EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PRE-COLONIAL AND
COLONIAL ERAS IN KENYA

ZACHARY M. MOSOTI

Abstract
The study provides a description of education and training during the pre-colonial and colonial periods up to 1963 when Kenya gained independence. It shows how what people used to do can be seen as education even when colonizers did not think it was education or training. It uses chronological approach first then thematic, and then chronological, again within themes.

INTRODUCTION
In all societies throughout human history, people have educated their children. The concern for the preparation of the next generation is one of the fundamental characteristics of human civilization. From one generation to the other, we seek to pass on what we know and have learned, hoping to ensure not merely the survival of our offspring but of our culture as well. This is equally true in the African context before and after colonization.

However, not much is known about the training scene in Africa. In particular, the growing interest in training and how it relates to what is happening in the developed world is not documented (Akin-Ogundjeji, 1987). There is no adequate documentation of the history and scope of education and training in Africa, and in Kenya in particular, especially before the coming of the European colonizers. There is, however, some documentation regarding education in general after the Europeans came to Kenya. This study reports available information regarding the status of education and training in Kenya before and after the coming of the colonialists.

Pre-Colonial Period
Human Resource Development (HRD), as known in the U.S.A is barely starting in Kenya. But HRD as a means of preparing individuals to fit into their societies by being efficient and productive members is as old as man. In Africa, including Kenya, informal education that is practical starts very early in life, when

ZACHARY M. MOSOTI is an Associate Professor of Management, School of Business, United States International University – Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.

International Journal of Research in Education Vol. 8, No. 1 © 2011 by The Development Universal Consortia. All Rights Reserved.

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children are taught their respective roles in societies. The intention always has been to help people perform their duties and responsibilities better than they would have without that informal education.

**Technical Education and Training among Africans (Kenyans)**

Technical training as an art and science began in Kenya a long time ago. Long before arrival of the Europeans, Kenyans knew how to build their houses, fashion agricultural implements and make spears, knives, hoes, axes, cooking utensils and water containers. Kenya’s ancient art and technical skills made the life of our people relatively more comfortable to the degree allowed by their own natural environment and skill competencies. Traditionally, these skills were passed from father to son, from mother to daughter and within the family or clan in the form of an apprentice-ship system (Okaka, 1996).

According to Reagan (2000), traditional African societies are, by and large, oral ones. This is true even where an established written language exists, such as with Swahili, Zulu, Xhosa and so on. Writing about traditional education in East Africa, Mazrui and Wagan (1985) noted that: “Yet another characteristic of most indigenous systems of education in East Africa is that they are based on oral tradition rather than the written ones. This is not to suggest that the written tradition has been entirely absent. On the contrary, both the Amharic literary culture and the Kiswahili literary culture are centuries old. But the most “tribal” educational systems in Eastern Africa operated on the basis of supremacy of the oral tradition, with only a minor role for the written word” (p. 40).

An important aspect of traditional education in the African context has, therefore, been concerned with teaching children the oral tradition, as well as helping to learn to use language creatively and effectively. In essence, such learning is a central feature of the intellectual training of the African child. In fact, the kind of African education and training before the coming of any foreigners was complete. It was complete in the sense that children were taught social norms and matters of sex, by their grandparents, aunts and uncles as was necessary; they were taught how to become adults; they were taught how to be productive and feed their families, which was, according to me, vocational education.

**The Use of Proverbs in Learning and Development**

This subject suggests that proverbs, riddles and sayings were used to teach Africans to show some intellectualism in the ability to say or communicate by an extraordinary mind. Children were made to believe that their ancestors gave proverbial sayings and a good use of them means you are as good as the ancestors were.

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Reagan (2000) supported this view, saying that the basic idea underlying proverbs is that such sayings provide succinct, easily remembered summaries of important ideas and experiences that are part of the shared cultural knowledge of the community. The proverbs embody the wisdom and experience of a people lacking written records in a concise and even often amusing form. It is also a way of winning an argument.

According to Lebega (2005), proverbs provide a means of educating people about justice, principled leadership, good neighborliness, collective action, freedoms, sharing servility, and cronyism. This shows how important proverbs are to the African community as a means of communication.

As described by Reagan (2000), this is knowledge. Knowledge is to some degree relative; it is both reasonable and appropriate to talk about multiple perspective of reality. Knowledge he added, “is constructed by each individual. In other words knowledge is not something that is out there that we need to grasp; rather this is something that we ourselves build based on our own background, experiences, prior understandings and the data before us (p.7)”.

One of the central features of traditional education throughout Africa is its concern with the formation of the child’s character regarded as moral education. Fafunwa (1974), in discussing the education and training of the Yoruba of Nigeria, described this concern with character formation as the cornerstone of African education and training. Moumouni, (1968) agreed: “Moulding character and providing moral quantities are primary objectives in traditional African education. Almost all the different aspects of education of the child and adolescent aim towards this goal, to a greater or lesser degree. In the family, parents concern themselves with the bearing, manners, honesty and integrity of the child. Outside the house, games, the society of his friends in the same group, and the demands they make on each other constitute a real source of character building. Sociability, integrity, honesty, courage, solidarity, endurance, ethics and above all the concept of honor are, among others, the moral qualities constantly demanded, examined, judged and sanctioned in ways which depend on the intellectual level and capacities of the child and adolescent (p.22)”.

Among most African communities, especially the Kikuyu of Kenya, it is the responsibility of the mother to teach girls house chore duties, good manners and honesty. It is a father’s responsibility to teach young boys traditionally, male-related duties, such as taking care of animals in the home, farming and use of farming equipment. The same sentiments are true among the Kisii people of Kenya. We can talk of initiation into adulthood, done as an education process. Although it is true that circumcision of women is being faced out because of the influence of
Christianity and education by NGOs and the government, it is still cherished by many especially in the rural areas. Through circumcision of males and females, an adolescent undergoes a formal social transition into adulthood. Before undergoing this initiation, one has to satisfy the community that he/she is ready to go through the initiation process. The night before circumcision day, there is what could be termed as training session for the big event of moving up the ladder to adulthood. Regarding initiation, Raum (1967) noted, “the first thing that strikes an educationist is that initiation is a tremendous pedagogic effort. There is the ritual isolation of the company of initiads in camp set apart ‘in the wilderness’. There is the appointment of the requisite personnel: the master of the rite, or owner of the lodge; teachers of different rank; the operator; assistants and supervisors; and the carrier of food to the camp. The master of the rite has to be a man of charisma to be able to transmit special qualities to the inmates of the camp; teachers and assistants must be ritually pure (pp.99-100)”.

Thus while the situation was informal, it was well organized with specific responsibilities distributed to people.

Vocational Aspects of Traditional Education

One of the mistakes that early Europeans made in Africa was assuming that they brought education to an entirely uneducated people. They claimed that, before their arrival in Africa, all the young were left in total ignorance. They also argued that, if there was any learning at all before the arrival in Africa, it was by the young imitating the old (Smith, 1934). If only literacy and formal western schooling constituted education, they were right; but, as education is a preparation for living in the society into which one is born they were profoundly wrong (Sifuna, 1976). For, in the deepest sense, African indigenous education was a true education—true in the sense that it carried the same meaning then as it is today. It was strongly adapted to the environment, and its aims were: “to conserve the cultural heritage of family, clan and tribe; to adapt children to their physical environment and teach them how to use it; to explain to them their own future and that of their community depended on the perpetuation and understanding of their tribal institution, of laws, language and values they had inherited from the past (Castle, 1996, p.39)”.

This was basically the purpose of western education that was superimposed on African communities.

According to Mazrui and Wagan (1985), in African communities, sex education was important for both boys and girls, but other aspects of domestic preparation could be gender specific. In some societies, the cultivation of land was part of the preparation of women, while control over the animals was a prerogative of men. In addition, women were called upon to acquire the traditional
skills of housekeeping, ranging from child rearing to cooking. This can be regarded as a form of vocational training as the goal was to improve performance and be productive to feed the community and family.

As Devissé (1985) added: “If to all this we add the self-evident fact that most of what we know is learned outside school, informally and through life, it may be wondered whether formal in-school education is anything but an immense deceit. The school is not the only and probably not the principal place of education, but it has enjoyed a growing monopoly of the transmission of knowledge to be ‘modern’ and pragmatic (p. 91)”.

Preparation of children for their future economic roles in the society is an important element in traditional African educational thought and practice. To some extent, of course, many vocational skills and knowledge are acquired simply by observation, imitation and participation as the child interacts with his or her parents on an everyday basis (Reagan, 2000). This is the case, for instance, for many agricultural and domestic types of activity. For other occupations in traditional societies, however, various kinds of apprenticeship are employed.

Fafunwa (1974) stated that, generally speaking, vocational education in traditional African education has been divided on the basis of occupation type into three broad categories; agriculturally-related occupations, trades and crafts and professions. Agricultural activities have been the basis for the vast majority of traditional agricultural societies, although some groups such as the Maasai, Pokots and Turkana of Kenya have relied on animal husbandry instead. Agricultural knowledge and skills have been passed on from one generation to the next, most often by involving children in all aspects of agricultural production from early on. Gradually, children are given increasing responsibilities as they become proficient at the tasks related to agricultural production, often being given their own small farm to tend.

Ogundijo (1970) noted several important features of indigenous apprenticeship practices, not the least of which is that children were not free to choose the trade of their liking, for they were bound to follow the guidance of their parents. To gain more effective training, parents often appreciated their children to their relatives, friends and competent craftsmen. Okeke (1991), commenting on the same topic, added that, not only were trades and crafts learned through the apprenticeship system, but so, too, were the professional occupations of traditional African societies. Included under the general category of professional occupations were such roles as “doctors, priests, witch doctors (traditional healers), civil servant, village heads, chiefs and kings, tax collectors, judges, messengers, shrine keepers, soldiers, etc” (p.21). To this day, traditional healers in Africa provide an important alternative to western medicine that is a socially and psychologically powerful alternative, especially in rural areas.
Sifuna (1976) provided practical examples of how the Luo, Kikuyu and Luhya communities of Kenya had their own systems of vocational education, with aims, content and methods that served them as well as any other community. Explaining the Luo system in particular, Odinga (1967) pointed out how the children were awakened by adults to go and milk cows; tie the animal near the granaries; dig the ground cleared by their fathers; work in groups supervised by their fathers; release the cattle for their stakes and take them into the grazing field, but they were always watched by elders who would chastise them if they neglected their duties. By midday the women returned to the village to prepare food and cultivate the vegetable plots assisted by the girls. And “in the afternoon the elders went back to the land to clear the areas we would have to dig the following day, and some boys were taken with them to learn how best to clear the bush” (p.8).

Such was the rigorous training to which Luo children were exposed. For the boys, other training included building houses or granaries. Sifuna (1974) stated that Luo indigenous education embraced formal methods of teaching through stories, legend, riddles and myths. Odinga (1966) summed up one of these methods of teaching as follows: “when evening was over we sat at the feet of the elders...and the elders instructed us about our duties and told stories, which were one of the two sources of education in the village. The other source was the harps or the harpists who played an important role in the community. The harpist learned at the feet of the elders and expressed the people’s philosophy in the musical and poetic language (p.9)”.

From this short analysis, it can be deduced that the Luo indigenous education was vocational and based on the roles that the children were later to play in the community. It stemmed from the physical and human environment (Sifuna, 1976). This analysis reminds me of the kind of training that my father gave me when I was growing up. I remember after my circumcision, that he sat me down and lectured me about having become an adult and what it meant. He was in essence, reminding me of the kind of training I had received the night before the circumcision day; he was traditionally not supposed to be present during his son’s initiation, but my uncles, cousins and senior relatives were present. However, this time my father went a step further and showed me how to slaughter chicken, goats and cows for meat. As he told me, I was now a man, and I should be equipped to take his place if we had guests in his absence.

To qualify this education as vocational training, an Expert Group Meeting discussing human resources and development planning in Africa in 1973 said that many participants thought it necessary to study the traditional African societies of the past in order to solve the crisis that many countries were experiencing in
education (I.D.E.P, 1973). Unemployment and underemployment were unknown in traditional societies. The economic functions of the traditional system should, therefore, be studied and efforts made to develop traditional technology that could be integrated into international technology of human resource development.

The Colonial Period, 1900-1963

This colonial period has been divided into two sections. Firstly, the period beginning 1900 and ending 1945 (second world war) and the second part from 1945 to 1963 (independence). In both cases, I have delved into the content related to HRD in Kenya as it related to TVET.

Early Colonial Education and Training 1900s to 1945 (Second World War)

Vocational education and training started during colonial rule when the white man believed that Africans should not receive the same type of education as the whites, i.e., education that would lead to a university education and white collar jobs. Therefore, they made sure that the Africans would always receive an education that would qualify them for manual jobs. This resulted in Africans rejecting technical and vocational education training (TVET) when they needed preparation for a job, turning to it only as a last resort. Though the government has tried to address this problem, this attitude towards TVET still remains to certain extent.

Systems of education inherited by the newly independent nations of Africa in the early 1960s had been designed to serve the colonial and minority interests. Overall provision was grossly inadequate to the requirements of modern nationhood, with little more than one-third of the relevant age group enrolled in primary schools, less than three percent in secondary schools and a minute fraction in the few institutions of higher learning education that then existed on the continent (Court & Kinyanjui, 1985).

The colonialists' first concern—far from providing an education that would weld together colonized communities that would present an obvious threat—was to set up a system of schooling that met their own needs. In Africa, this European education took a different shape, blatantly withholding training in the full use of men's and women's intellectual and critical faculties. Despite its self-serving nature, this education was presented as modern, new, and innovative, thereby discrediting traditional training methods (Devisse, 1985).

The coming of the Europeans and the decision to build the Uganda railway, which attracted Indian traders and laborers, were instrumental in training artisans and craftsmen at Kabete Native Industrial Training Depot (NITDs) starting in 1924. The Christian missionaries brought in technicians and made an effort to train
Kenyans in different skills to assist in the maintenance of the needed services and their operations. Such places as Mumias, Kikuyu, and Machakos were some of the earliest sites of technical training (Okaka, 1996).

Mbугua (2002) pointed out that industrial education in Kenya is traced back in history to around 1925 when the Colonial Office issued its first statement on education policy to the effect that education should render the individual more efficient and promote advancement of the community as a whole through the advancement of agriculture, development of native industries, improvement of health, training of people in the management of their own affairs and the circulation of the ideals of citizenship and service. However, Africans generally resented this type of vocational education, as it was perceived to be meant for the less gifted and in some ways inferior. It was informally labeled “education for the servitude”. The implementation of the policy gave rise to the establishment of Craft Training Centers, commonly known as Native Industrial Training Depots (NITDs). The first of the type was built at Kabete.

During the missionary settlement in Kenya, the Church Missionary Society, (CMS) started what it called a partnership between religion, education and training. They aimed at creating self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing churches in each of the missionary fields. The necessity for educated leadership in an indigenous church led to such an emphasis on the training within a newly developed native school, the most competent instrument for achieving this goal (Sifuna, 1976).

Under the cover of economic self-sufficiency and as a means of evangelizing Africans, agriculture and industry were introduced. The mission transferred to Africa a curriculum and methods designed to meet the needs of the British working class. The so-called educational needs of the working class, or, more generally, the poor, were thought to consist of reading, writing and sometimes arithmetic, but above all religion. Complementary to this was industrial or technical education (Strayer, 1971).

The CMS saw industrial education as a way of disciplining Africans. Industrial education was felt to be particularly suited to Africans due to what the Europeans believed were inherent disabilities the Africans suffered. Their schools, therefore, included manual work, agricultural and technical training and reading and writing Kiswahili (Sifuna, 1976). TVET started long before independence and that technical industrial education made economic and administrative sense-to train a skilled class of workers who would keep up the habit of daily work.
Specific Content and Schedule of Colonial Education and Training

To succeed in offering this kind of education, experimental grant were offered the government to certain mission schools for technical and vocational education; the Department of Education was founded in 1911. By 1912, industrial training in basic skills, such as smithing, carpentry, agriculture and typing, was successfully underway (Sorren, 1969).

When the colonial government decided to search for the type of education that was needed, they asked for written answers from 18 white settlers (all of whom were residents of Limuru). The question was: Will you give your views of native education? The answers were as follows:

1. To be considered only after provision for European education is complete.
2. Industrial education or trade apprenticeships
3. Agricultural apprenticeship
4. To be taught to work
5. The three R’s
6. Morality-honesty
7. Cleanliness
8. Religious education
9. Educate him to develop the country (Scalon, 1944:22)

In light of these views, the European Commission of Education, relative to the nature of native education, said: “...for education to have effect it is implied that the education given must be of the right kind. For natives, education should be on technical lines as many witnesses have recommended but there appears to be a fear that if any literacy education is given, the child educated would be ruined and will look forward to clerkship-and similar occupations rather than entry into the field of labor (Education Commission, 1919:7)”.

This European commission recommended the following daily routine that was followed in a typical school day during the said colonial period and was as follows:

6 a.m. Ringing bell, air blankets
6.20 a.m. Roll call (time here seems confusing)
6.15 to 7 a.m. Sweeping dormitories, dinning room, classrooms, offices, e.t.c.
7.15 a.m. Breakfast (maize meal)
7.30 a.m. Dormitory inspection
7.45 a.m. Morning prayers
8 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. Classroom instruction
12.20 p.m. Lunch
1.30 p.m. Bathing and parade (lining up for inspection by teacher on duty)
2 to 4 p.m. Farm and garden work, building etc.
4.30 to 5.30 p.m. Organized games (Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursday s-silent on other days)
6.00 p.m. Supper
6.30 to 8 p.m. Indoor games
8.30 p.m. Roll call, Evening prayers
9.15 p.m. Lights out (Sifuna, 1976, pp. 112-113)

School activities took 1,650 minutes and were portioned out as follows:
100 minute drawing
240 minutes arithmetic
200 minutes reading
145 minutes writing
600 minutes handicrafts and building
225 minutes physical exercises
90 minutes free, used to make up arrears in any subject
50 minutes recreation (Sifuna, 1976, p. 113)

The number of minutes for handicrafts and building exceed reading, writing and arithmetic combined. The emphasis was on manual work rather than literacy education. For example, the whole afternoon is scheduled for farm and garden work and building.

The white masters did not want Africans to receive intellectual education because they would start demanding their rights and eventually their independence. The schools that were built during colonial days were meant to offer technical vocational education and training and not intellectual, literacy education.
Table 1: Enrolments in Schools between 1923 and 1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Year Founded</th>
<th>1923</th>
<th>1924</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1935</th>
<th>1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Industrial school Depot, Kabete Coast Technical School,</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waa Ukamba Native School,</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machakos</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeanes School, Kabete Government School,</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kericho Government School</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kapsabet Government School</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narok Government School</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kajiado Government School</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maseno Central Taifa Technical School</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wusi</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahuhia</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kikuyu CSM</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>756</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tumutumu</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Catholic School Nyeri</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kamagambo</td>
<td>1911</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakamega Central</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbwa Industrial</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kisii Central</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>240</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabaa</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>138</td>
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</table>

Source: Department of Education, Annual Reports; adopted from Sifuna (1976, p. 114)

Table 1 shows that enrolment increased annually in most schools. It could be that many realized the need for education and training to get white collar jobs. In another report, it was recommended that the primary courses be based on realities of life and be used as a demonstration center for teaching the main lessons of good food production. Their recommendations set the colonial education authorities thinking about the possibilities of introducing more vocational elements in the school curriculum (Africa Education, 1853).
Education and Training, 1945-1963

The growth and development of TVET was seen after the Second World War. The war brought an influx of people, more sophisticated equipment and machinery, and greater need for training. Army corps were established, after the war and recruitment began on a very large scale among Kenyans. The need was then for drivers, mechanics, builders, electricians, welders, carpenters, clerks and so on. More so-called fundis (people with special skills) brought their skills learned earlier to use after the war. They set themselves up as craftsmen and were very useful. In the late forties and fifties, there were more young Kenyans qualifying from primary schools. Industrial depots were upgraded to vocational schools and in the early sixties were again converted into secondary vocational schools (Okaka, 1996).

Education and Training in Kenya after the Second World War were marked by the following features:

(i) Five years from 1945-1949 when the modest effort was made to improve industrial procedures and practices.

(ii) A period of concerted effort 1949-1954 as a result of the Beecher Education Report (a commission on education set up by the colonial government)

(iii) A brief period of specialized interests in practical education at the intermediate school level, around 1956.

(iv) A kind of holding operation until independence in 1963 because the emphasis shifted to adult training in agriculture, in particular through farmers’ training centers (Sifuna, 1976, p. 134-135)

To certify the products of the NITDs, as well as other informally trained persons, the selection system that had successfully been used to recruit artisans for the Second World War effort was adopted for civilian use, and in 1951 the Trade Testing System (a system under which certificates were offered after testing candidates and ensuring that they could perform duties related to the trade) was formally started.

Another major breakthrough for TVET in Kenya was the setting up in 1954 of a commission for higher education whose main recommendation was the establishment of the Royal Technical College of Nairobi. This institution later became Nairobi University College and thereafter the University of Nairobi. The Mombasa Institute of Moslem Education (MIMOE) was already in existence, having been established in 1948 to provide technical and vocational education to Moslem students of East Africa (Okaka, 1996).

In 1960, the colonial government passed legislation covering industrial training with the title “Chapter 237 - Industrial Training Ordinance.” An act of
parliament to make provision for the regulation of the training of persons engaged in industry, this regulation changed to “Chapter 237-Industrial Training Act” on attainment of independence in 1963 (Mbugua, 2002).

The problem with this kind of education was that it was racially motivated. In the first national report on education in independent Kenya, known as the Ominde Commission of 1964, it was reported that all previous reports dealt with African Education or European Education or Asian Education, as though they were separate social entities.

That is what, in effect; they were, for in colonial days, education, like society, was stratified on racial lines. It was, in fact, a caste system, with rigid boundaries penetrated to any noticeable extent only with the near approach of independence. The treatment of African Education as a separate entity led to certain historical consequences. During the ten years before independence, more capital was invested in European and Asian intellectual/literacy education, representing 3% of the population, compared to the technical and vocational African education of the African 97% of the population. There was no communication between the three main systems of education until 1960 (Sifuna, 1976).

Reactions to Technical and Vocational Education during Entire Colonial Period

Ranger (1965) provided perhaps one of the best summaries regarding the kind of education offered at African schools. He pointed out that there actually was African interest in technical and vocational education in the very early years of colonial rule. This disappeared when “Africans began to understand that learning of those technical skills would simply place the graduate in a subordinate position. The demand thereafter was almost exclusively for literacy education” (Ranger, 1965).

Sifuna (1976) pointed out that, despite the early impressions of industrial education in schools and those who were actively involved in it, it generally remained very unpopular. There were a number of reasons:

(i) The effort to teach practical and traditional values was suspected by Africans as an attempt to insure cultural divisions with Africans being relegated to a position of subjugation.

(ii) The syllabus lacked flexibility, making little allowance for regional variations, with the result that some recommended programs failed completely.

(iii) It was generally difficult for schools to obtain grants for buying the necessary tools to carry out technical programs.

(iv) The African masses were generally unimpressed by the fact that “improved farming” in native reserves was confined to the growing substance crops,
most of which they grew efficiently anyway. If Africans were allowed to
grow cash crops, such experiments would have been received
enthusiastically.

(v) African opinion was never sought as regards to the kind of education
Africans were to be given (pp. 142-145).
Regardless of the fact that reaction to the technical and vocational education
training was not very promising, it was being offered. The intentions may not have
been good or may have been suspicious to the Kenyans at the time, but TVET was
available locally, as offered by the colonial government.

HRD includes any education and training from which people learn to better
their skills and produce more than previously. HRD’s responsibility to prepare
human resources in learning/non-learning institutions for better performance. With
this understanding, there was TVET (and thus HRD) during pre-colonial and
colonial days. Equally, the type of training that emerged in post-colonial times
was similar to that as existed before the colonialists came into Africa or Kenya in
particular.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As acknowledged, this study has demonstrated some of the characteristics
of the African indigenous education system. The system served a preparatory
purpose. Children were brought up to become useful members of the household,
village, community, tribe, and country. It prepared boys and girls well for their
adulthood. Learning was largely practical and enabled the learner to live
productively.

During colonial years, the colonizers saw the need to introduce schools in
which manual work, reading and writing were taught. This kind of education was
meant to prepare men and women to be good workers and good citizens, and to
develop spiritual insight. In this way, however, they remained submissive to the
colonial masters and refrained from questioning authority.

The colonial government, though biased, acknowledged the importance of
developing human resources. The government placed strong emphasis on technical
and vocational education and training to develop (though not fully) and utilize its
human resources.

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