



Why have we left our education system to decay and collapse?

ISMAIL LUKWAGO NTEGANA > EDUCATION

I was in Primary Seven at Bright Grammar Boarding Primary School Nyendo Masaka when the government launched Universal Primary Education (UPE). Research from donors had showed that investment in lower education produced more returns to the economy than investment in higher education. Besides, no community can develop without focusing on the human resource development. In the far East, it is believed that if a community wants prosperity within a year, such society should invest in grains and if the need is to prosper in 10 years, the investment should be in trees, but if the community desires prosperity for centuries, the investment should be in people.

This explains the rapid developments in most South Asian countries like Singapore, South Korea, Japan and others with little or no natural resources compared to African or Middle East countries. The only resource these countries have is their education system that have produced the human resource that these countries desire. I, therefore, find the talk of achieving the middle class status in the near future as wishful thinking with the kind of education.

As we celebrate 20 years of UPE, we need as country to have a sober analysis of its successes and challenges no matter our political inclinations. The enrolment has increased, granted but does quantity build bridges and carry out heart surgeries? Government officials celebrate quantity, increase in enrolment, buildings constructed while the Opposition will critic these without giving relevant



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alternatives. The government is more interested in physical parameters for purely political reasons. Most of the public schools in greater Masaka are dead and so are those that were in Kampala City. The same people who attended these schools have presided over their death. Can a pupil in Luweero C/U qualify to attend Kings College Budo or Ndejje Secondary School? Can government officials send their children to the schools they attended? Just because you can afford private education, don't dare think you or your children are safe. The biggest challenge to all African governments is not their respective opposition leaders, but youth unemployment and underemployment as well as lack of equal opportunity for all.

The 20 years of UPE have killed the public education sector in this country. The private sector that sprug up to fill the gap left by the decaying public sector is so exploitive and naïve. The individuals are training our children into robotics. These kids have no life skills. The schools' main concern is to make as much money from us as possible. The media has helped them. Every time examination results are released, schools and parents rush to media houses to have their children published so that the schools are praised and more kids join

such schools the next term. Our children have become grade producing machines, but are unable to live their lives after school. Our children are not prepared to learn to succeed. Most of the students from private institutions cannot communicate both orally and in written form. Education is now for the rich - children of the rich attend "good" schools where they are coached for seven years, examined in a poor manner, join another system that is only favourable to them and after six years, these join the university and after university, you expect them to steer this country to greater heights? What joke!

How can people who can't manage themselves manage others? No wonder we are experiencing a scandal both in public and private sectors. A bank is audited by reputable company but it turns out the audit report was after all fake or faked. The higher number of secondary school graduates prompted the liberation of university education and it is now a must that each family must have a university graduate regardless of what course they studied and from which university. Government officials are proud to tell us the number of universities and not the number of discoveries and research these universities are carrying out. Instead of focusing on knowledge accumulation and use, we discuss quantity. No country has ever developed because of quantity without quality.

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