

SÖDERBLOM borrowed a quote from Adolf von Harnack to illustrate the necessity of inner re-prioritization of values on the part of Christians: "We are delighted when noble patriotism is brought to light in this world of material interests, but poor indeed is the man who finds his highest ideals in patriotism alone or sees the nation as the epitome of all good. What a relapse from the time when we in this world experienced the presence of Jesus Christ among us! We should, therefore, strive with all our might for Christian unity of mankind and we should be generous in our small circles to prove that the brotherly unification of mankind is not an idealistic dream of utopians but a realistic aim, inseparable from the Gospel."

THE FULFILLED PROPHECY OF NATHAN SÖDERBLOM

One of the disappointments that the emerging ecumenical movement experienced during the mid-war years and that had an impact also on the ecumenical activities of the Archbishop of Uppsala was the deprecatory stance of the Roman Catholic

Church towards ecumenism. Nonetheless, SÖDERBLOM did not lose his hopes of co-operation with the Roman Catholics and followed actively the grass-roots initiatives among the Catholics.

In his Nobel Lecture he quoted the words uttered by his friend Wilfred Monod during the 1925 Stockholm Conference: "In communion with Chrysostom and Origen, with Pascal and St. Francis of Assisi, with Luther and Livingstone, let us first turn to our brothers separated from us, the Roman Catholics, whose seats among us have remained empty in the physical sense, but whose spiritual presence is deeply felt." SÖDERBLOM did not live long enough to see the change in the Roman Catholic Church happen, but it is beyond doubt that his spiritual heritage contributed to the changes that led to the embracement of ecumenism by the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council.

Suggested Reading
The quotes from Nathan SÖDERBLOM's Nobel Lecture, as well as the biographical data, are cited according to: <http://nobelprize.org/peace/laureates/1930/soderblom-bio.html>; <http://nobelprize.org/peace/laureates/1930/soderblom-lecture.html>.

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Jesus said: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." St. Paul wrote: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God." St. Peter wrote: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." This rule was valid even when Nero was emperor of Rome. Romantics and unthinking individuals have taken offense at such words. But society and history are not built of romantic effusions and dreamy ideas, but by labor according to the dictates of conscience and the order of law. There is one universal tenet: "We ought to obey God rather than men."

—From Nathan SÖDERBLOM's Nobel Lecture held on December 11, 1950, in Oslo.

Serge TANKEU KESSEU

Higher Education in Africa: Context and Prospects

Higher education has been a major issue in all the debates these past decades in Africa and around the world. Our educational system is sick. In many areas of educational policies, people have become aware of this evil, of its magnitude and its meaning. Many reflective thinking workshops, debates and symposiums have been organised one, two and countless more times on this issue.

Despite all this, the lack of organisation in universities and secondary schools, with their rampant failure rate, is increasing every year. The alienation of elites, which is related to the absence of reliable state and social policies confronted with the failing educational system, is very problematic.

The current analysis is an additive tool to understand the situation of education in Africa; it opens new horizons on opportunities and alternatives likely to enroot Africa in her permanent quest for a more and more effective educational dynamic.

How did we get to this point? What are the possible ways out? And how can our faith and hope completely free us and enable us to reach academic excellence in higher education at the world level? We will focus on these questions while scrutinizing the crucial issue of higher education in Africa.

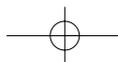
AFRICA AND EDUCATION: TIME FOR CRISES AND DOUBTS

The desire to take a concerted action with the other continents in the dynamic of giving and receiving was a total failure, mainly because of the mistaken approach adopted in the internal educational system of Africa, whose objective was to train new people after independence.

The "school of hostages" which was introduced in sub-Saharan Africa at the beginning of the XIXth century by the colonial powers was principally for the children of kings. Its primary aim was to perpetuate dominance. The goal of this approach was to build an innocent and socially strong Africa.

Particular students were singled out and suffused with an educational content that had nothing to do with the mentality of the colonised and did not consider his primary needs. Rather, it was designed to "wash his brain" and make out of his "savage" mentality a "civilised" one likely to emancipate the Negro and lift him up to the level of a "man."

Moreover, this colonial educational approach aimed at raising colonial administrations in our countries to use those few-trained indigenous people as subordinates. Because of their knowledge of the local culture, they were then used as interpreters with local populations to explain the essential cultural elements of the colonised to the coloniser.



Finally, after this selective system, education was opened to everyone in order to build indigenous societies with a language and ideas foreign to our culture and our philosophy, and whose ultimate goal was to marginalise - indeed to abandon - local cultures incompatible with the "New Negro."

Nowadays more than ever, the result is frightening. From the enthusiasm of independence to the economic and politic slump, it is agreed that the colonisers made tools and forced them into our young states, which were only longing to live. Thus four decades following independence, the majority of our states have moved backward.

Even worse, our educational system as a whole has remained and still remains a system favourable to extraversion and alienation - a system that conveys mentalities and behaviours based on open-mouthed daydreaming in front of colonial, neo-colonial and global approaches, whose values and ambitions we awkwardly internalised without wondering whether they correspond to our profound hope as race.

Today, once more, Africa is dying, dying out of this deep evil because of our incapacity to consume western modernity from our own protocols of understanding human existence and its profound drama. Marcus NDOGMO said in this regard:

"The modern school ... having ousted traditional initiative so as to reduce it to a minor fact, has become the main and decisive instance for education in Africa. This school is said to be responsible for all the deep social upheavals that occurred in black Africa.

"It not only undermined and destroyed the structure of the African cultural scene, putting into question all its system of moral and symbolic values, but deeper, it destroyed the social link. Because of its insularity, all those who benefited from the instruction granted in the modern school found themselves separated from their environment, their parents, their peers and from schemes of traditional ways of thinking."

Thus by reproducing the spirit of colonial nations even after independence, without either understanding the deep effects of the spirit of nations, or the fundamental needs of our population now, the African school showed its limits.

Higher education in Cameroon copied the so-called English technocratic approach in the Anglophone institutions of the country, the French rhetorical elegance and flimsiness in the Francophone institutions of the country, without questioning the adequacy of approaches drawn from a different but problematic context for all, which showed its weaknesses.

How can we explain the fact that in less than one decade we are already embarking on the third general reform of higher education, from the system licence (bachelor's degree)—maîtrise—DEA (master's)—doctorat (Ph.D) without a thought for the student and the costs it entails? In front of this state of facts, many questions are arising. Did we use enough time to efficiently experience a system? Should we end up there? In my opinion, we shouldn't.

EDUCATION IN AFRICA: SOME QUESTIONS

It would be too easy to conclude that realities inherited from colonisation and the post-colonial period, whose aspects we presented, alone are responsible for the failure of education in Africa. As I see it, the major problem is not related only to the educational system; generally taken, it is also related to major changes in a society, that is, very deep changes of conditions, practices, strategies, schemes, theoretical and practical codes that define modalities when

dealing with questions and ways of finding answers to them.

Presently, once more, when facing realities that are making Africa a loser at all levels, is it not time to ask questions that will constitute a leitmotif for all those who are still dreaming of an Africa where great hope for the occurrence of a new educative society is being released? I tried to draw tracks for useful researches and I am now submitting them to all of you who are every day confronted by disasters and huge fears in our families and populations.

First track - to educate is to narrate: I am deeply convinced that men are building new generations by telling them all kinds of stories: tales, dynastic sagas, fables, legends, myths, and so on, about the grandeur of their ancestors. Which stories did our parents tell us? Which stories are we telling or will we tell to younger generations of African men and women, in our families, schools, communities and public arenas of debate, in order to train the leaders of tomorrow?

Do we have a collective database system that is deliberately being used as collective reference in our educative system? Do we have showcases of living memory that are fed by the power of the word that tells about the past while building the future in the imagination?

We all know what Americans are telling their children in the USA; President George W. Bush is constantly reformulating its substance: *The greatness of America is boundless*. Because heroes are exalted, values defended, and fights celebrated, I can know all the mythology orchestrated by this American truth.

Today many Latin-American states are formulating it differently: *We are a cosmic race, the fruit of the inter-fecundation of all races, and we must learn to live at the world level*.

Second track - to educate is to choose: It is scrutinizing the long and uncountable customs of other peoples to feed oneself with those that can be productive, in order to solve problems in our current societies.

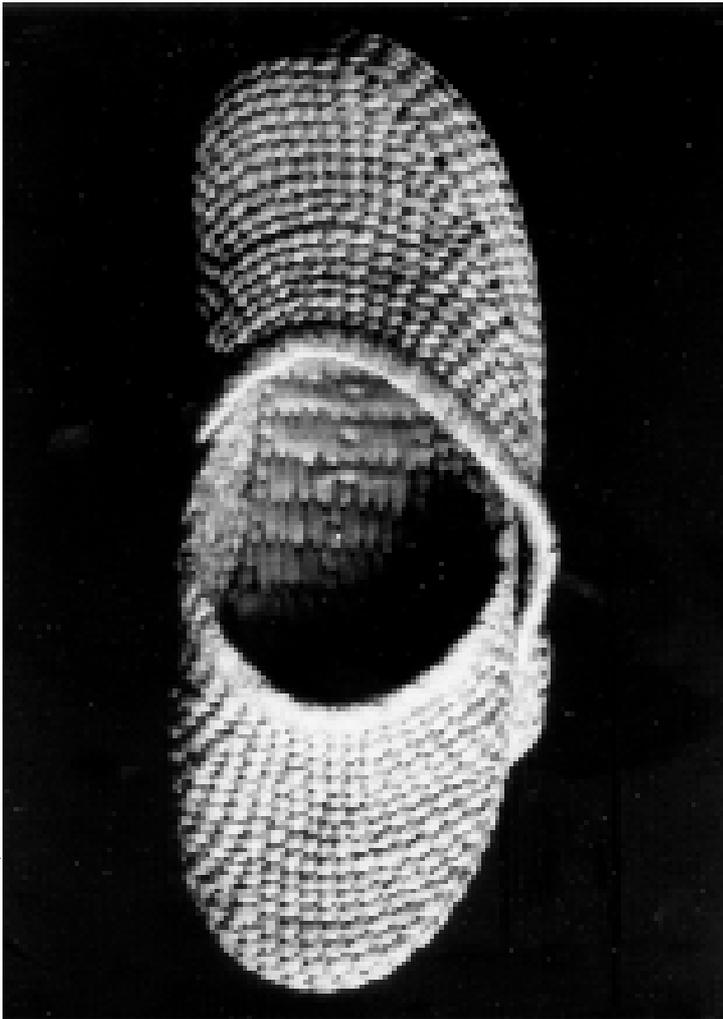
Rightly, we can refer to the *Orange Revolution in Ukraine* that developed the liberating counter-violence that opposed the ruling order to engage liberating actions in view of a society of freedom. This invention of freedom is a model of self-defence and self-assertion, since it secretes revolt, dissidence and will for a new life in the imagination of a dominated and oppressed people.

Third track - to educate is to integrate: Words like humanity and community must have a vital and concrete meaning. Then we will be able to integrate one or many persons in our communities of life, faith, vision, and values with very useful aspirations. Has our society integrated those important words in the education of persons so that they can grow and serve tomorrow as adults?

Fourth track - to educate is to acculturate: As from time immemorial, civilisations have been meeting, confronting, engaging their hopes and inventing projects of societies through difficulties or dialogue. I am convinced that a people cannot pretend to invent everything for its own existence. How is it possible to use knowledge, cognisance, beliefs, practices and arts of existing from outside as deep power in the building of our future?

Fifth track - to educate is to build: It is to build a structure for the spirit, a foundation, pillars and levers that enable members of a society to be and live together, to act and hope together on the basis of markers they consider as foundations and prisms of their being in the world.

It has to do with training intellectual, ethical and spiritual



personalities to master the world, organise it and live in it as human beings; to be able to defend oneself against the dangers of nature, external threats and difficulties of life.

Understood from this point of view, to educate is to put in place concrete and pragmatic strategies, thought-out programmes to reach natural goals that were set, ambitions that were developed. Which kind of individual and collective intelligence do we intend to develop and boast in front of the expectations of our society, here and now? By means of which kinds of programmes and to achieve what goal?

Sixth track - to educate is to orient: That is, to find another focal point of hope, as a society and a person, in a deep life different from the one we have in the current Africa. It has to do with orienting people who consider hope as a principle for vision and deep action both in training as in working. What is our hope and what are our methods to embody it in energies and faith, to give an assumed radiance to our African societies in their quest for affirmation?

Seventh track - to educate is to create: To avoid, as it is the case today, to live the destiny of enslavement and domination forever, it is imperative we produce a dynamic capable of invention, so as to enroot and enrich our peoples, as well as all peoples; and to reinforce the planetary heritage of knowledge. What can we do to encourage this trend?

Out of all the tracks proposed here, based on a publication

of the Congolese pastor Kā MANA, we see only one answer: to instruct, train and educate oneself and our future only in this perspective.

In my opinion, such a project, such an ambition can be possible only if we add our faith and hope in the future to the constituents of knowledge. This faith and hope will be the keystone of any reliable answers to the problems raised by education.

AFRICAN EDUCATION: LET'S HOPE IT

At this level, my desire is to deeply and reasonably open horizons to give rise to other contribution for productive answers to issues related to higher education in Africa. Viewing the damages and the proposed tracks, it is important now, more than ever, for us as people with beliefs guided by our faith, while making strategic choices in order to get out of our problematic systems.

Talking of faith is integrating our values for hope, ethics, and actions inherent to our African traditions when transferring deep knowledge and religion in education. I see it as mastering the content of our traditions in their profound sense for work, thinking, individual and collective introspection of how we understand ourselves and the future we want and have to build.

In front of a reality that requires our awakening, we present the necessity to continue the debate in four points.

Mobilise and stimulate the action of getting back to the basics, in order to find the treasures of our legends, tales, fables, which could help us in narrating the world destiny with reference to ourselves, as contributions, services and humanity are submitted to the world awareness.

Eradicate biases we have about ourselves, since the possibility for every African to see him- or herself in a mirror and assume the image of God he is, could help us to build our deep effects from the energies and hopes we possess.

Make young people, irrespective of religion and custom or tribes, familiar with mutual exchanges and meetings with adults, without complexes and freed from the cult of alienation, in order to ask the essential questions of life and to question the destiny of humanity, of our people and of each person.

Promote culture and free thinking, critical thinking and excellence as a dynamic for the permanent construction of a society that is always evolving.

These four axes we presented as requirements for thought must first be based on our relationship with God so as to give rise to a productive sense with our neighbour. It is also necessary to add them to contextualised and open educational policies in order to raise a challenging sense of local training for the world arena of knowledge. Thus summarised, the present scientific tool would be used, not as means favourable to collective alienation, but as tools for intellectual enrichment.

Suggested Reading

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