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CHINUA ACHEBE'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION ANDEDUCATION DILEMMA IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Education dilemma in Africa is the net effect breakdown of structures, superstructures and value-education. Education is a culture which transmits values. The values of a culture refer to core-elements of a culture which a people are ready to live or die for. Core-elements of a culture are the immutable elements of a culture. Value- Education is a transmission of these cultural elements from one generation to another. Chinua Achebe in his novels celebrates the values of justice, truth, respect, freedom, discipline, and democratic spirit, etc. Colonial education within the limits of its aims of education transmitted these values. Post-colonial education in most African nations broke with these values due to bad leadership, corruption, and indiscipline. The position of this paper is that education dilemma in Africa can be resolved through value –education and correction of structural error of most African nations.

Keywords: Chinua Achebe, Education, Dilemma, Value.

Introduction

Axiology is the branch of philosophy which deals with values. It is the science or study of values. It is divided into two: Ethics and Aesthetics. Ethics is the science of morality of human actions. It deals with the rightness or wrongness of a human act. Aesthetics is the science of beauty as seen in arts. A philosophical enquiry into the thoughts of Chinua Achebe as revealed in his books depicts him as an idealist with axiological bent. Value-education appears to be a genre most preponderant in the pages of his works.

Chinua Achebe is a Nigerian of Igbo extraction, a son of Ogidi Anambra State and a noble laureate. This world acclaimed intellectual giant is a product of government college Umuahia and University College, Ibadan. He wrote the following works: Things Fall Apart (1958), No longer At Ease (1960), Arrow of God (1964), A man of the People (1965), Girls at War (1972), Beware Soul Brother, Morning Yet on Creation Day, Ant Hills of the Savannah (1987), The Trouble With Nigeria (1983), and There was a Country (2012). Chinua Achebe's philosophy of education is deducible from his works and stand out irrepressibly. The core of this philosophy of education is value-education. The novel "A Man of the People" is comic depiction of the inception of education dilemma in Africa. The book points out a number of variables to be considered when discussing education dilemma in Africa. These variables are: Education managers, education process, education products, education system as school, free or paid education, etc.

Statement of Problem

Education dilemma in Africa is in itself a hydra-headed problem. The problem is where is the missing link between colonial education and post-colonial education? There is the problem of disparity between colonial education products and post-colonial education products. Why is there a wide margin in character and value between colonial education products and post-colonial education products? There is the problem of processes of education. Teaching, instruction, training, and mentoring have been effective education processes, why are these processes not effective for education of African students. The reason for ineffectiveness can be sought in: the teachers, students, school environment, or mold of transmission. The problem of corrupt leadership cannot be overstressed. The issue of corruption of leadership is at the root of education dilemma in Africa. The problem of brain drain is related to education dilemma in Africa. When best brains of a nation live in Diaspora the conclusion is obvious. The problem is compounded because it would have been expected that the wealthy will add value to education for the sake of their children. Unfortunately, they send their children abroad for education. When the later graduates, the idea of coming back to Africa becomes an idea from the blues. Infrastructural dilapidation, lack of strong educational policies, lack of implementation of existing policies, mismanagement of education funds, bribery in education, empty shelves, digital divide, etc are among the problems behind education dilemma in Africa. There is the problem of quality and value of certificates awarded by educational institutions in Africa. Without doubt, the problems of child-soldier, hawking, poverty, child-trafficking, child abuse weigh heavily on education.

Explication of concepts

The concept education has been conceived in differently by many experts. It appears that the concept is ambivalent. The result is no one definition can totally exhaust the rich meaning of the concept. It is worthwhile to delve into the etymology of the concept in order to exhume the meaning of the concept from the debris of conventional usage. The Latin language places the concept within the root word "Educo". This root word is an irregular verb. In its infinitive form, this root word has two forms as "educare" which means to bring up, to produce and "educere" which means to draw out, bring away, to raise up, to erect, to summon, to lead out, to hatch the young etc. (Gerrard, G., Littlejohn, J., (ed.), 2008, P. 119). The nuances of meaning of the infinitive portray the conflict in meaning of the concept education. The first sees the child as a "tabula rasa" without any knowledge. Education is filling in knowledge and to make out of the learner a totally new product. The second sees the learner as potentially endowed with knowledge. The role of the teacher is to facilitate the actuality of this innate knowledge. In either case, education is both a filling in of knowledge as well as a drawing out of innate knowledge from potency to actuality. The underlying fact is that education should fill in worthwhile knowledge and draw out worthwhile knowledge for it to be education in true sense of the word. The French meaning of the word collaborate the above analysis. The French language word for education is "enseignement" which means instruction. (Douglas, J. H., Girard, D., Thompson, W., (ed.), 1968, P. 413). The learner must obey instructions in order to learn. Instructions are series of rules which a learner need to observe in order to replicate correctly what following the rules brings about. And by so doing education is said to have place. Rules seen as instructions are values which when imbibed by a learner qualifies a learner to claim to have been educated. From Latin and French background education is first and foremost value-based. It is the transmission of values of a culture, civilization of a generation, norms of a people. Without mincing words then the normative definition of education is the fundamental conception of education. Normative definition of education is value-based conception of education. Normative conception of education recommends character formation, discipline and good moral conduct as implicit in the meaning of education. it does not exclude freedom of the learner but does not allow the learner to conceive freedom as license. The learner lives in a society and society sets forth the objectives for the education of its citizens. The concept dilemma is derived from Latin word "dilaminare" which means "to split into two." (Douglas, J. H., Girard, D., Thompson, W., (ed.), 1968, P. 108). This concept within the context of this paper implies that education in Africa has been split or torn apart. It presupposes that education should be unified but it has been split. It raises the question of who split education. How was it split? Why did it split? The French language word for dilemma is dilemma and means figuratively to be embarrassed. Education in Africa is an embarrassment to Africans at

home, to Africans in Diaspora and to other races of the world. Dilemma

further means to be in crises, to be at crossroad, to be in a state of impasse, and confusion. It is a state of being caught in a web when one is not supposed to. The concept dilemma as a splitting of a unified whole experience is the state of affairs which prevents complete perception of a reality as it is. It trusts forth a part of a whole as reality. This is why the mind is confused when confronted with the state of dilemma. The mind variegates between perceiving the whole and perceiving the parts of the whole. In this state, the mind finds it difficult to make a decision. Dilemma is, therefore, the state of mind which prevents reality from being perceived as a whole in such a way that the perceiving mind becomes ashamed. Dilemma as embarrassment which the mind feels is the ground for shame. When the mind oscillates in either direction, not affirming A nor negating B, it is said to be in a state of dilemma. It is like a traveler who suddenly comes out of a crossroad and does not know which road leads to his destination. The traveler is said to be in dilemma.

The concept value is ambiguous. In the sense that defining it in terms of "genus et differentia" is hard. The Latin language translates the word value with "pretium" which means honor, esteem, diligent, prestigious and highly placed. "Pretium" is akin to words as worth, highly priced, worthwhile. Pretium occur in neuter gender and it is a noun. Value as a noun is supposed to be the name of a thing, person or place, but it is not. Instead, it is ascribed to a thing, person or place. Value is that thing, person or place which is held in honor, highly esteemed, and as precious and prestigious. Dictionary of Philosophy maintains that value is that feature of a thing which is taking into consideration in decisionmaking, which influences choice and guides one and others. (Blackburn, S., (ed.), 1994, P. 377). Value can be subjective and objective. It is subjective when an individual is the sole source of criteria of features which influences his choice, decision-making and provides guidance. And it is objective when others, the community, the group, the significant other form the source of criteria for whatever is held as worthwhile to influence choice, decision-making and provision of guidance. Value-education is therefore that form of education which establishes the standard and ideal virtues to be attained in teaching learning process. It aims at transfer of knowledge which is worthwhile and which can guide learners in their choices and decision-making through life. It is not just education for certificate but education for life. It involves the transfer of core- elements of a culture to the future generation. Fundamentally, it is character education as well as subject education.

Chinua Achebe's Philosophy of education

A journey through some of the social-reality works of Achebe unveils his philosophy of education which is fundamentally value-education. In his book, "No Longer At Ease", Obi Okonkwo is the central character. He was educated abroad on community scholarship. He came back from studies abroad and gained employment. Things were no longer at ease when Obi Okonkwo took bribe in office and was sacked. This book indicts Western Education as well as the product of Western Education. Obi Okonkwo may have been educated academically but was not educated in character. He was lacking in life of virtue, patriotic spirit, and love of others. The book cast a shadow of doubt over education abroad, since the products are the same one and six pence like those educated at home.

The novel, "A man of the People", led some to indict Chinua Achebe as having a foreknowledge of Nigerian-Biafran war before the unexpected happened. This novel portrays some of the scenario which led to dilemma in education. The central character is Chief the Honourable M. A. Nanga M.P., a fraudulent politician who converted Anata Grammar School hall into political rally spot. Nanga was a school teacher turned a politician. And Mr. Jonathan Nwege, a proprietor and principal of the school turned a politician as well, pursuing government contracts and appointments. These hard facts are the reasons why education has gone bizarre in Africa. When teaching is not seen as a profession but as a stepping stool towards becoming a politician and education is molded up with politics then the products of such education must suffer. On the main, it is the society that pays the bigger prize. Education in politics and politics in education are the reasons why there are incessant strikes in African universities. They are the reason behind cultism on campus and funding of cultists. Achebe painted the picture of his philosophy of education as value-education in the words:

We are proud to be Africans. Our true leaders are notthose intoxicated with their Oxford, Cambridge or Harvarddegree but those who speak the language of the people,away with the damnable and expensive university educationwhich only alienates an African from his rich and ancientculture and puts him above his people. (Achebe, C., 1965, P. 4)

Achebe's thoughts indicate strong affection for value-education. This inclination is further seen in the interaction between Chief Nanga, the Minister and Jalio, the president of Writer's society. As minister of culture, chief Nanga was to open a book exhibition being organized by

writer's society. A contrast must be drawn between minister of culture and book exhibition and minister of education. is education part of culture or is education separate from culture? The encounter between Chief Nanga and Jalio reinforces Achebe's position on value-education as the hob of education. The dressing habit of Jalio was an abomination to education. Achebe wrote about Jalio in these words:

I read an interview he gave to a popular magazine in which It came out that he had become a non-conformist that he Now designed his own clothes. Judging by his appearance I should say he also tailored them. He had on a white, and blue Squarish gown, with a round neck and no bottons, over brown, Striped 'baggy trousers made from the kind of linen material We sometimes called Obey the Wind. He also had a long untidy Beard" (Achebe, C., 1965, P. 66).

This dress pattern forced Chief Nanga to confuse writer's society to include musicians. A writer is supposed to be a cultured and well respected educated person. Writers in history have been known to be ambassadors of their alma mater. In the case of Jalio, his dress pattern made him a national apology to education. Chief Nanga confronted Jalio:

'Let me tell you' said Chief Nanga in a softened but film tone 'If you want me to attend any of your functions you must wear proper dress. Either you wear a suit... if you don't like it you can wear our national costume. That is correct protocol (Achebe, C., 1965, P. 67).

It is clear that for Achebe to be educated is to acquire proper dress pattern. An educated person is one who adds value to his personality through his dress and appearance. Such an educated person can be an ambassador of his or her nation. Education should preserve the value of culture of proper and decent dressing. Education is supposed to form the whole person: body, soul and spirit as well as the cognitive, affective and psychomotor.

In the same novel, "A man of the People", Achebe discusses the issue of education standard. Standard six is compared to senior Cambridge. And the standard of education is said to be on a stead decrease over the years. This prediction appears to be the case. In the present setting, education standard in Africa has gone so low that a senior secondary student in class three finds it difficult to read well, write well or perform simple calculations. A question that occupies the mind is the responsible for poor standard in education: the system, the teacher, the student or some hidden curriculum.

In the same novel, Achebe took up the problem of girl-child education. The recurring issues have been there is no need to educate a girl since she ends up in the kitchen without using the certificate to work. When a girl is educated with huge sum of money, who pays for such education? Should the husband to be pay for his wife's education along with the bride price or not? The husband should pay the bride price. The lost for educating a girl-child should be on her parents. Thus, education of a girl-child is learnt at the mercy of parents if they are ready to incur a loss by educating their daughter. What beats imagination about education of a girl-child is that in spite of her education, girls like Edna prefer to marry a polygamist. Thus, education which should confer freedom and self actualization for the individual appears not to work for the girl-child especially those who for the sake money and political position get married to a polygamist. This appears to be one of education dilemmas of this generation.

The theme of value-education featured again in Achebe's novel titled: "Girls At War". The Chapter on Men's Path held value-education in an inclusion. Michael Obi was appointed headmaster of Ndume Central School. This appointment was ad rem because Mr. Obi had educational anticidents and proven records of academic discipline and conscientiousness. Achebe wrote about Mr. Michael Obi:

He had had sound secondary school education which Which designated him a 'pivotal teacher' in the official Records and set him apart from the other headmasters in the mission field. (Achebe, C., 1972, 70).

Value-education is supposed to fetch employment after education. Secondary school certificate can give job to a student, but the problem is the salary scale for this level. It is the society which set salary scale. The society can decide to make education worthwhile by making job opportunities available for students after graduation and by fixing family salary scale. Value-education encourages putting the right people in the right position and not putting square peg in a round hole. It discourages bribery to get an appointment. Mr. Michael Obi waited to be appointed and his appointment came. He was appointed a headmaster to a problem school. He accepted the posting in good faith and determined to change the school. In value-education, teachers' perception makes or mars education. Optimism or pessimism of a teacher can make education a lasting experience or make education nightmare. The personality of a teacher really matters for education to thrive and dilemma be eradicated. Mr. Michael Obi used two principles

to transform the school: 1. High standard teaching 2. School environment beautification. These two did the magic. There is no substitute for quality teaching. Achebe believes in this principle that teachers make or mar education and the development of a nation. No nation can rise above the standard of its teachers. Teachers interpret the curriculum, apply the curriculum and determine both content and quality of what students receive as education. The learner is equally important but to the extent the learner is educable and ready for adjustments in life. The constructivist school of thought maintains that the construction of the environment to be academic friendly enhances learning. Mr. Obi embarked on beautifying the school environment. He met one obstacle: the footpath across school compound. He closed it despite the position of chief priest of the deity of the land. Mr. Obi did so because government education officers will come for inspection School inspection helps to checkmate school administration. soon. What happens when school inspectors are compromised through bribery then the school system dies step by step. The episode makes it clear that education is to transmit worthwhile culture of a civilization to the next generation but to eradicate obnoxious, cruel, fictional and fallacious culture. It is horrible for people who are supposed to be educated to still believe that the dead walk through paths, or that their dead father has come back to life, or that a person infected with HIV/AIDS can get healed by having sex with a child etc. On the main, most primary and secondary schools; and even tertiary institutions look like deserts and refuse dumps. The fields are overgrown, no flowers, classrooms are filthy, and the walls are pasted with pieces of papers and very dirty. In some cases, the floors and zincs have gone so bad. How can good teaching -learning process take place in such schools? No wonder, there is dilemma in education.

The force of Chinua Achebe's vision of value –education is very pronounced in the book: "The Trouble with Nigeria". In the midst all variables he adduced as the trouble with Nigeria, two stands out irrepressibly. These are: Indiscipline and corruption. And these two touch on education so much that education dilemma anchor for the most part on them. Achebe defines indiscipline as:

A failure or refusal to submit one's desires and actions To the restraints of orderly social conduct in recognition Of the rights and desires of others. (Achebe, C., 1983, P.31)

The fundamental facts of indiscipline are: pursuance of self-interest, negligence of common good, infringement on human rights of others.

Indiscipline in education is the reason why products of education in Africa are grossly indiscipline. There is no regard for rules and educational policy. The whole effort is for shortcuts and subversion of policies for selfish interest. Examination malpractice, student's restiveness, indecent dressing, lateness to school, failure to submit results on time, and absenteeism are all acts of indiscipline in education. These acts of indiscipline have become so massive that there are fears that entire education system is threatened. Its closest sibling corruption is more dangerous in its effects not only on education on the nation at large. Corruption in education is seen in bribery for postings to offices and positions, in sales of question papers, forgery of certificates, in aiding unserious students to graduate, in diverting education funds for other projects, in fixing the salaries of teachers for some months in order to accrue bank interest, in extortion of money from students. Corruption is fundamental to education dilemma in Africa. The unbridled quest for power forms the crux of corruption. It is this mentality that has left most African nations in a state of ruins. A politically unstable nation or continent must have unstable education system which in time turns into education dilemma.

Discussion of Problems

The African question in relation to education raises cause for alarm. Why is education standard in Africa very poor? Why are there many sub-standard tertiary institutions in Africa? Why is it that no university in Africa made the list of first hundred universities in the world? The colonist laid strong foundation for education, because their education system served the goals of the government of the time. What disoriented education in Africa? Why is it that African students on campus prefer the lifestyle of hooligans and gangsters? Why are African students very noisy? Why have African tertiary institutions become a breeding ground for cultism, armed robbery and social ills? Studies on Africa have always followed a structural approach of Pre-colonial Africa, Colonial Africa, and Post-Colonial Africa. The pattern has been to cast stone on Africa past, to blame colonialism for all African problems in order to exonerate contemporary Africa. The pre-colonial Africa thrived in both formal and informal education. Informal education helped in the transmission of skills and values from one generation to another. Pre-colonial informal education trained hunters, builders, wrestlers, musicians, iron foundries, goldsmiths, technicians. No sphere of the society lacked in man power. Pre-colonial Africa's formal education once in history occupied an enviable position. It is a truism that every global civilization predicated on formal education started in Egypt. Egyptian civilization originated the art of writing,

developed technology evident in the building of groundnut pyramids, and had the best schools that were attended by people across Europe and other parts of the world. Intellectual giants of the then world as Thales, Pythagoras, St. Augustine etc were educated in Egypt. Africa had a glorious past in education. African education dilemma started with the decline of Egyptian civilization and the rise of Greeco-Roman civilization. The carting away of Egyptian library, works of arts, and technology artifacts into Greece and Rome. This was the borne of education dilemma in Africa.

The exploration of Africa, the slave trade, and colonialism were different stages of destroying African education legacy. Exploration of Africa was followed by scramble and partitioning of Africa, a process which took away the ground of being of the African. The slave trade carted away intellectuals and African human resources into Europe and America to work on their farms. Thus, Africa was exposed to brain drain. The scramble and partitioning questioned the identity of an African and raises question of his or her real cultural origin.

Education dilemma in Africa was further enthroned by the discursive narrative which Europeans used generate false knowledge about Africans. The discursive narratives present Africans as having dogbrain, not capable of reasoning, lack human soul, and not capable of understanding moral responsibility. These discursive narratives aim presenting a false self-image to Africans and to hold them down on the grounds of such. This is true in the sense that the colonist actually refused to allow the African among them to go to school. If they must go it has to be a colored school. In side Africa, the colonist built schools with the intention of training man power for its government.

The much to be worried about in the whole discussion is that after independence, the African leaders continued to rule in ways worst than the colonist. Without any equivocation, education dilemma in Africa is the creation of African leaders. Failure of the head is failure of the entire body. Under-budgeting for education in annual budgets, undermining of character formation in education, turning education into a tool for political reasons and encouraging bribery in education by not doing anything about it are many of the ways government contribute to education dilemma in Africa.

The book of Giles Bolton titled "Africa Doesn't Matter: How the West Has Failed the Poorest Continent and What We Can Do about It" is pitched in the tone of apologia for Africa. He identified the problem of Africa as poverty, lack of national identity and disproportion between benefits of office and national wealth. (Bolton, G., 2007, P.38) This is one of such discursive narratives which aim at producing distorted knowledge about Africa. If his line of thought is followed to a logical conclusion, the inevitable conclusion is that the west is responsible for education dilemma in Africa. This is a cheap argument. Africa is not poor. Africa has never been poor. Africa is the home of mineral resources and human resources and the original home of humanity. The title of poverty as the new name for Africa is an international political title which has forced Africans not to think beyond the limits of poverty. If Africa is poor why can't the West leave Africa alone? African poverty is stage managed poverty. Poverty is not the cause of education dilemma in Africa. The cause is negation of values as discipline, integrity, and national consciousness.

The negation of values is constantly reinforced by incessant wars on Africa soil. Such wars leave lasting effects on societal values during and after the wars. These wars are on-going as physical or psychological and are fuelled form outside. The ammunitions are also supplied from Europe and America. The capital sin of Africans is co-operation with stranger to destroy one's fatherland. In the event of war, the academic calendar is frustrated, school blocks destroyed, libraries damaged, the elite who should maintain education culture are exterminated. Thus, the part to education progress in most African nations turns out to be the Sisyphus rolling stone that never rolls over the top of the hill.

Education dilemma in Africa is caused by Africans. When a nation accepts responsibility for failure then the nation is ready to make amends and waste time on ceaseless attribution of failure to an external agent. Africa still see Europe and America as one big brother out there to baby-sit her, wipe her nose, cloth her, feed her and nudge her to sleep.

It is worthy to note the point raised by John Ghazvinian, in his book titled: "Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil". Ghazvinian cited example with Angola. Between 1997 and 2001, scholarships for Angolan students to go abroad accounted for 18 percent of the education budgetmore than was spent on technical and higher education combined. These scholarships were given to children of the wealthy and elite. These children finish their studies and refuse to come back to their nation to help develop the nation.(Ghazvinian, J., 2007, P.135).African nations use their resources to patronize education sector abroad while leaving value-education at home to die out. Nigeria is guilty of these social evil. Millions of Nigerian students troop out each year for studies abroad. Some states even sponsor students on scholarship abroad and

append such as an achievement; while such states are unable to pay teachers salary at home. These are many frivolous ways of wasting African nation's resources abroad. The amount of money spent to train a student abroad can be used to give face-lift to some universities in Nigeria.

In other to make sure that African resources do not go untapped, some foreign nations open their universities in Africa. These universities charge exorbitant fees and are not checkmated. African nations are being exploited in the name of education. This exploitation thrives with the discursive narrative that degrees awarded by African universities are below standard. Degrees awarded by European and American universities are superior degrees recognized worldwide. The world and its wideness are determined by Europe and America. Yet, majority of lecturers abroad are Africans. Unfortunately, African governments have been caught in this web of deceit to degrade degrees awarded by its own universities and discriminate in favor of degrees from abroad. The mistake in this misplaced emphasis is that education exists within a cultural context and must be practiced within a cultural context.

Recommendations

- The African's education policy should be reviewed. The philosophy of education of Africa as a continent should be articulated with strong emphasis on value- education.
- African leaders should raise awareness on the need to avoid further wars amongst African nations. African Union (AU) should formulate strong policies to prevent war in the continent and to discourage weapon possession by individuals.
- African nations should work together to abolish such social ills that militate against education as hawking by children, child soldier, child trafficking, child labour, and gender discrimination in education.
- Any form of politics in education or education in politics should be discouraged. The school, students and teachers should be used for political reasons and teachers should be stopped from gunning for political appointments while in service.
- The idea of sending African students on scholarship to be paid for with funds budgeted for education administration in an African nation should be totally eradicated. Every scholarship should be within Africa Universities. The policy of Africa for Africans education should be upheld.
- Foreign nations having primary, secondary, university, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and Colleges of education or

professional institutes should be checkmated and made to pay heavy taxes. In actual sense, such activities should be discouraged.

- Exchange programs with experts from different fields from abroad can be encouraged. This will help our students to learn at home in their own cultural setting and such knowledge can benefit the nation.
- In all sphere of learning, value-education should be the watch word. High cognition must follow high morality. Character formation should be inserted in the curriculum. Education without character will definitely lead to education dilemma.
- Appointments to educational offices and positions should be on merit and not on political grounds.
- Enabling laws should be put in place to prevent mass exodus of Africans to foreign nations for education. let the funds to patronize education abroad be ploughed back into educational sector at home.
- Government should make sure that libraries are well equipped and school environment inviting for teaching-learning process.
- Research grants should be reinvented and results of research be reviewed for full application in the real world outside the school.

Conclusion

African nations should grow up and understand international business world in which everything is a commodity and interest overrides sentiments. The truth is that education is one of a nation's commodities which can be exported or imported for revenue generation. A nation's education standard is one of the yardsticks to measure the level of development of a nation.

Education dilemma in Africa is one of the reasons why Africa is still looked at as an underdeveloped nation. The hope is that history does not lie. And the Hegelian dialectics of history appears to be a prophecy of truth about history. The thesis stage, African in Egypt occupied the highest position in civilization and its education was the bedrock of that civilization. At the anti-thesis stage, Africa was mixing on world education map. In this stage of synthesis, Africa only suffers dilemma in education. As the dialectics of history resurrects anew with its thesis stage, Africa will rise again in education.

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