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# The game of merchants of education

**T**he current education system is 20 to 30 years of school, a student spends those years eating, drinking, sitting, singing, playing and sometimes being driven to school to get a non-inheritable, non-transferable certificate.

The food and provision for that individual is provided or obtained from the sweat of normally ageing and sometimes malnourished or geriatric relatives. After spending this unrewarding, time wasting years sitting, it is no wonder that one is fighting to get a sitting job.

They want to eat, but eat what? Eat what is produced by who? Our country's real problem is too many eaters, but too few producers.

## The African Infernal

A visitor to Green Hill Academy, Kololo Secondary School, Mbarara High School, Sir Samuel Baker or KIU, is able to quickly grasp the African infernal.

Millions of youth, in their prime of health and energy, instead of unleashing their productive potential on thousands of acres of productive land, swelling products in production houses, are instead filling halls, classroom, tree bases, crowing roads and alleys all struggling for their right to sit to stare, to listen, to play, to write in a book, to put their hand up and mostly keep it down, in this laconic fuss we have called school.

Above and overriding all, to sit and eat and drink and sometimes burn the school or college when food is not sufficient or not deemed good. They should be striking and protesting when they have no tractors, hoes, oxen, machetes, fertiliser, seedlings, irrigation water, factory lines, cotton, but alas, little posho, bad beans, can lead to the destruction of an entire school.

Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively dream of what the schools will do for them. It will bestow upon them prestige and success. From nursery to university, the gods of education have cast their spell; the education train drives pell-mell to an indefinite destination.

In these dream temples, the pupil is thereby "schooled" to confuse teaching with learning, grade, advancement with education, a diploma with competence and fluency with the ability to say something new or important.

His imagination is "schooled" to accept service in place of value. Medical treatment is mistaken for health care, social work for the improvement of community life, police protection for safety, military poise for national security, the rat race for productive work.

It costs roughly the same to school both the rich and the poor in the same dependency. Both depend on schools and hospitals which guide their lives, form their world view, and define for them what is legitimate and what is not.

Both view doctoring oneself as irresponsible, learning on one's own as unreliable and community organisation, when not paid for by those in authority, as a form of aggression or subversion.

## The home

If at the start of a child's school life, the family had three acres of land, four cows, goats and a granary, at the end of the secondary school, the family will have half an acre of land, no cows, no goats and a lot of debt.

The means of production are diminished in their only hope being the sitting and eating student.

## Opportunity cost

If each learner was growing two acres of maize and getting sh6m a year, by the time he completes 15 years in school, his total would be sh60m.

Another sh60m or more would be lost when this child spends six more years in school. But this is only part of the problem, for he would be growing the food that they can eat himself, in addition to producing, he would not be taking from any other person. Whereas in the school environment, he takes away and does not add anything productive.

Look, few schools have any significant acreage of land, they have a fish on the classroom wall, but not a fish pond; they draw a cow, but not a farm, they will write an orange, but cannot grow one and most of us left school without knowing how to tile a house or put a brick on top of the other.

## The merchants

The merchants of education tell us that if this child does not go to school, his future is doomed. His ability to fit into the world is interrupted.

His friends are limited and his capacity to make a good living will decrease. Their brains will contract and their eyes will be closed for ever.

These merchants, the Oxford University Press and Penguin, the banks, the TVs, the radio, the religious schools, the numerous saints who died long ago, but still manage to come back to earth and start these schools such as St. Catherine, St. Joseph, St. Mary, St. Augustine, St. Leo and St. Maria. If you are a saint and you do not have a school, you are straight out of luck.

To these saints, we add those who sell the books, the universities and colleges who take in billions, the pre-nursery, who now charge the same money as a university, the academics, who would have no jobs, if it was not for schools; the imperial nations, who know that the more people go to school the more they perpetuate the Anglo-Saxon culture of white hero worship.

When a person starts a school, few people do it because they want the learners to be equipped for the future, they do it because it is big business and now we are ever told that a certificate is not enough, you need a diploma and a diploma is not enough, you need a degree and the endless quest goes on.

## Who teaches the student?

At universities, most of the lecturers are those who did the sitting and who excelled in exams.

In this way, you find a teacher of economics who has never run a roadside stall, an agricultural officer who has no farm, electric engineer whose own house is in darkness, a high way engineer who has never made a footpath, a food scientist, who cannot keep banana juice stable for a few hours.

Watch how these engineers begin to decorate themselves with titles such as Engineer Mukasa, Teacher Odong, Master Tom and get upset when you miss their relevant prefixes. People who produce rarely decorate themselves with titles.

You do not find Carpenter Masereka, Matoke famer Kintu, I am filmmaker Spike Lee, I am painter Apio, I am brick maker Achan or cow herder Bamwosya.

In today's education, learning means certificates for doing ordinary things. This is bizarre since the teachers in modern schools are preachers spreading a creed which they themselves might not understand.

Credentials do not measure competence so much as attendance at a school. All that a certificate does is prove that you attended school and listened to a teacher tell you things most of which you have forgotten.

Schooling in developing nations is used to create new elites with a consumerist mentality. Where we are most likely to get income from; school or farm? Who has ever come from a school with money to take home?

Yet we get food and money from a farm and take to school, so the best place for a child to begin education should really be on a farm.

His first hours of the day should be in production, she may stagger and stumble in the beginning but later on he will master and mature. If that child wants to go and study what they study today, he can do that after he has learned productive work. He can do so at the age of 30.

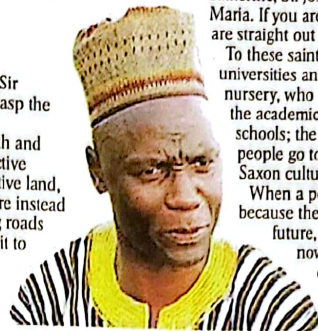
How can we leave our children in the care of people who do not even produce a book they use to instruct, to an institution that drains us of all resources and forces our active children so full of exploration?

So resistance to established phenomenon, to sit, eat, sleep, play and do as they are told and if they can repeat what this unproductive man in front of them has told them, they may even get good grades to show their parents.

And for those who really think that school is the answer, consider the following: The Government of Uganda employs approximately 400,000 Ugandans who take half of our national budget in salaries and expenditure.

The schools and universities produce now about 200,000 graduates per year. If the schools are not production houses and no production facilities are being built to absorb the new job seeking, envelop holding get-me-a-job-relative-graduates, where will they all go?

They will riot; they will throw stones at the police, especially when they are angry.



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