersupply in engineering and medical skills and oversupply in the degrees in the disciplines of social sciences (Burns et al. 2010). Perhaps this imbalance has presented a very unfortunate state of employment dynamics. On one hand, the country is looking for people with scarce skills such as engineers and individuals of medical backgrounds; and skills such as social work; while on the other hand the country suffers from graduate glut (South African Council for Social Service Professions 2009). It is a sophisticated scenario that requires serious examination of the education system and its management. For example, in South Africa, the rate of graduates unemployment increased by 50 percent from 1995 to 2005 (Development Policy Research Unit Policy Brief Series 2007). Currently, there are over 600 000 unemployed graduates (Mbanjwa 2012).

Erosion of Culture

Though education may be viewed as a lighter giver, a tool of civilization, modernization, eurocentrism, westernization and globalization (Kang'ethe 2014a), it also has a negative impact towards cultures. Cultures are important and integral components of development. According to Kang'ethe (2009), culture is the mirror of the society, in the sense that it represents the society's thinking and cherished values and ideologies which are passed from generation to generation. However, education especially gender related curriculum is wiping away culture. Women are no longer submissive to their husbands and this is causing many divorces thereby increasing HIV/AIDS and child headed families. Biologically, women and men are different. Although also influenced by patriarchal mindset, cultures reinforce sexual based role differentiation. However, education is importing western education to African education and this is turning to be a recipe for disaster. To some extent, education is helping woman to be financially independent (Cameron 2013). Although this is a positive aspect of women empowerment, it poses challenges of societal stability in that women no longer feel they should toe the cultural dictates of being under men. Women have therefore been agitating for recognition and fair treatment through the lenses of human rights.

These researchers, although human rights advocates, have to face facts and accept that the phenomenon of women empowerment is weakening the norms and values embedded in cultures. However, the perspective of one is that it is important to maintain the African cultures intact in order to maintain social cohesion and discouraging social vices such as divorce, and generally moral decadence (Kang'ethe 2014b). Then in her view, education achievement is also weakening the cultures. She therefore considers cultures a panacea that needs to be jealously guarded. Contrastingly, the other one considers having a balance between women empowerment and maintenance of cultures. Both are good and a balance of each one of them needs to be respected.

Benefits of Education

Widening the Scope of Human Capabilities

Inarguably, education expands human capabilities. Thus it gives people freedom to make

best choices on the alternatives available for development. It sharpens individuals' minds, ways of doing things, their vision and perspectives (Rahim 2006). In other words, education allows people to approach diverse ways of lives efficiently and effectively. This means that they are likely to achieve the goals they set with some degree of ease, and also with a possibility of lessening the costs of achieving their goals (Lawson and Spours 2011:10). This is succinctly evident because with the ushering in of modernization, eurocentrism, modernization and globalization, activities such as communication have been made faster, trade has become easier, especially due to massive application of information technology. This is why Kang'ethe views globalization, which also includes modernization and development as an engine of social and economic development (Kang'ethe 2014a). To say the least, globalization has been expedited by pace in education and South Africa is one of the countries that continue to enjoy the fruits of globalization especially in its farming industry.

Besides making people to increasingly afford decent livelihoods, education allows invention, rationality and modernism. Education is also viewed as a tool of civilization. Thus education has both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits. For instance, it empowers the people to know their rights especially in the labour market (Rahim 2006: 859). People who are adequately employed are likely to understand the labour law conventions and therefore make informed decisions when handling labour related deprivations. According to convection 87 and 98 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), employees should not be discriminated at workplaces and their rights should be recognized (ILO Conference 1998). This implies that education has the power to sow the seed of resistance to underdevelopment. To say the least, lack of education is a recipe for disaster in the labour market because more often, the workers are ill equipped to negotiate for fair wages, and usually only qualifies for a lesser pay. Perhaps this is why most people in South Africa who could not get access to decent education due to the architecture of apartheid have perpetually been in appalling states of poverty. Education, therefore, is a tool of liberation, whether politically, economically, or socially. It is this realization that has made the government to embark on serious policy changes allowing massification of education. Without

decent education, the goals of redressing the deeds and unfairness of apartheid cannot be achieved (Kraak 2001; Subotzky 2000).

Education is a Driver of Globalisation

Perhaps the realization by many governments especially of African countries that they cannot overcome poverty and many facets of development led them to policy wise and resource wise embark on heavy educational investment. In fact, in many countries of African continent, the budget that goes to education constitutes the lion's share of their national budgets (Dlaska 2013). In South Africa, for instance, education is one of the sectors in which the government spends billions and billions of rands. For example, the education sector budget increased from 207 billion rands in 2012 to 232 billion rands in 2013 (Butler 2013). This is especially to drive the massification of policy (Kang'ethe 2013). Education serves as an important ingredient of globalization because of its capacity to sharpen people's minds and therefore afford them huge opportunities to manage and run sophisticated machinery, come up with innovative ways of doing things, and be in a position to tap and harness resources both effectively and efficiently. Education also enhances people's capacities to understand various languages with ease and therefore enable the educated to easily mingle with a larger segment of the global population. Perhaps this is why in countries such as Botswana, students are increasingly learning languages such as Chinese as a preparation to enhance communication with Chinese in the students' future. A well educated individual is a global leader, is one equipped with communication skills as well as reading skills (Dlaska 2013). Since no country can develop in isolation, education is the most single tool that can break this barrier. Perhaps why the western countries continue to get the lion's share of globalization is because its members are well skilled and therefore position themselves to benefit more from trade and other global benefits. However, these researchers feel that globalization may be favouring the rich countries than the poor countries and therefore see globalization, although viewed as a panacea by many, as also a tool to of capitalism and imperialism. These views notwithstanding, if it were not for education, maybe people could be still living the early

stoneage lifestyle of writing on stones (Emeka 2013: 298).

Education as a Tool of Investment

Education is an investment in the sense that it enables the educated to get good jobs and therefore improve their lives and those of their families. Perhaps this is why the global community upon drawing the 8 areas, or Millennium Development Goals that guide countries as they strive towards eradicating forces of under development, positioned the need to achieve universal primary education as goal number two. No country is working hard as South Africa to ensure that all its citizens are educated so that they can redress the past unfairness of the apartheid that made the black majority not to get equal quality of education as the whites (Butler 2013). As strategies to redress these gaps, the government in its pursuit of revolutionizing the state of education saw the integration and merger of the erstwhile technikons into the bigger and established universities while some were made autonomus institutions. This is the educational paradigm shift that the country has been undergoing in the last few years (Kraak 2001; Subotzky 2000). However, these researchers are not contented with the quality of education especially the primary and secondary level ones. Apparently, the matric students being admitted to higher education appear very much unprepared to the challenges of tertiary education. Perhaps this could be a contributory factor to poor performance of some of the universities especially that take a bulk of the students from humble socio-economic backgrounds and also from areas that educational infrastructure is also weak.

Theoretical Frame

Human Capital Theory

This study will be informed by human capital theory. This is because for people to live a decent life, they need to expand their capabilities through education (Rahim 2006). In other words, the human capital theory put people at the centre of development by treating them as means and not an end to themselves through education. Thus through human capital theory education will develop people by people through people leading to sustainable human

and economic development. Succinctly, human capital is the investment people make in themselves through education so as to enhance their economic productivity (Olaniyan and Okemakinde 2008:158). The human capital theory dates back in 1961. It was formulated by Schultz and further developed by Becker in 1964. Human capital theory is relevant in this because it suggests that investing in people through education would give them skills and relevant knowledge to facilitate productivity in the domain they are embarked on. This, then, could positively contribute to raising their incomes and possibly their standards of living (Becker 1994). The human capital theory has been chosen because it looks at education deeply. Thus it is not the number of years or degrees that matters, but it is the effectiveness and efficiency of the skills, creativity and attitudes towards work that determines an individual's competitiveness in the labour market and also in solving social economic development needs of a country. However, human capital may not achieve great dividends if other important factors are not in place. It should therefore not be viewed as a panacea to spur the much needed development. It needs to be complimented by other developmental based theories. The development of human capital and its impact can be increased if applied in harmony with other factors of production. For instance, without a conducive political goodwill, even individuals with effective and efficient human capital may not achieve great dividends. The other loophole is that human capital assumes as if people and the economies are homogeneous. The truth is people and the economy is heterogeneous (Fagerlind and Saha 1997).

CONCLUSION

The role of education and especially its quality in driving development of especially poor countries cannot be overemphasized. These researchers agree with some contention from some developmental pragmatists who suggest that development in Africa is possible and feasible, if people have the right skills and education. The African countries' education which is discredited to be of lower quality compared to that of the western world is blamed on the fact that their curricula is borrowed from the west and yet their developmental needs are not the same. As South Africa continue to restructure its educa-

tion system, the architects need to bear in mind that the use of the western crafted curricula could be the main challenge bedevilling the countries quality of education. This paper prompts a bell ringing process for South Africa and other countries to consider examining their education curricula and possibly restructure them to be responsive to the needs of its citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Succinct Policy Implementation in Education

These researchers suggest pragmatism in terms of implementing development policies and programmes. This means that theory and practice must be compatible. In other words, what the education system proposes to achieve should not be merely a lip service, rather it should be implemented. This challenges the government of South Africa to relook at the implementation of its very splendid developmental policies such as the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training and the South African Schools 1996 Act. These policies envisaged education system producing creative graduates who can contribute meaningfully to development. It would also be critical to examine the extent to which the aspirations and the goals of these acts have been achieved.

Education to be Globalization Compliant

Education should move hand in hand with globalisation. Thus, there is need for a continuous network between the education and the global needs so as to meet the developmental needs of a country. For instance, education which is linked to globalisation will supply the relevant skills on the job market and thereby avoiding oversupply or undersupply of skills. A link between education and globalisation will allow engagement of education with the social realities thereby causing positive social, economic and political development.

Education Curriculum to Match Developmental Needs

There is need for restructuring and reorganisation of the whole education system so as to create a feasible roadmap to meaningful development in South Africa and in Africa in general.

Failure to completely restructure the colonial education system so as to interlock it with development and global needs will further bury Africa deeper in her unbecoming grave instead of halting her from marginalisation and development of under development. Furthermore, South Africa should stop copying the education system of the western countries. In fact education should be able to solve the local development needs of a particular country. The curriculum should be a consultative one, a visionary one that will be crafted by those who are development conscious and with the interests of the economies of the countries at their hearts. Africa should learn a lesson from Europe. Europe is not successful because of copying foreign theories, but because of dealing with reality. In these researchers' contention and belief, it is time for African countries to take the route of indigenization. They should look for solutions of their problems in their background and also make curricula and approaches that are home grown. In terms of education, these researchers challenges against the notion of Africa perpetually being used by the developed countries as a human laboratory where those countries tests things which are detrimental to development

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