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How an education system can contribute to unemployment

Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school — Albert Einstein

For any country's future to be guaranteed, its education should be a priority to the citizenry and government. Uganda is credited for having provided a chance to every school-going child to attain basic education and for that reason, schools have churned out a great deal of an "educated populace". Even with all the free available education, statistics show that much as there is a high turnover of pupils in primary education, about 70% in dropouts of those registered annually. One cannot help but wonder what eventually becomes of these dropouts! Do they join the workforce? Do they possess enough skills to enable and sustain them to compete favourably with their peers who will later join them as an employable lot?

The biggest question the country faces today then stands, is the current work force that we all see on every tabloid's headline up to the task and ready to support economic productivity?

Well, gauging from one's vantage point, this question can be answered differently to suit one's opinion and taste.

The glaring truth, however, is that we are currently faced with youth unemployment, low productivity and despair among the country's biggest labour force.

These can hardly scratch the ground to make ends meet at the end of the day, thus many remain unemployed and numbers keep increasing by the day.

There have been a few more proposals to tackle to unending youth unemployment and the right to education ranging from changing the syllabus to focusing on tertiary institutions that offer specialised education.

All these have been tried and put under scrutiny to make sure the country produces the best professionals, who not only seek to be employed, but create more opportunities for others within the economy.

The whole situation looks more like running in circles and the lamentations about youth unemployment never cease.

Everyone seems to be searching for an answer which has proven hard to come by. Again, one ponders curiously; what remains after all these youths have gone through the known formal education? Are they taught to acquire the necessary skills that will enable them compete favourably in the job market? Is the current system offering enough room for them to learn or it is a platform for many of them to enhance their parrot-like skills only to pass the next exam? Are we having a system that provides an opportunity to the youth to develop and enhance their talents?

With these questions honestly answered, one cannot fail to find a workable solution to the systemic cancer that has stifled progress among the country's youth.

Let's take a closer look at the system adopted by the first world countries, take for instance the United Kingdom and its Cambridge curriculum of education: It provides a fertile ground for any Commonwealth country to benchmark and learn a few more enriching concepts.

Embracing a Cambridge approach to education provides us with a better way to enhance skills and talent for both the teachers and the students in a school environment. It is a platform where holistic education is provided to those whose seek not only to learn but to have an experience



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of what learning ought to be holistically.

Albert Einstein is quoted defining education as "...that, that remains after one has utterly forgotten what the learnt in school". A closer focus on these words of wisdom enlightens the aspect of skill and talent: two ingredients that enhance human development at work. Schools should be in position to accord their students enough skills and talent more than the theory that doesn't cope with the needs of the 21st century. The world today appreciates better a more skilled and talented person with charisma and work ethic to achieve a desired goal. With the current setting in the education policy in Uganda, one can hardly find a skilled and talented person with that sort of self-drive and passion to work.

We ought to give our learners a chance to "learn in order to learn", the aspect that stimulates a self-consciousness of learning to ask the relevant questions in order to solve a challenge at hand. It provides an

opportunity to empower the attributes of consciousness to exercise the acquired skill by paying attention, listening, perceiving, developing curiosity, intuitiveness and creativity.

The kind of learning that gives the ability to direct and take responsibility for one's own learning. This introduces us to the other aspect of learning to do.

Our populace should be in position to change society through intelligence and responsible action. The student should be in position to strategically use the knowledge they learnt at school to resolve issues at hand and further make rational decisions. One who learns to do knows when and how to take and handle risks; a tenet so crucial to the demands of the country for now.

Schools need to give attention to the need for societal cohesiveness as we all need to learn to live together as a society. We should be able to teach our students how to overcome prejudice, discrimination, dogmatism and all societal stereotypes that eventually lead to confrontation and violence.

As a society, we are interdependent and not independent of each other, schools that always work as breeding grounds for new members of society are in the sole position to stimulate this among them. The greed and selfishness that we witness in the world today is the result of total societal breakdown of the core value of the need for interdependence.

Another crucial aspect that ought to be part and parcel of our education system is the idea of learning to be. Most schools rarely focus on painting a picture for the student of what they would eventually turn out to be.

A student needs to make a discovery of the true nature of human kind. We should learn to belong to the whole with genuine human values. The curriculum should hence focus on cultivating the qualities of imagination, creativity and acquiring universally shared human values.

As a society that prepares for posterity, we should work towards the enlightenment and or union with the cosmic harmony through a holistic education. This will bring into being the highest potential of all our school-going children. It is an approach we chose to use as Horizon Campus Jinja. It is one that we think all schools should pick a leaf from.

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