

Facebook Feature

An Excerpt from Rabbi Gbaba's "In-depth Analysis of Educational System in Liberia: Part Three"

Introduction

Dear readers: welcome to the continuation of my conversation with you. If you have been closely following our conversation you will find that we are gradually laying the groundwork for the successful reestablishment of a viable educational system in post-war Liberia. However, the process of revamping what we have destroyed is not void of political and financial ups and downs. Notwithstanding, with our combined patriotic efforts, we may succeed if we put aside our individual and collective differences in order to celebrate the diversity that is inherently ours as a nation and people.

In view of the foregoing, I shared with you that there are two unique schools of thought or paradigms when it comes to the way we view or practice education in Liberia: the traditional educational system v. the western educational system. Below, it is time to analyze the products of traditional education against products or graduates of western educational system. This analysis may give us a feel of how both educational systems can benefit us if we blend both traditional and western educational theories in order to reconceptualize our national curriculum and improve our educational system in post-war Liberia. As usual, your comments and views are welcome.

Analyzing the Products of Traditional Education against Products of Western Education

If one critically analyzes the products or graduates of traditional educational system v. products of western education, one will find in the products of the two educational paradigms two unique and contrasting outputs. For an example, unlike the traditional educational system and curriculum that taught native Liberians about self-knowledge and self-sufficiency by training them to acquire vocational and technical skills and become **blue collar workers**, the western educational system taught Liberians to be **white collar workers and laid back. Early western education in Liberia mainly taught one to work in the office and not in the field.**

This was principally because western curricula mainly comprised of western classics: Latin, Arithmetic, Grammar, Greek and Roman History and basic general knowledge about western democracy. These subject matters were also core to the initial Liberian curriculum as well; but unfortunately they did not have a direct relationship or impact on the learning desires and styles of the vast majority of Liberian teachers and learners. For instance, the western educational system was academic and western focused and it lacked traditional, vocational and technical instruction and/or components to empower graduates of western education to obtain a balanced educational diet after they completed high school. In addition, the curriculum was not inclusive; therefore, most of what that was taught in Liberian schools back in the day and perhaps in the present did not include the beliefs and customs of traditional or native Liberians. As a consequence most Liberian students studied from K-12 up to college level without a sound knowledge base of themselves, the *others* in their lived world and their cultural heritage.

As a result, western graduates were limited in their outputs. Thus, they mainly served as office secretaries and assistants; whereas on the other hand, graduates of traditional institutions had multiple skills and talents and they contributed more productively than their western equivalents, such as engaging in hands-on activities like brushing farms, harvesting their farm produces, constructing their huts, weaving baskets, hunting animals in the bushes and coming to town with their game in hand, healing broken bones through a very awesome traditional orthopedic procedure, and so forth.

Besides, western education prepared learners to demonstrate greater appreciation of and imitate the western way of life, subsequently neglecting and forsaking their own traditional belief systems. Comparatively speaking as well, traditional students acquired self-knowledge, self-pride, love for country and fellow countrymen and women. That is why I argue in this document

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Paying Lip Service to Education, Peace, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation in Liberia

After over twenty-four years of civil strife in Liberia, one would think that the concepts of restoring lasting peace, reconstruction, rehabilitation, reconciliation and repatriation would be paramount subject matters for public debates and when revising the national curriculum and when restructuring the educational system of Liberia. Unluckily, this is not the case. Also, given our national crisis and misfortune that claimed the death of more than a quarter million people, and that deprived the youth of Liberia (about 70% of the population of present day Liberia) access to education for nearly twenty-two consecutive years, one would have also thought that already existing vocational and technical schools would be resuscitated and/or new ones established and financed to absorb Liberian youth who are not academically inclined but that have the talents to become tradesmen and women so they may be properly reintegrated into mainstream society.

Regrettably, there are not sufficient or hardly any programs of sorts to provide the learning and training requests of our youth, former child soldiers and combatants who were forced against their will to become 'killing machines' for Liberian warlords and politicians. So, sadly, this huge population of Liberians has been left in the cold by their warlords and political mentors after Liberian warlords and politicians accomplished their political goal of regaining power in Liberia.

Further, one would think that education would be prioritized after a bloody civil war that occurred due to ignorance, disease, poverty, and lack of self-knowledge so that Liberians may be mentally and physically prepared to put the broken pieces of their social, economic, and political fabrics back together and on their own. Unfortunately, education is not prioritized to address the teaching and learning requirements of our youth, let alone providing Liberian youth (and all Liberians in general) trauma healing and counseling, and mental health services to serve the population of Liberians who are plagued with distress, mental health issues and trauma as a consequence of the civil crisis.

In addition, there has not been one major and/or a single attempt by the government on the ground to organize and launch a national peace and reconciliation conference to give Liberians an opportunity to air their concerns and iron out their differences. As a result Liberians are basically at loggerheads with one another because the issues of the past continue to haunt them with little or no efforts being made by the status quo to address these socio-political and educational concerns of the Liberian people.

For instance, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up to pave the way to attaining comprehensive peace and reconciliation in Liberia. After the Commission completed its work and submitted its findings to the National Legislature of Liberia, the honorable body refused to perform their task of approving the document and to pass laws that will ensure the high levels of mayhem and human atrocities that Liberians suffered for more than two decades under their warlords (now turned ‘politicians’) do not recur in Liberia. Hence, one of the reasons for the silence and lack of cooperation of Liberian lawmakers is because some of them were warlords and/or are supporters of warlords. In this light, most of them fear they may be indicted and imprisoned if the findings of the Commission are approved.

Indeed, all these underground activities are also directly or indirectly supported by the questionable role of the international community and so-called ‘peace brokers’, and/or ”Go-Back-Chops” in Liberia. Thus, those who came to ‘broker peace’ in Liberia have now joined Liberian warlords to further suppress victims of the Liberian civil war. So, what do we do, my people, to free ourselves since we are caught in a vicious cycle of vampires? The solution to our national crisis therefore rests upon the shoulders of yours and mine.

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