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# AFRICA'S CHILDREN AND THE PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT:THE CRITICAL ROLE OF EDUCATION

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By

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We shall start by making an explication of the three salient and interrelated concepts in both the conference's theme and my presentation's title: *peace, education and development*. Peace, as defined in the New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (1989) is "the condition that exists when nations or other groups are not fighting; the ending of a state of war; friendly relations between individuals, untroubled by dispute; freedom from noise, worries, tears, etc." (p.738). Education, according to Lanslord Tote, is defined as a system of organized influences which promotes all-round development (mental, physical, social, emotional/psychological, spiritual, etc) which continues as long as a person lives. From a sociological perspective, education is the process by which a society's values, customs, and traditions are transmitted from the older generation to the younger. This helps to facilitate the continuity of the society - e.g., maintaining its economic and political ideologies and ideals.

Development, as perceived in this paper, refers to human development, which is the process of enlarging people's choices. It is a development that is focused on people and their well-being with its main objective "to enable people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives" (The World Bank, 1992). A nation's rate of human development is measured by what is called the *Human Development Index (HDI)* which combines the indicators of national income, life expectancy, and educational attainment. An additional yardstick to measure human development is called the *Political Freedom Index (PFI)*. The indicators of PFI include the following: Personal security, rule of law, freedom of expression, political participation, and equality of opportunity.

One important impediment to Africa's development effort is its inability, for the most part, to sustain the gains or progress it has attained. In another words, its development is not sustainable or short-lived. Sustainable development is "a process in which economic, fiscal, trade, energy, agricultural and industrial policies are all designed to bring about development that is economically, socially and ecologically sustainable" (ibid, p---). There are minimum requirements for achieving sustainable development. They are as follows:

1. The Elimination of poverty
2. A reduction in population growth
3. More equitable distribution of resources
4. Healthier, more educated and better trained people
5. Decentralized, more participatory government
6. More equitable, liberal trading systems within and among countries
7. Better understanding of the diversity of ecosystem, locally adapted solutions to environmental problems and better monitoring of the environmental impact of development activities

One can see why the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are focused on the following aspects:

1. Reduce poverty and the unacceptable high rates of maternal and mortality.
2. Increase access to education.
3. Ensure gender equality.

All of these goals will be addressed at some length in this presentation.

From the foregoing explications, it can be seen how closely related and intertwined the three concepts of peace, education and development are I believe that a nation can hardly achieve and sustain development without peace and quality education.

### **Stories about Africa**

African states are making appreciable progress in their development agendas. Efforts at improving access to education at the preprimary and primary levels, improved graduation rates from primary to secondary school for boys and girls, reduction in infant mortality rates, improvement in their Human Development Indexes, infrastructural development are yielding encouraging dividends. However, much of the reports about Africa are in most cases not positive. In their introduction to the World Bank's publication on Africa's future and challenges, Garcia, Pence, and Evans (2008) remarked that  
Much is written about Africa today and much of it is not hopeful.

*Daily, the world hears stories of disease, despair, and death. Such a litany of misery is not unfounded -- but there are also stories of hope, promise, and potential. They too are a critically important part of the complex story of Sub-*

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*Saharan Africa (SSA) in the first year of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Just as multiple stories exist, so are multiple perspectives needed to understand, envision, and plan a hopeful future for Africa's children.*

In a similar vein Executive Director of UNICEF, Anthony Lake, in his forward to the organization's 2012 *The State of the World's Children* remarked that "when many of us think of the world's poorest children, the image that comes readily to mind is that of a child going hungry in a remote rural community in Su-Saharan Africa - as so many are today" (p. 5). However, the director noted, there are millions of children in cities and towns throughout the world who are also at risk of being left behind.

There is no doubt that a true and balanced portrayal of Africa can yield important benefits, such as attracting foreign investors. However, the fact remains that the continent still faces serious challenges to its development efforts. One has to be realistic and truthful about the continent's complex problems and by so doing plan adequately and wisely to address the myriad of the problems (political, economic, attitudinal, socio-cultural, religious, etc.) that are inimical to its development. We as Africans, especially intellectuals, have to take due cognizance of this reality and resolve to play more positive roles to help improve our situation. A meeting like this of some of Africa's critical minds is a positive step and in the right direct in this regard.

The focus of this presentation, as mentioned early, is on Africa's children and particularly, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) which comprises all but 6 of the 54 countries that make up for the continent (i.e. the northern nations of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Susan, and Tunisia). Children of Sub-Saharan Africa are among the most deprived and impoverished (education, nutrition, etc.) in Africa and the world. For example, AIDS is now the leading cause of death in SSA and many children are orphaned by the disease which further limits their chances of survival, especially of female ages 15 - 24 who have a higher incidence of the disease than males, 3.0 and 1.3, respectively according to 2011 statistics (Population References Bureau, 2013).

The table below presents statistical data that can impact Africa's development

**Table 1.10: The World's Youth 2013 Data Sheet**

THE WORLD'S YOUTH 2013 DATA SHEET										
GEOGRAPHIC AREA	EDUCATION		MARRIAGE		HEALTH RISKS & BEHAVIORS					
	% Enrolled in Secondary School 2005/2011		% Women Ages 20-24 Married by		Tobacco Use Among Adolescents Ages 13-15 2005/2011		% Ages 15 - 24 with Comprehensive Knowledge of HIV/AIDS 2005/2011		Attitude Towards Wife-Beating Among Young Women (% who agree under certain circumstances) 2005/2011	
	Female	Male	Age 15	Age 18	Female	Male	Female	Male	Ages 15-19	Ages 20-24
World	72	73	N/A	11	11	19	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Africa	22	51	11	34	13	20	25	32	55	55
Sub-Saharan Africa	38	45	13	40	14	21	28	34	54	55
Northern Africa	68	70	1	12	6	18	8	N/A	57	52
Western Africa	36	44	17	41	11	20	22	31	48	51
Eastern Africa	33	39	11	38	12	17	36	41	56	56
Middle Africa	28	44	12	43	27	34	18	25	66	68
Southern Africa	92	87	N/A	N/A	19	24	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: *Population Reference Bureau  
The World's Youth: 2013 Data Sheet*

The table below presents statistical data that can impact Africa's development

### Secondary School Enrolment

Secondary school enrollment (the ratio of the number of students enrolled in secondary school to the population in the applicable age group (such as 12-17) shows that for the whole of the continent, only 22% of girls are enrolled in secondary school compared to 51% of their male counterparts. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is not much different though a little better for females with 38% enrolled compared to 45% males. Enrolment rates are much higher in Northern and Southern Africa.

Early marriage is another factor that limits girls' educational opportunities as this factor is related to adolescent fertility and child-bearing. The adolescent fertility rate measures the number of births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 19. Although the

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adolescent fertility for rate girls is declining worldwide, the incidence of adolescent childbearing remains common in many nations, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. "Early childbearing presents serious consequences to the health and development of young girls and it also limits their educational opportunities, training, and their ability to develop their livelihood" (p.1).

**Health Risk and Behaviors**

Tobacco use among adolescents which refers to the percentage of adolescents ages 13-15 who consumed any smokeless or smoking tobacco at least once during the last 30 days prior to the survey. Tobacco use should be of concern to planners, educators, parents, and society, especially for children of such a young age. Tobacco presents import health risks to these persons and to society. Another health risk factor is HIV/AIDS which is said to be the number one cause of death in Sub-Saharan Africa. Though the disease affects more women than men, men receive comprehensive knowledge of the disease than females, as shown in the table.

The problem of gender-based abuse, another health risk and behavior, is becoming increasing worrisome across the world. Customs and traditions in many parts of the world put women at risk of being physically and sexually abused. Wife-beating (and attitudes towards it) is a big problem in this regard. Attitude towards wife-beating refers to the percent of young women ages 15 to 19, and 20-24 who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances, such as neglecting the children, refusing sexual intercourse, leaving home without telling her husband, arguing with her husband, or burning the food with her husband, or burning the food (PRB, 2013, p.1). This is a sad state of affair for women, to say the least. Sometimes these abuses are perpetrated in front of children and youths who may grow up to think it's okay for a man to beat his wife and they in turn may also become wife-beaters. Later on in this presentation I will report on a study I conducted with young children in which I explored their views on this subject of wife-beating.

We may ask "What's the significance of all these statistics for this presentation?" Well, they provide us invaluable data regarding where we are in our development report card - our successes and challenges - so we can plan more effectively to address the challenges. We have to adopt an evidence-based/data-based approach to the myriad of problems facing our nations.

Now, let me come to the crux of my presentation - The critical role of education in preparing Africa's children for peace and development. As defined earlier, education is supposed to transit the values, customs and traditions from one generation to the next. This is referred to as the *reproduction function* of schooling - a reproduction of the cultural, political, social and economic order of society

(Johnson, et al. 202, p. 125). Another important function of education is adaptation-the ability of the products of the schools to adapt to changes, such as technological changes so that they can continue to be productive in the workplace and in the society. Another function of schooling is reconstruction - the ability of the graduates of the school system to become agents of change, change that will better society.

### **Economic Benefits of Education**

Interest in the economics of education goes way back to the times of Plato Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. Advances in this area of scholarship has been remarkable. In the past people did not know that improvement in productivity in the workplace was due mainly to education and training of workers. This lack of understanding has been termed the *coefficient of ignorance*.

In his study of the benefits of public education, Burton Weisbrod, as reported by Rogers and Ruchlin (1971, p.3), identified seven broad benefits which he attributed to the contribution of education. They are as follows:

1. Direct financial returns.
2. Financial options.
3. Hedging options.
4. Non-market returns.
5. Residence-related benefits
6. Employment-related benefits.
7. Social benefits

The first four of these benefits accrue to the individual (internal rate of return) and the remaining three accrue to others or the society (social rate of return).

1. Direct financial return stems from the fact that researchers have found a positive correlation between educational attainment and income/earnings. Though variables such as ability, ambition, and other socioeconomic factors to contribute to an individual's increased earnings, the contribution of education cannot however be doubted or underemphasized.
2. Financial options refers to the fact that each level of education that proceeds the highest achievable level provides a person with opportunities (options) of acquiring further education. The acquisition of additional education provides an opportunity for the individual to reap the financial and other benefits resulting from the increased educational attainment.
3. Hedging option. Education makes available to an individual an increased probability to be able to adapt to the effects of technological change. He/she can do this by "remaining at a job and utilizing more sophisticated equipment or adapting to an entirely different job."

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4. None-market returns refers to one's ability to do things (all the do-it-yourself type of work) a person is able to accomplish because of his/her education. Examples include one's ability to complete one's income tax returns, helping one's children with their homework, completing a job or loan application.

The above four benefits are those that accrue mostly to individual and are referred to private rate or returns.

The remaining three are those that accrue to society as a result of the individual's education. They are therefore referred to as *external benefits* or *externalities*. Hence, we talk of *social rate of return*.

1. Residence-related benefits which result from "the physical juxtaposition of the beneficiaries and the educated individual." That is, other persons (e.g. the educated person's current or future family, his/her neighbors, taxpayers and the government at large) derive benefits from the individual because of his/her education. For example, children in the neighborhood would come in to watch television, learn how to use the computer, eat a more balanced diet etc. in the educated person's home. Also, the educated individual may provide water, counseling in support of the local youth football club, provide some financial assistance (e.g. fees and educational supplies) to deserving kids from background families in the neighborhood. I encourage you to do this kind of thing for people in your neighborhood if you are not already doing this. Make a contribution to the future.
2. Employment-related benefits - This refers to the "effects of the educated individual on the overall productivity of his colleagues, in situations where production involves cooperative effort." An education person's presence on a taskforce or team can provide the leadership or encouragement and support needed to accomplish a task more effectively and efficiently.
3. Societal Benefits. Examples of these types of benefits include the following:
  - a. The contribution of literacy as an important requirement for an intelligent citizenry, a smooth organization of economic activity, and for economic growth.
  - b. The educated individual pays income tax which the government can use to provide services that benefit society.
  - c. Education also lessens the financial burdens often placed in society by "minimizing the need for corrective and welfare services.

### **Educating Africa's Children for Future Leadership**

The role of education to improve the lives of SSA children cannot be overemphasized. Serious investments have to be made at all levels of government, and by the international community to assist in this effort. A USAID Africa Bureau Office of Sustainable Development (2001) made a strong case in support of investment in education in SSA. The report noted:

*African children - the future of the continent -are rightly at the center of the development process. Their education is key to sustaining democracies, improving health, increasing per capital income, and conserving environmental resources. Education lowers infant mortality, increase longevity, reinforces democratization and political stability, decreases poverty, reduces inequality, and lowers crime rates. Educated women have fewer and healthier children and are more likely to send their children to school*

Countries that do not make this critical investment in their children, the report went on to note "will not be able to nurture the required social capital for sustainable development; will suffer diminished economic growth, governance capacity, and health indicators; and could experience increased conflicts, health crises, and other social ills" (ibid, p.2).

According to a recent BBC World News Report, one of our colonial masters (Britain), despite the world's economic ill-health in which she is also embroiled, nevertheless decided to feed all her children up to age 7 free of charge this is going to cost £500 million pound sterling. I am not suggesting that Africa should make an investment of such dimension but we have to increase our investments to levels that will make a significant difference in improving the lives and education of our children. Ghana's LEAD program, for example, provides financial assistance for her economically-challenged families which include thousands of children.

Though the leaders of Africa agreed recently "to provide 15 percent of their national budgets toward health care and 20 percents toward education," Farrow (op cit) reported, most of them have not honored that pledge. We have to try to put our monies where our mouths are.

If our children are our future leaders then an important question we must ask is "what kind of future are we preparing them for and, more importantly what kind of education do we provide them to prepare them for leadership roles in this future? The legacy we have to leave for Africa's children to inherit is one of a peaceful, politically and economically stable society. The type of education needed for such a world should be in the first place *multicultural* and *of good quality*.



### **Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education grew out of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in the United States of America. It was meant to address racial discrimination against Blacks in three key areas - education, housing, and employment. So multicultural education became a reform movement seeking to provide educational opportunities to all children, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, disability, exceptionality, and geographic location. Every African child, therefore, irrespective of the factors mentioned above (facts of exclusion), should be guaranteed a multicultural education. This kind of education should possess and promote the following characteristic for it to adequately prepare Africa's children to live a happy and productive life in an increasingly interrelated and interconnected global village.

- a. It is antiracist/anti-ethnocentric.
- b. It is basic education.
- c. It is important for all children/students.
- d. It is pervasive
- e. It is critical pedagogy.
- f. It is education for social justice.

It is gratifying to note that African governments are taking active steps to provide opportunities for its citizens, including the children and youths, for them to become productive and contributing members of their nations. Respect for the Right of Children including those with disabilities, enactment and enforcement of gender equity legislations, for example, are receiving the attention they deserve at the state and local government levels.

However, much remains to be done. Our democracies and not only our educational systems have to be multicultural, providing equal opportunity to all irrespective of the factors mentioned earlier to participate fully.

Multicultural education should not be seen or taken to provide equal access to education per se but it should be a quality education. Like a USAID Report on *Basic Education in Sub-Saharan* rightly noted, "It makes little sense to create access to education for all if learning does not take place" (p.4). Despite the progress that has been made over the past decade the report went on to say, "the sad truth is that most classrooms fail to create good *quality learning condition* and there is a growing awareness that governments cannot currently provide quality education for all children." The challenge for missions, the Report advised, is for nations to integrate the political agenda of education for all with the educational agenda of maintaining high quality of learning" (Ibid). In other words, politicians and educators must be singing the same chorus. Until we can get these two entities/actors in a happy marriage,

progress in education and its resulting economic development will continue to elude us. Let politicians provide the financial, moral and monitoring/oversight and let the educators do the job of educating our children - our future leaders.

In addition to equality of access, we must provide these other forms of equality - equality of survival, equality of output and equality of outcome.

Equality of survival refers to a situation in which every child will be provided an equal opportunity to complete the education program they are pursuing (they survive). Promotion should be based on sound criteria and fairness. Students should never be simply moved through the education system even when they have not acquired the appropriate student learning outcomes.

Equality of output refers to the ability of every student to perform academically at comparable levels. We do not want to see a situation where the graduates of public secondary school A and do high level maths and write a good job application letter while those from School B cannot do simple arithmetic and cannot even read with understanding a simple job advertisement in the local newspaper. School will not perform at equal levels but the different in performance must not be glaring but comparable. Likewise, we do not want a situation where the graduates of School A are known in the community to be of loose morals (street fighting, prevalent of teen pregnancies, etc.) and those of School B are well mannered (respected, kind, and academically highly motivated).

Equality of outcome refers to a situation where the opportunities (e.g. employment, further education) are equally available to all qualified graduates of the school system, irrespective of the factors mentioned earlier - ethnicity, gender social class, etc. True equality of opportunity therefore should involve all four types -access, survival, output, and outcome. We should not encourage the development of situation where there are "different strokes for different folks." If we don't have equality, let us have, at least, *equity* - fairness.

### **Acquiring Quality Education**

A good quality education is multicultural in nature - an education that will enable its graduates to acquire the knowledge, skills, and conducive behaviors to earn a decent living and be able to live a productive, selfless, and peaceful life as a contributing and patriotic member of society. How do we get our children to acquire this quality of education?

I strongly believe that the best way we can do this is to strengthen our Teacher Education programs. The teachers we place in front of our children, our future leaders, must be of high quality sound in content knowledge pedagogy,

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professional ethics, and a high personal integrity. As one who has spent all his professional life in teacher education at home here in Sierra Leone and abroad, including Nigeria and the United States of America over the last 30 years, I think I know what good teacher education should and must be.

What do we do to prepare a cadre of high quality and dedicated teachers for all levels of our education system - preprimary, primary and secondary? To this end and I offer the following recommendation.

1. Develop top-notch curricula for preparing early childhood teachers/care providers, Birth through Kindergarten (B-K) Junior and Secondary School teachers.
2. Equal emphasis must be placed in content knowledge and pedagogy
3. Provision of modern/appropriate infrastructural and instructional facilities (e.g. teaching techniques labs, computers for students' and lecturers' use, manageable class sizes, etc.)
4. Pay teachers (all levels) well and on time.
5. Provide merit pay for high-performing teachers.
6. Provide regular in-service training to keep them abreast with new best practices

### **Assessment**

Though this aspect of education should come under curriculum, I feel it is so vitally important that it deserved special and separate treatment. The way we assess in our schools and even in our tertiary education institutions leaves much to be desired. I say this out of personal experience in tertiary education. Most of the assessment done at all levels consists of requiring students to **reproduce knowledge**. Very little opportunity is provided to assess *creativity*, *problem solving*, and assessment progress in the *affecting* domain (feelings, emotions, attitudes, etc.).

Teacher Education programs have to prepare candidates to use a variety of assessment strategies including tests/quizzes , examinations, portfolios, interviews, observations, individual/group projects, oral presentations, etc. **Authentic** assessment must be our goal. The importance of *continuous assessment* cannot be overemphasized. One or two assessment exercises cannot constitute continuous assessment. The word *continuous*, it must be emphasized, implies a series of assessment exercises (formative assessment) throughout a semester. If done well, professionally, and with **integrity**, we would not put so much emphasis on final examinations especially when we take cognizance of the fact that many of our students (and teachers, too) may be struggling with malaria and other debilitating diseases during exam periods. Apart from the quality assessment this practice will

provide, course grades will be provided in a timely manner so that students can register on time for the following semester or graduate on time. Isn't a shame when some of us do not turn in students' grades several weeks, sometimes months, after the end of final examinations? A change of attitude in this regard is a moral imperative!

### **Ethics/Character Education in the Curriculum**

Again, though ethics is a curriculum matter, I want to treat it separately like I did assessment because of its importance for our institutions and society at large. Our educational institutions, at all levels, including our Teacher Education departments, sorry to say, have become centers of immorality, including cultism, sexual harassment and abuse, bribery, widespread examination malpractice, including "sexually transmitted grades," embezzlement of public funds, laziness, lack of empathy, selfishness, outright lack of respect for constituted authority, you name it. In essence, we have lost that vital virtue called **integrity**, the cornerstone of ethical and moral conduct. What kind of future leaders then do we say we are educating? Do we as adults have integrity? How much of it do we have? Do parents have it? Do politicians and other leaders in the public and private sector have - how much?

Persons with integrity do what is right and they stand up and take responsibility for their actions. "They are brave, honest, humble, and fair. They understand the role of ethics in their personal, civic, and working lives. Finally, they have a robust sense of justice and work to create more just institutions" (Manning and Stroud, 2008, p.4). These are the types of persons our Teacher Education programs should prepare as teaches and leaders who will inspire our children to assume leadership roles in our nations across this great continent we call Mother Africa.

Integrity is also of vital importance for effective leadership, and consequently, for effective organizations. Though integrity alone cannot make an organization effective, Manning and Stroud (2008) rightly argued, no organization can be effective without it. They argued further that organizations that do not have integrity "can never develop the kind of teamwork and commitment it takes to serve customers and clients [e.g. our students] or to meet organizational goals" (ibid p.5). According to Kouzes and Posner (2003), good leaders model the way; they inspire a shared vision; they challenge the process, empower others to act; they and they encourage the heart." This describes the leader with integrity, a leader who will do what he/she thinks is right, "even when this means leading and not following the crowd" (Manning, 2008, p.3). When one is living with integrity, one is often likely to be at odds with those who are "doing what is easy and comfortable" (ibid). Manning and Stroud, in fact, emphasized that "the most difficult and long-term task is actually developing integrity in the individuals and organizations" (p.6). But are we as

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Africans going to give up our efforts to develop integrity or look the other way? No, we cannot afford to! We must start early - with the young children.

It is critically important, therefore, that every Teacher Education program should offer a course or two in Ethics-not a theoretical ethics course(s) but applied ethics, that is, the type of ethics to pursue practical students learning outcomes. Assessment in such a course(s), therefore, should be of the authentic type described earlier. Let us look at the following exercise, for example, which is good for an ethics course:

**A Thought Exercise**

*Suppose you die tomorrow. On your deathbed, will you look back on your life and say you'd had a good life? Will you have any regrets? What will they be? Suppose you could watch your own funeral, what do you suppose people would be saying about you? What would you want them to say?*

An exercise like this will be not only educative but fun and interesting, especially if the teacher can facilitate a health discussion from all members of the class. Such an exercise is capable of bringing about how they view themselves and the world around them, and provide invaluable information that will help us to mold their worldviews. A thought exercise of this nature will be good for young primary and junior secondary students, too. We may be surprised at how critically and intelligently our young children can perceive and conceptualize complex situations. This brings me to talk about a research I conducted some years back in which I explored the worldviews of groups of Sierra Leonean primary school children, ages 6-12, on some important adult problems and issues. What I learned from those kids was revealing, educative, and emotionally touching experience I will always cherish. There were three schools involved, one private and two public. I will report here only a few of the questions I children in my group interviews with them.

1. Who are smarter - boys or girls?
2. Who should be paid more - a man or a woman?
3. Is it right for a man to beat his wife?
4. If you were the President of Sierra Leone or if you have an unlimited amount of money, what would you do to help young children like you?
5. How many of you would like to go to America? What would you like to do or see when you get to America?

**Students' Responses**

**Question 1:** Most of the boys said they were smarter and so did the girls. When they were asked to say why they thought they were smarter, one boy braggingly said: "Boys are smarter because they have fast brains." Another replied "Boys are smarter because they can be politicians, doctors, or paramount chiefs." One 12-year girl

stood up and gave this multicultural response: "I believe we are all the same [equally intelligent/smart]. If we work together we will build our country."

**Question 2:** On this question about equal pay the boys and girls were almost evenly split - the boys claimed that men should be paid more and claimed the opposite. However, a few of the girls believed that men should be paid more even when they were equally qualified.

**Question 3:** One the question of spousal abuse or wife-beating, the group was almost evenly split in their response. Most of the boys responded in the affirmative whereas the girls responded in the negative. A 10-year old boy responded as follows: "Some women deserve to be beaten because they abuse their husbands; they disgrace their husbands in the public." An eight-year old boy added: "The wife can drive the husband crazy to beat her." Again, these children may likely have been reflecting on situations they had witnessed at home or in the community. Such a perception, needless to say, needs to be addressed and changed before it gains firm ground.

**Question 4:** Regarding what they would do to help children if they were president or had unlimited money, the responses were emotionally touching to me. I was touched by and also proud of their perspectives in this regard. The following are verbatim quotations of the most frequently cited responses:

1. Give them [children and youth] some money, food, clothe, and shoes
2. Provide education and health clinics.
3. I will build hospitals where people will go for free.
4. I will build school, orphanages, and hospitals where they would not pay for treatment.
5. I will open factories and shops.
6. Build houses for them and give them cars.
7. I would build colleges and universities for ones that have left school [secondary school completers].
8. I will build Under-Five clines [clinics for children under five years of age].
9. I will give them schools, give them teachers.
10. I will give them teachers and pay them [the teachers] well.
11. Provide free education.
12. I will give them books and pencils.
13. I will be responsible for their education and their health.
14. I will provide free electricity and water supply.

What was striking and emotional about these children's response was their great concern, repeated over and over, for the education and health of their fellow Sierra

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Leoneans. Any government, be it in Sierra Leone or in any other nation of the world - democratic, socialist, communist etc. - that can adequately provide for the health and education of its citizens is likely to enjoy great support and approval from its citizens.

**Question 5:** Visit to America. I was emotionally touched by one student in particular who responded that "I want to go to America to eat chicken. I have not [eat] chicken." Each time I have watched the video recording of this research and listen to this boy's statement, I feel saddened. To this child going to America would offer him an opportunity to have a food item, which, in his home, was a luxury, and I believe the same is true about many homes in Sierra Leone and many other parts of Africa. Whereas his counterparts in the private school talked about going to America to see and visit the White House, go to Disney World, go to Hollywood to see famous movie stars, he would look forward to the opportunity to have a meal of chicken. Poverty and malnutrition are reported to be responsible for many of the preventable deaths of millions of Africa's children including those living in deplorable urban slums in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Let me continue my recommendations for providing quality Teacher Education

1. Selection for Teacher Education. Very highly qualified students should be admitted into teacher education programs and not those "leftovers/rejects" from other faculties. Teacher Education must not be dumping ground for the weak applicants. Teacher Education applicants should be as qualified as those applying for engineering, medicine, science, etc.
2. High standards must be established for progression through the programs with specific transition points.
3. Establish a national accreditation mechanism or system to periodically (e.g. every 5-7 years) evaluate Teachers Education programs for accreditation and re-affirmation of accreditation.
4. Teacher candidates should pass a rigorous (both theory and practical) licensure examination to be qualified as teachers. Make the teaching service more professional. The Sierra Leone Government has proposed a Teaching Service Commission which should take up this and the other functions mentioned earlier. Nigeria is doing this through its .... We have to harmonize Teacher Education programs, at least regionally.
5. Faculty in Teacher Education programs themselves should be certified, at least those teaching the professional education (pedagogy) courses. This can be done by licensure exams like those for teacher candidates or through regular faculty development/in-service workshops and seminars.

6. A Conceptual Framework for Teacher Education Department. Every Teacher Education department must have a concise conceptual framework, which is a kind of, permit me to say, the Bible, Koran, Tura, etc. which provides the guidelines that govern everything the department(s) do. The conceptual framework tells what the graduates of a program will be able to do. Here is an example of a conceptual framework from the Department of Education in the USA from where I recently retired:

*The theme/purpose of the conceptual framework undergirding the Department of Education program is: To produce graduates who are critical-thinking problem solvers with the knowledge, pedagogical and technological skills, and professional dispositions needed to function as effective teachers in a diverse world (Shaw University, 2011)*

This framework is printed boldly at the top section of the front page of every course syllabus. It is not for "window dressing" but it should be followed religiously and reflected in the teaching of every course. Teacher candidates must be able to incorporate the conceptual framework in their lesson plans and classroom teaching.

State and national accreditation agencies always want to know how Departments of Education reflect the conceptual framework in their programs. If, for example, a department professes to educate teachers who will be able to use technology in the classroom, accreditation agencies would want to see evidences of how students are taught to acquire this competency. For example, they will examine students work products and visit schools where the students do their student teaching.

In fact, I suggest that every department in a college or university should have a conceptual framework to guide its operations.

## **Conclusion**

That our children are our most valuable resource and the future leaders of our nations can hardly be doubted or overemphasized. However, we must always ask ourselves "what kind of leaders do we want them to become?" We all hope and pray that they become the future innovators who will lead the way in providing a politically stable, peaceful society of sustainable economic development. As a recent UNICEF Conference Outcome Report rightly noted, "Children are the key actors in shaping the ideas and tools that will define how we will achieve equitable sustainable development." However, if we do not provide them the quality education and the stimulating and nourishing environment where they will develop their God-given potentials and talents to the fullest extent possible, our children may be our leaders in sorry to say, criminal activities, such as arm robbery, drug abuse, sophisticated leaches on our economy, wife-beaters, and easy targets for recruitment as terrorists. The need



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for a sound character education that will emphasize the building of integrity cannot be overemphasized. This character education should start at the pre-primary level and continue till the end of the tertiary education system. This character education comprising of ethics should be infused across our K-16 education curricula. This is particularly important, as emphasized earlier, for our Teacher Education programs where the teachers into whose hands the education of our future leaders will entrusted, are being educated. All hands must come on deck in this endeavour - parents, teachers, administrator, community organizations and their leaders, officials in the government and private sectors, etc. We all have a stake in nurturing our children to become the leaders and patriotic, empathetic, law-abiding and productive citizens of the future.

The caliber of teachers I have described here, and also those who will educate them, have a colossal task in their hands for, as the UNICEF Report cited earlier rightly noted "much of how we operate now and what we think is important to teach our children is becoming extinct as a means of future survival" (ibid).

Our children (both boys and girls) across the continent are very intelligent and possess the capacity for critical thinking and problem solving so vital for success in our increasingly competitive, interconnected, and interrelated global village. Our task is to nurture them to bring out the genius in them. We have to catch them early. This is why early childhood education should be a big priority in our educational system. The question we should be addressing as we engage in nurturing our children is not how intelligent they are but *how are they intelligent*. Our children and future leaders possess what Harvard University professor and psychologist Howard Gardner, calls *multiple intelligences*.

If we can identify and develop these different intelligences in our children they can become the innovators to make us more competitive in our increasingly technological world. For example, on May 29 2013, UNICEF brought together young independent innovators/entrepreneurs from Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, and Uganda to showcase companies they had developed and initiatives of global significance they had started in their countries. These children will become the "future leaders of innovation in the post 2015 world," UNICEF noted. Our governments, the private sector, and local communities have to come together to help young and potential innovators realize their dreams.

A 15-year boy, Kevin Doe, in Sierra Leone, for example, was able to design his own FM radio station with scraps he picked up from his neighborhood. He was invited to spend last summer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States of America where he showcased his innovation and received mentorship from distinguished scientists and technologists at this globally renowned institution. Doe also had the rare opportunity to meet former President Bill Clinton.

There are many Kevin Does in communities across this great continent of ours who are waiting to be discovered. Unfortunately, many especially girls, will not be discovered, and potential innovators will be lost. Even those in our classrooms today are not provided the opportunity to develop their creative talents in science and mathematics because of the biased and inactivating ways we teach. I was so embarrassed to hear that even in our tertiary education institutions some lecturers still dictate notes to their students even in science and engineering classes. This is 21<sup>st</sup> Century to cry out loud.

Like the late American Professor of Education and a dedicated champion of girls' education Myra Sadker, once remarked "If the cure for cancer is in the mind of a girl, there is a strong possibility it will never be realized."

We have a moral obligation to provide opportunities for every child to acquire a good quality education and to live a happy and productive life, and a contributing member to the development of society.

UNICEF devoted its 2012 publication of the *State of the World's Children* to the millions of disadvantaged children in the world's urban communities, and for the first time, children with disabilities, another severely marginalized group in our world, were the focus in the 2013 publication. What are we doing to address the many problems and issues raised in these annual reports, especially as we approach the post-2015 era vis-a-vis the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals? This question should be in the forefront of our minds. We have a moral obligation to nurture our children. As the great German Protestant theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as quoted by Johnson (2005), once remarked, "The test of the mortality of a society is what it does for its children" (p.88).

As we deliberate on this crucially important conference theme "*Peace, Education and Economic Development in African States*" let us think about what we can contribute to help that underprivileged boy or girl in our neighborhoods get a chance in life to develop their God-given potentials so they can become successful in life. That will be an important economic benefit (residence-related benefits) we will be providing our communities. The psychic income we will derive from such a contribution can last a lifetime.

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I would like to end this presentation with a quotation from a Methodist Worship Book. Though it comes from a Christian source, its message is applicable to peoples of all faiths worldwide. I pray no one will be offended by it. If it does, please accept my apology. The message reads:

*God of mercy, we pray for the life of the world... and for those who exercise power... Show us how to lived as members of the human family; to reject the ways of war; to bear each other's burden and to work together for justice and peace'*