

Cultural, Religious, and Government Institutions: Imagining the Possibility of their Cooperation in Poverty Alleviation in Uganda

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Abstract

The paper wrestles with the question: In what possible ways can cultural institutions, religious leaders, and government cooperate to harmonise foreign cultures to develop an Africanised education curriculum towards alleviation of economic poverty in Uganda? The historical literary analysis method was relied on to investigate records that shed light on the impact of culture on the development and implementation of education curricula. Results show that the Europeanised education curriculum at play lacks Africanised colourings and such an anomaly has slowed poverty alleviation in the country. The post-colonial government launched several job creation programmes aimed at alleviating poverty but the resultant outcomes have been dismal in the recent past. In all the poverty eradication endeavours undertaken, constitutional mechanisms are not traceable that were enacted to involve religious and cultural institutions in the architectural process of scrutinising, curriculum development, and piloting poverty eradication programmes among indigenous communities. Findings reveal that the Europeanised curriculum is theoretical in nature and lacks the ethics intended to equip learners with practical skills. To overcome the anomaly, Uganda adopted an Asian mode of education, projecting the approach as a rightful path that will influence innovativeness among young people. On the contrary, this scholarly article postulates that the fantasized education aspirations intended to alleviate economic poverty using copied cultural knowledge transfer methodology are most likely to hit a rock. Every society is wired with unique knowledge transfer attributes that are strongly rooted in their universe ancestry. It is recommended that the Uganda Ministry of Education needs to think tank with cultural, Christian, and Muslim leaders so that an Africanised education curriculum is developed. Without tripartite relational collective involvement in the development process of an integrated education curriculum that speaks the language of Africans, the current rolled-out competence-building curriculum is most likely to take decades to smoke people out of economic poverty in Uganda.

Key Words: Culture, Religion, Government, Education, Curriculum.

Introduction

Can cultural, religious, and government institutions cooperate to alleviate economic poverty? The answers to the puzzle are scanty especially in Uganda where secular driven legislations have ring fenced the actors not to meddle in poverty alleviation agendas of play mates. Accordingly, the political class mans a lion space in championing community poverty alleviation engagements in Uganda. Just like in Uganda, sceptic attitudes held by Africans about Western-oriented education curricula has affected the ability of Africans to infuse themselves in their cultural heritages to innovate admirable business products that can pull the limping many out of poverty. On the global scene, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of education exclusion, 60 percent of young people aged 15 to 17 years lack practical vocational skills, a condition that has held communities in cycles of economic poverty (Kaledzi, 2022).

On the East African scene, Kenya excels in the education enrolment of young people; however, 67 percent of graduates lack formal employment (Habitat for Humanity, 2017). Certainly, Uganda, like Kenya, enacted several policy reforms to promote education for all. Scholarly reports indicate that primary schools registered an increase of 10.8 million learners in 2019 from 2.5 million in 2000 while secondary school enrolments shot to two million learners in 2019 from 814,087 in 2006. In addition, the period, 2006-2020, witnessed the literacy growth increase by 59 percent. 'However, despite the progress made, Uganda's education sector still faces challenges of access, equity, and quality' (United Nations Children's Fund Uganda, 2024, pp.11-14). The challenges being registered in the education sector put into question the Europeanised education curriculum being implemented to equip young people with self-driven discovery skills aimed at ushering them towards innovativeness and job creation.

To solve the education curriculum foreignness-infused mess, several studies reveal that when people's cultural universe is integrated with imported cultures, the contextualized education curriculum unpins the social economic transformation of society (Maina, 2003, p.3). Therefore, relying on the historical method that centres on understanding literary works as human voices out of the past in an effort to spur dialogues and understanding was used to investigate the historical records that shade light on the impact of culture on the development and implementation of education curriculum (Palmer, 1969, pp.7-10, 60-63).

The paper displays the relational disparities of poverty alleviation engagements between cultural leaders, religious institutions, and government since precolonial Uganda up to date. It is clear cut that the Europeanised education curriculum that has been in force since colonial days, lacks Africanised colouring. As such, the curriculum has yielded little results to mitigate the digital age challenges associated with economic poverty in Uganda. This paper then, proposes that government of Uganda needs to rethink of Cultural-Religious-Government ecumenical engagements to harmonise foreign cultures to develop Africanised education curriculum towards the alleviation of poverty in Uganda.

1. Cultural and Religious Institutions Poverty Alleviation during Pre-Colonial Period

During precolonial period, the amalgamated kingdoms and chiefdoms into the current nation Uganda had well-structured governance systems. How the unschooled society organised themselves to maintain social order and ensure community economic sufficiency, it is hard to trace from orality sources that were by then the mode of knowledge storage and transfer. The most prominent and well organised political system by then was that of Buganda kingdom (Thobani, 1973. p.64).

Kingdoms and chiefdoms were led by cultural leaders. Cultural leaders played their roles as custodians of social traditions and economic development. The leadership chain was hierarchical, thus: village, parish, sub-county, and county with centralized command vested in apex tribal leaders. At every administrative level, there were leadership committees composed of people assigned to man specialised responsibilities by the top kingdom organs. The chain roles of tribal leaderships consisted of: distribution of land, handling of legal matters, enforcement of payment of taxes, mobilisation of the community to participate in economic development programmes and civil wars, quarantine restrictions to prevent spread of disease epidemics, enforcement of cultural social traditions, and promotion of mercantile barter trade (Ramadhan, 2015, pp.103-105).

With the coming of Islam a head of Christianity and colonial governance, trade routes that facilitated exchange of goods and services were opened; madrassa schools where set up where indigenous people were taught Arabic and Swahili literacy and numeracy skills; Islamic practices were assimilated in indigenous social traditions, local people traded in ivory, gold, spices, ceramics, and textiles; and contextualised Islamic teachings influenced farming practices that greatly benefited local communities (Pawliková-Vilhanová, 2004, pp.199-205).

In subsequent years, Christian missionaries raiding on the missionary foot paths of Muslims, they set up missionary stations in Uganda. Given the fact that Christians had external financial and technical support, their spiritual and economic empowerment programmes flourished and overshadowed that of their counter parts – the Muslims. Christian missionary stations became demonstration centres where local people flooded to attain Christian values and vocational knowledge. Literacy and numeracy skills integrated with indigenous language concepts transliterations, modern farming methods, and health management skills were passed on to the local people. Riding on the trade routes opened by the Arabs, mercantile businesses flourished. Local people became suppliers of raw materials to the industrialised Europe and consumers of recycled exotic imported products. To boost the local economy, foreign aid hand-outs were doled by overseas missionary societies to facilitate infrastructural development, public health, and human resource development (Pawliková-Vilhanová, 2004, pp.199-205).

Adjacent to missionary stations, community markets were set up where indigenous people engaged in mercantile enterprises supervised by the indigenous leaders who held double roles as religious leaders and cultural leaders. At that time of history, even when there existed interfaith, intra-religious, and intertribal hostilities, cultural and religious institutions worked together to alleviate economic poverty (Hansen, 1986, p.57).

2. Cultural, Religious, and Government Institutions Poverty Alleviation during Colonial Period

When colonial governance came into force in 1890, Europeans took a ride on Buganda cultural governance system to promote secularism. Secularism promoted the making of ethical decisions based on human reason, empirical evidence, inherent potential and dignity of humans and not on cultural social traditions and religious beliefs that were viewed as mythical and manipulative. The Secular concept of community social transformation that was introduced came in opposition with Christian moral teachings and traditional cultural practices. The relationship between cultural institutions, religious institutions, and the state became hard to define (Hansen, 1986, pp.57-60).

At that point of time, religious institutions did not want interference of the government in their community engagement programmes. Secondly, they demanded to be exempted from taxes levied on religious generated mercantile products and import duties. However, the colonial government refused to grant religious institutions special privileges. Everyone was regarded as an ordinary

citizen who must adhere to the supremacy of the secular government. Certainly, the double roles of persons as cultural and religious leaders were disbanded. Religious institutions were denied the privilege to make use of land donated by indigenous people to engage in commercial farming. The economic force of religious institutions to participate in international trade was suffocated. Probably, this was intended to avoid rivalries whereby religious minorities could have been denied life survival privileges by the well-established religious giants, or the stance could have been promoted for fear of government losing control of indoctrinated and radicalised religious groups (Hansen, 1986, pp.61-64).

However, formal education was left in the hands of religious institutions. Religious institutions promoted their faith religions, acted as educational agencies, they offered vocational training, and government took up the role of employing college graduates. In addition, government extended financial support to supplement on thinly generated finances of religious institutions. As such, implantation of education programmes remained a project of religious institutions up to the end of World War one in 1918 (Hansen, 1986, pp.67-68).

The post first world war period witnessed colonial government taking over management of education institutions. The restrictions that were imposed weakened the abilities of religious institutions to promote ethical moral values to influence society to engage in innovative education that for a while had provided indigenous people with practical income generating skills. The impasse caused economic crisis among the general population (Hansen, 1986, pp.73-74).

To minimize the effects of economic poverty, the colonial government in 1946 came up with a ten year development plan aimed at: a) stepping up agricultural productivity, b) improving skilled manpower by setting up training facilities, c) recruiting foreign expatriates to bridge the short supply of manpower, and d) minimizing regional economic inequalities that occurred. To the effect, some regions became agricultural producing communities while others became labour force reservoirs (Kaberuka, 1987, p.186)

In their planning process to overcome economic poverty, the colonial government did not involve cultural and religious institutions to energize the thinking and planning process. Cultural and religious values that promote integrity, life of simplicity, respect, stewardship, communalism, and servant leadership were sidestepped. Although moral ethical values were being promoted by religious institutions to their adherents, few people could take them to heart, after all they were not

a requirement for one to gain a government job. Instead, economic growth was emphasized through the deployment of foreign expatriates (Kaberuka, 1987, pp.186-194; Harris, 2005, p.2).

Foreign experts promoted their culture of production. Accordingly, primary production of raw materials and value addition industries were discouraged by the colonial government to be established in Uganda. On a small scale, private enterprises manned by foreigners were permitted to establish processing industries. Of course, Ugandans had the liberty to engage in the private sector entrepreneurship but indigenous people lacked substantial education, market exposures, capital, and expertise. Religious institutions that would have doled support to indigenous groups were caged out of the market environment. Instead, Asian and British investors enjoyed the monopoly of the private sector. Foreign investors set up large scale plantations and operated processing plants. Indigenous people became providers of raw materials to the manufacturing industries. Even then, the prices of raw materials were dictated by the colonial government (Kaberuka, 1987, pp.186-194; Harris, 2005, p.2).

As the colonial era winged, the economic survey conducted in 1951 revealed that Ugandans were peasant farmers involved in livestock rearing and subsistence farming to meet family consumption needs and surplus sale to the local markets. Household sources of income came mainly from sale of unprocessed cotton, coffee, and hides for export. By 1960, Ugandan household incomes were in a sole state (Kaberuka, 1987, p.190).

Probably, if cultural and religious institutions had been involved in the planning process to jointly come up with contextualized remedies to poverty alleviation, the colonial government would have registered steady economic progress. Nonetheless, involvement of cultural and religious institutions could have been effective on condition that Cultural-Religious-Government ecumenical coexistence in the fight against economic poverty had been legislated but such arrangements are hard to trace in historical literary sources. While the private sector enjoyed the monopoly of the market environment, income generating sources for cultural institutions went into extinction and the major sources of incomes for religious institutions come from offertories and external donor support. Offertories, that were insufficient, were used to finance the welfare of clergy and to build worship spaces. In addition, donor support with associated restrictions was directed to meet the critical needs of the vulnerable groups in society and to cater for European tailored theological education of clergy, a trend that persists up to date (Mazrui, 1977, p.24).

In addition, most health facilities and educational institutions planted on religious lands that would have been sources of revenue were taken over by government. The few private business companies manned by religious institutions, even when they are generating incomes, the proceeds are insufficient to support local congregations to attain practical skills that can aid them to move towards economic sufficiency (Mazrui, 1977, p.24). In additions, regardless of the remarkable growth in operational grants advanced by the donor community to solve humanitarian challenges projected by religious institutions, current reports on ground indicate increasing complaints among religious adherents about economic poverty (Isiko, 2019, pp.112-114).

Given the fact that Ugandan households are struggling to unshackle themselves from economic poverty, it can be deduced that foreign education curriculum chained Ugandans in financial self-support discovery. Colonialists armed indigenous people with tools that were not contextualised to inspire African minds to manipulate their cultural economic resources. Certainly, the pioneer educated Ugandans who would have stepped backward to customise the education curriculum became Hellenised and this has led to Black Culture heritage manipulation dwarfness, reversal of which, will take decades.

It is hard to come across recorded history that Europeanised intellectual Ugandans are empirically manipulating African spirits and gods to move towards industrialization. If the African ingenious knowledge mining was at work, Uganda would be at the cutting edge in the global mercantile economy. Uganda, like other nations, has abundant natural resources that can be manipulated. For instance:

a) Medical Services: Though hospitals are useful as disease curing and prevention centres, there are foreign drugs and equipment consumed by the local population. Uganda has plants, animals, and minerals used in the manufacture of drugs and medical equipment, but hands on skills knowledge is none existent among gifted African herbalists to engage in laboratory research, processing of African drugs, and branding of African medicines with specific bad spirits they cure. Before colonisation, Africans manipulated natural plants, animals, and clays to solve diseases curative needs of society that were caused by bad spirits. In addition, ethical teachings were passed on through taboos that if not respected, the outcome was death, and such fears made people to engage in disease preventive measures to minimize diseases epidemics. However, the African

disease curative and preventive medical science are demonised by the elites. Currently, customers of gifted African herbalists seek their services in secrecy for fear of being stigmatized by the puritan Christians and Muslims. As such, Ugandans are intellectually incapacitated to develop an Africanized medical science curriculum coloured with African names of bad spirits as the root causes of diseases.

To the European cultural universe, environment energised diseases are a result of viruses, bacteria, and several hazards. It is, to such that they work hard to minimize using empirical measures. To the Africans, human environment abode is a world of spirits. Useful spirits promote human growth while bad spirits emit destructive energies. Hence, viruses and bacteria are to the Europeans as spirits are to the Africans. Europeans regard African belief in spirits as animistic and primitive (Busia, 1955, pp.19-20). To such, Europeanised African intellectuals have carpeted their world filled spirits and are busy implementing foreign educational curriculum that has made it difficult for indigenous people to manipulate their cultural heritages to move towards self-discovery.

b) Education: Schools were started by the Europeans because the colonial government wanted a literate society that could be interconnected and exchange self-generated services. However, the curriculum and instructional materials used in education institutions up to date are Eurocentric tailored (Byerly, 2009; Nwibo, 2010). And yet indigenised generated knowledge and well packaged curriculum wrapped in the language concepts of Africans would make Ugandan households to move towards economic freedom but such gold mines are less ventured into by the African education curriculum framers.

The devoid of African cultural language concepts in the education curriculum handed by the Europeans to Ugandans has had a disproportion influence on the economic mind-set change of the indigenous community to move towards economic independence. Youth unemployment with associated criminalities is a major observable indicator of the lethal effects of economic poverty in Uganda (Job Creation in Uganda, 2022).

3. Government Poverty Alleviation Strategies during Post-Colonial Period

Uganda attained independence in 1962. In the initial years (1962-1971) of self-governance, industries and commercial enterprises were nationalised, state owned companies were created, crop marketing boards and cooperative societies were strengthened, and cultural institutions were

abolished. During this period, although the role of cultural and religious institutions in the fight against economic poverty cannot be traced, the country registered progressive economic growth (Harris, 2005, p.3).

There were civil wars between 1972 and 1985. Over 50,000 Asian entrepreneurs left the country and their businesses distributed to the armed forces. Expatriates left the country and Europeanised indigenous professionals fled to exile. As a result, commercial industries came to a standstill, the country's infrastructure crumbled, and the economy collapsed. From 1986 to 1989, the government visualised strategies that were needed to minimise the economic crisis in the country. Thus: a) build a pro-people security force, b) rehabilitate physical infrastructures, c) minimize inflation, d) add value to raw materials to increase export earnings, e) work towards civil service reforms, and f) seek international donor aid (Harris, 2005, pp. 4-6).

In 1990, several statistics published by the World Bank revealed that 55 percent of Uganda's population was living below recommended international poverty levels. The rural poor struggled with poor family hygiene. Child and maternal mortalities were rampant. Illiteracy levels were on the increase. Most households were incapacitated to meet life necessities of food, shelter, clean water, and scholastic needs for their children (URN, 2022; Sharon, 2024). Against that empirical backdrop, the government of Uganda launched several job creation programmes aimed at overcoming economic poverty, illiteracy, and diseases, thus:

a) Rural Farmers Scheme: Credit in the form of agricultural inputs were given to rural based farmers. The intention of government was to support the rural poor to engage in profitable agricultural enterprises. To the dismay, the programme did not yield the anticipated results. Farmers failed to pay back the loans (Job creation in Uganda, 2022).

b) Seed Capital Scheme – Entandikwa: The programme was launched in 1996. Under this scheme, farmers were loaned money to start up crop husbandry and livestock farming. However, beneficiaries diverted money to solve their household basic needs. The impact of the scheme met a catastrophic demise and government never recovered money from the recipients (Job creation in Uganda, 2022).

c) Prosperity for all Scheme: Launched in 2001, the scheme aimed at alleviating economic poverty through microfinance, stepping up agricultural productions, value addition to raw materials, and marketing of branded products. Communities were encouraged to form Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOs). To the contrary, negligible groups survive today but many microfinance groups collapsed (Job creation in Uganda, 2022).

d) National Agricultural Advisory Services - NAADS: This was the fourth scheme rolled out to alleviate poverty. The intentions of the scheme were to provide: agricultural inputs, extension services, and market links to farmers. Shamefully, government officials provided substandard hand-outs to rural farmers. Subsequently, the scheme vanished (Job creation in Uganda, 2022).

e) Operation Wealth Creation: NAADS was replaced by operation wealth creation Scheme supervised by the military. Involving army in procurement and supply of agricultural inputs to farmers meant minimizing corruption that was so rampant among government officials. However, as time rolled, soldiers were more corrupt than the civilians. Subsequently, the scheme came to demise (Job creation in Uganda, 2022).

f) Youth Livelihood Programme – YLP: The programme came to play in 2014 to solve the crisis of youth unemployment. Young people were encouraged to form enterprise groups. Groups received seed capital funding from government. As time rolled, youth initiated businesses vanished and government never recovered the money (URN, 2022).

g) Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme – UWEP: During the same time span of YLP scheme, women entrepreneurship scheme was launched. The aim of the scheme was to equip women with enterprise management skills, support them access financial services to engage in production, product value addition, and bulky product marketing. Just like YLP, government finances injected in women initiated enterprises vanished out of existence (URN, 2022).

h) Presidential Initiative on Wealth and Job Creation – Emyooga: Government never gave up her zeal to fight economic poverty. In the 2021, Emyooga poverty alleviation scheme was launched. The scheme envisions a parish development model where money is loaned to individuals instead of groups to start income generating projects. However, there is no mechanism in place to ensure that beneficiary individuals have time tasted running projects that need to be boasted. The

current scheme, though it dishes money directly to the beneficiaries to minimise government chain corruption, it is doubtful whether such an arrangement will address the gaps of the previous schemes and propel economic transformation among the rural poor (Job creation in Uganda, 2022).

Even when Uganda government poverty alleviation initiatives have reduced household economic poverty from 19.9 percent in 2013 to 8.4 percent in 2020; statistics indicate that youth unemployment stands at 75 percent (Job creation in Uganda, 2022; Magelah & Karugonjo, 2014, p.ii). In the year 2021, Uganda Bureau of statistics established that 9.3 million youth were not schooling, not engaged in income generating activities, and were not enrolled for vocational training. A condition that indicates that government needs to rethink of Cultural-Religious-Government ecumenical legislative strategies to facilitate productive community engagements so that individuals manipulate their cultural heritages to move towards economic self-sufficiency (Guyson, 2023).

To the disappointment, 85 percent of university graduates are unable to use their attained secular academic knowledge to innovate goods and services for sale to earn a living. Currently, Uganda is rated among the poorest countries in the world with 41 percent of the population struggling to survive at USD 1.9 per day (Job creation in Uganda, 2022; Busiku, 2024). High poverty levels are observable: in 'Bukedi (61.4 percent), Lango (49.3 percent), Elgon (44.1 percent), Busoga (43.5 percent), Bunyoro (42.5 percent), and Kigezi (42.1 percent)' (The Independent, 2023).

In all the poverty eradication endeavours that the government of Uganda has undertaken in the recent decade, it is hard to come across recorded history that constitutional mechanisms were enacted to involve religious and cultural institutions in the architectural process of scrutinising, curriculum development, and piloting economic poverty eradication programmes among the diverse indigenous communities. Of course Ugandan legislators and professionals subscribe to religious and cultural institutions. Such arrangements are buffeting for them to contribute cultural and religious ideas, but then, cultural wisdom is vested in elite African elders and the theological articulations are relegated to intellectually sound religious seers. To the contrary, most of the legislators and government employees are secular trained persons whose mental outputs are detached from African religiosity knowledge transfer that if well customised can influence jobless educated young people to engage in innovative mercantile enterprises.

4. Uganda Poverty Alleviation Education Curriculum

To unearth the factors that were contributing to joblessness among college graduates and chronic economic poverty, several studies were conducted in Uganda. Findings revealed that the education curriculum inherited from colonial masters was not tailored to impart on hands skills and professional ethical values to students. The old curriculum was seen to be theoretical in nature and as the root cause of increasing household economic poverty in Uganda (Musiimenta, 2023).

To mitigate the unemployment challenges, in February 2020, a new education curriculum focussed at empowering learners in high schools with critical thinking and innovative skills was rolled out (Chemonges, 2020). The curriculum that targets students in lower secondary school level is driven by the overall objective of facilitating learners to discover their innate competences and manipulate them to become job creators in the current global digital market environment (Mubangizi, 2020, pp.3-7).

However, along the way, complaints and negativities were registered among teachers. They were tasked to implement a new curriculum that required cumbersome teaching approaches. Such approaches were foreign and were never passed on to them during their professional trainings but marathon workshops were organised to orient them. To make matters worse, pedagogy trainers were seen to be gambling, and instructional materials aligned with the curriculum were inadequate and in certain circumstances unavailable (Mwesigwa, 2023).

The techniques and visualised outcomes offloaded onto the teachers to implement competence based education in Uganda were lifted from Asian nations. To the framers of the curriculum, they observed that countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, and South Korea that had contextualised secular education systems from Great Britain, USA, and France were advancing at a high speed. To the Ugandan observers, competence based training was the driving force influencing high levels of knowledge acquisition and practical skills impartation among Asian students. They came to knowledge that Asian countries incorporated indigenous cultural ethics in their curriculum and such was promoting trustworthiness and integrity in the implementation of government development programmes (Mugarura, 2023).

Ugandan educationists went on to reveal that due to their mode of education, Asian countries were exporting sophisticated and advanced technologies to Western industrialised economies and they

had become competitive contenders with their colonial masters in the mercantile economy. To the Ugandan educationists, taking on Asian mode of education is projected as a rightful path that will influence creativity and innovativeness among young people (Mugarura, 2023).

Certainly in Uganda, Asians, despite of their small number that makes one percent of the total population, statistics show that they own 80 percent of business companies (Nsubuga, 2023). During the time span – 2016 to 2019, they contributed 65 percent of Uganda’s tax incomes (Dawood, 2016). From 2020 onward, they contribute 69 percent towards the country’s tax revenues (Kalyegira). This means that Asians execute their professional duties within the dictates of their social traditions. In keeping with their ancestry frameworks, after Asian children have acquired literacy and numeracy skills in Ugandan elementary schools, they are airlifted to their mother land to infuse themselves in their indigenous traditions (Nsubuga, 2023). Given the economic innovativeness of the Asian community in Uganda, education specialists thought that by adopting Asian education system, Ugandans will walk towards economic liberation, but it is uncertain whether copied competence based education will yield the anticipated fruits.

To the dismay, the postulated futuristic aspirations of alleviating economic poverty using copied cultural knowledge transfer methodology is most likely to hit a rock. Every society is wired with unique cultural attributes that are strongly rooted in their universe ancestry. It is on the basis of people’s culture that they develop education language concepts that point to their sense of belonging and the unique space they occupy in the globe. It is not certain whether cultural expressions are human driven strategic constructs, though, to the scholarly mind, it may suggest so; there seem to be a divine designer responsible for engineering humans into different cultural expressions and placing them in specific geographical locations (Acts 17:26-27). Otherwise, a human being would have multipurpose professional talents and competences in equal measure. Accordingly, humans unhindered by cultural road blocks, would offer universal economic poverty alleviation services to the diverse earthly cultures.

To the contrary, as human beings come in contact with neighbourhood cultures, they acquire new insights, not to suffocate their innate identities, but new insights are assimilated in their identities. The journey of assimilation may not be spontaneous. It may take a great deal of effort, especially when the borrowers of ideas are focussed at repackaging their cultural ideas into better versions.

Uncritically, the mistake Ugandan educationists have made is to lift wholesomely Asian education system and enforce it. Asian educationists contextualised secular education and foreign religions into their cultural-religious systems. To the Asian societies, their knowledge acquisition, progressive civilization, innovations, and morality are powerfully rooted in Hinduism. Foreign ideologies are incarnated in Hinduism. Hinduism occupies giant space among all religions on Asian continent (Pew Research Centre, 2015).

In accordance with knowledge acquisition, morality, innovativeness, and ethics of work; Hindu religious worldview is bound to the hierarchical structure of the caste system – a categorization of members of society into defined social classes which an individual cannot change in any way, thus, *Brahmins* - priests and teachers, *Kshatriyas* - rulers and soldiers, *Vaishyas* –merchants, and *Shudras* - workers (Asian Art Museum, 2021).

An individual's position in the caste system is believed to be a reflection of accumulated merit in past lives (karma). An individual must perform the caste designated functions well, failure to do so, such an individual will be reincarnated to re-perform the duties correctly. To be reincarnated in this world is a painful dutiful episode. Not every religious practice and vocational career can be undertaken by all members of society. Similarly, different activities are considered appropriate for different transition stages of life (Asian Art Museum, 2021). Accordingly, Asian education curriculum is programmed to enforce transition stage life morality and to construct the caste system agendas of society. That means that knowledge advancement at school is a continuation connect of knowledge enforced at individual, family, and community levels. Every individual is empowered from childhood to accomplish caste caged duty in society.

Such arrangements are recorded to have led to: a) orderly society with well-defined roles and responsibilities, b) preserved rich diversity of cultural expressions, c) promotion of specialised professions, and d) upholding of commodity bonds whereby members of caste systems provide safety interconnections. On the other hand, caste systems are observed by the outsiders as: a) promoter of social equality that denies less privileged individuals life opportunities, and b) discriminative due to enforced rigid boundaries (Olcott, 1944, pp.648-654). Weaknesses withstanding, the global voices indicate that Asian countries are winging in the global economy (Mugarura, 2023).

Second, the central focus of Hinduism is self-knowledge (*atman*); in knowing one's self, one comes to commune with ultimate reality (*Brahman*). Evil comes from ignorance of what is good; knowledge of what is good negates evil. One's purpose in life is to recognize what is good and pursue it according to one's particular duty (*dharma*), and the action involved in that proper pursuit is one's *karma*. The more dutifully one performs his/her *karma* in accordance with his/her *dharma*, the closer to self-actualization an individual becomes and so the closer to realizing the Divine in one's self (Mark, 2020).

In essence, an individual's *dharma* can only be performed by one's self; no one may perform another person's duty. Every person has arrived on the earth with a specific role to play and, if an individual chooses not to play that role in his/her present life, such a person will come back in another and another physical world, until he/she accomplishes the divine assigned duties (Mark, 2020). As such, Asian education system is aligned to people's talents visualised from the point of birth, greased at home, role model copied in the community and this is what propels competence building curriculum in schools that Ugandan legislators think can be replicated in a society that is driven by African religiosity.

As aforementioned, Asians do excel in innovative enterprises because they are bound by their religious values to engage in mental gymnastics that are not only emphasized in a class room setting but they are a manifest of their indigenous ancestry. At every life career transition stage, Hinduism upholds ritualistic celebrations. Every stage of celebration is a divine ordained new beginning that fosters future prestigious life attainments. Dishearteningly, intellectual dwarfness, pride, greed, social injustices, criminalities, economic poverty, and societal sluggishness is a result of people's inability to take on moral ethical values associated with overcoming suffering – *Maya* (Mark, 2020).

The way out of *Maya*, according to Hinduism, is that human beings must work hard to tap into the light of spiritual wisdom through *yoga* – mental meditation gymnastics. It is through *yoga* that an individual unites with the divine and finally attains *Moksha* – enlightenment or spiritual freedom or liberation. When this knowledge (*Moksha*) dawns, there is complete satisfaction; no evil desire remains in the mind, and no further impulse for rebirth remains (United Religions Initiative, 2020).

Accordingly, it is on the basis of Hindu morality ethical guidelines that Asian education curriculum is enforced. Asian education curriculum, according to Ugandan scavenger educationists, promotes critical thinking (Mugarura, 2023). However, such intellectual take, is a wishful undertaking, Asian child thinking processes does not have infancy enforcement at schools but it's a curriculum journey that begins at home, enforced in the community, and then progressively coloured with in-filler foreign ideologies by the educationists. To the disappointment, the new Ugandan education curriculum that is detached from African religiosity is most likely to snail speed combat economic poverty in Uganda.

5. African worldview Competence Building

African religiosity upholds the philosophy of Ubuntu summed in the statement: 'I am because we are' (Paulson, 2020). According to the African worldview, every successful African is a product of many skilled hands. No one in an African society succeeds in life without the collective support of mentors, family members, neighbours, religious leaders, cultural leaders, and tapping into the domain of the living dead (Mabvurira, 2020, pp.74-75). However, African religiosity intellect and moral building tools have got no space in the colonial education curriculum nor in the recently Ugandan fashioned competence skills building curriculum.

Wrapped within African religiosity are principles that if integrated in the education competence building curriculum can steadily steer Ugandan socio-economic advancement, thus:

a) Communalism: Learning involves collective engagement in community activities. For example, when an African Elder wants to pass on divinely revealed knowledge, the entire community unit is ritualistically involved in the pilot project. The successes registered and celebrated are taken on by every household in that specific locality. However, the current Uganda education curriculum lacks such arrangements. Learners are not grouped to engage in specialised out of school practical economic projects. In addition, there are no deliberate curriculum designed measures to reward academic grades to the student driven community engagement economic projects. To make matters worse, there are no education policies that promote innovations and ensure that talented teachers, students, and parents benefit handsomely from successful community engagement creativities. Schools scattered all over the country are wall fenced without tributary communal community engagement poverty alleviation programmes. In essence, it is small

communal economic projects that when successfully innovated by young scholars can translate into government funded giant enterprises.

b) Elders and Mentorship: In the African setting, the concepts of: professionals, academicians, expatriates, etc., do not exist. Even when the Europeanised professional roles are important in the African indigenous community, service providers are not revered as divine ordained. Africans pay allegiance to Elders. Elders, men and women, dressed in role specific African symbolic garments, are regarded as wise people, who are anointed by the divine to guide and mentor society. Relying on their specialisations, Elders tap into the mental domain of the ancestors to offer services to society. To these, people listen to their constructive advices radiated through storytelling, poems, idioms, songs, proverbs, myths, legends, folklores, persuasive speech, etc., and take to heart their instructions. The ritualistic instructions invoked by Elders bestow blessings. Failure to listen to the divine ordained instructions of Elders, invites curses on individuals, households, and the entire community. Africans fear the wrath of curses that are manifested in the form of diseases epidemics, disasters, chronic economic poverty, and life career instabilities (Odongo 2024). To the contrary, the current Ugandan education curriculum lacks the colouring of the divine involvement of Elders –coded by educationists as school management committees, prefects, school inspectors, and teachers. In addition, school environments lack designated spaces decorated with African ancestors and taboo symbolisms that radiate psychological mental energy to spur learners to engage in constructive activities that shape the economic face of society.

c) Role of Ancestors: In the African philosophy, when Elders who had influential impact on society die, they transit to the world of ancestors. Ancestors in African sense are to what other worldviews accord titles as Heroes, Saints, and Martyrs. Ancestors abode in the spiritual mental domain that which the living tap into to stay in communion, depending on the earthly specific need. Communion in the sense that the living dive into the historicity of ancestors to energise their present life activity outputs. Plunging in the mental domain of ancestors, informs Africans of what they were, what they are, and what they will be (Zulu, 2002, pp.476-477).

Memories of ancestors are determinants of the contents of African human lives. However, the Ugandan education curriculum is not organized in such ways to ritualistically elevate the influence

African ancestors have on individuals, households, and communities and the afterlife benefits of the living who aspire to be counted among the ancestors.

The earthly prestigious benefits accorded to African ancestors are enormous, for instance: **One**, their earthly constructed objects radiate hidden inner life for future generations that when patiently investigated and interpreted, bring out meanings that provide solutions to the present needs of society; **two**, knowledge hidden in the innovated works of ancestors, when futures generations unwrap them, speak volumes about mankind's inner nature in a given time space situational context ; and **third**, knowledge of the works of ancestors recorded in literary works and stored in orality sources is a powerful guide to discover human expressions and interpret the truth of lived experiences of Africans. The interpretive sum of experiences and expressions inform the present actions to shape a better African tomorrow.

Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether interpreters as they dive into the mental horizon of ancestors present the overall meanings of artistic works as communicated in their originality; shelved voices may be purified works, deprived of the nutritious nutrients that spiced the original creativities but the vibration presence of ancestors in the Ugandan educational curriculum if strategically infused, a resultant outcome would be progressive societal economic transformation.

d) The role of Nature: African religiosity is a universe that radiates the natural world as being regulated by the Supreme Being, gods/goddesses, spirits, ancestors, and elders. Africans believe that there exists a Supreme Being compounded in masculine and feminine traits. The Supreme Being is in control of the detailed visible and invisible complex programmes and systems. Human beings have no direct access to the Supreme Being but their needs are wired through a chain of mediators. Next to the Supreme Being are gods and goddesses who are assigned specific cabinet ministerial responsibilities over individuals, households, communities, nations, plants, animals, planets, etc. Some gods and goddesses are known while others are yet to be discovered. African gods and goddesses are to what Christianity and Islam designate as male Angels. The African gods and goddesses are responsible for good tidings and when not appeased by adhering to life preventive and curative prescriptions, then wrathful punishments are the outcomes (Busia, 1955, pp.19-21).

In essence, African gods and goddesses, when viewed from the Eurocentric worldview, they are system compartmentalized into: several living and nonliving things that exist in three states of matter: solids, liquids, and gases. The three states of matter have life forces operating by cause and effect. Obviously, the remote controllers of the forces behind cause-effect vibrations, though not brought to display by empiricists, it is what Africans regard as gods and goddesses in charge of several sectors of universe life balance and harmony.

In ascendance to gods and goddesses, are spirits that bond gases, liquids, and solids. In essence, Christianity and Islam conquer with African language concept of spirits. The three worldviews project spirits as good and bad ejected by divine forces. Viewed from the Eurocentric worldview, although they castigate African interaction with nature as animisms and syncretism (Busia, pp.19=21); spirits are what they have failed to come to knowledge that it is what they refer to as: atoms, molecules, viruses, bacteria, instinct drives, etc.

The spirits from their space of abode trickle to the ancestors who reside in the sacred mental arenas – plants, water bodies, mountains, caves, grave yards, symbols, libraries, museums, clays, animals, birds, and caves. The ancestors then release life forces in the intellectual mental pots of the elders who through analytical research and critical thinking tap into them to attain insights that energize them to innovate and implement strategic programmes that ensure that balance and harmony are maintained in the African natural universe.

To the dismay, the role of nature in the innovative life outputs of Ugandans is not reflected in the education curriculum. The curriculum is full of Eurocentric language concepts that are not compatible with African language heritages. Under such circumstances, it has become difficult for college graduates to dive into their cultural gold mines to turn deserts into springs of economic prosperity.

Essentially, Eurocentric outlook has shaped European civilization because their ideologies of development are wrapped in their everyday family-community language interaction concepts. Such concepts though theoretically understood by the African intellectuals, their resultant outcomes to usher Ugandan society towards self-discovery and industrialization has a long way to go.

6. African Religion, Christianity, Islam, and Government: Cooperation Possibility to Alleviate Economic Poverty.

During the precolonial period, the political roles of tribal leaders were not detached from their African spirituality. African spirituality ensured social harmony, economic prosperity, and physical health. People paid allegiance to the divine function of their tribal Supreme Being, gods, goddesses, male-female spirits, and male-female ancestors. Guided by the insights attained from the divinities, people executed their daily routines (Ramadhan, 2015, pp.103-105).

When Arabs and Europeans became hosted by indigenous communities, the African inherent understanding of the function of divinities were perceived negatively. African language spiritual universe was castigated as primitive and barbaric. Foreigners worked so hard to send to abyss African spirituality. To the Arab Muslims and European Christians, their spiritual world language concept is a universe of masculine God, male angles, male spirits – good and bad, and male-female saints from whom humans acquire insights to order their vocational activities (Philips, 2005, p.268).

In addition, European colonialists came along with their language concept of the universe. To them, instead of the Supreme Being / God controlling the movement of the universe, it is gravitational forces that influence the release of diverse atoms. Atoms then interconnect to form diverse states of matter. The states of matter – gases, liquids, and solids are what emerge, evolve, decay, and reintegrate into the universe to evolve into superior states of matter. To the European secularists, even when it is hard to trace from their scholarly sources, to whom they infer as the architect and designer of the organised systems and laws of nature, to them, it is through mental manipulation and understanding of the natural world that society can move towards socio-economic sufficiency (Jacobs, 2015).

To the disappointment, introducers of Christianity, Islam, and secularism failed to take the back seat to align their worldviews with those of Africans. Africans, because they were subdued by the superior civilisation of foreigners, they wrapped themselves with foreign language garments that have held them in a state of despair and confusion. Currently, Ugandan educationists are incapacitated to manipulate Black culture heritages and have foreign cultures contextualised in the education curriculum to usher society towards socio-economic liberation.

In Uganda, the European tailored education curriculum takes the lion's share at all levels of intellectual learning. Christianity and Islam come in thinly, legislated to be taught as optional separate curriculums aimed at inculcating religious values among the grafted adherents (National Curriculum Development Centre, 2009, pp. vii-viii). On the other hand, Black culture education curriculum intended to inspire indigenous people traverse their cultural mines is none existent in Uganda. In reality, Ugandans are intellectually fed on European culture and this anomaly has resulted into production of theory oriented graduates incapacitated to manipulate their cultural heritages to move towards economic sufficiency. If Uganda is to be at the cutting age in the current digital mercantile economy, then the following needs to be done:

a) Dialogue and Communication: Uganda Ministry of Education needs to think tank with cultural, Christian, and Muslims leaders so that Africanised education curriculum is developed. Abrahamic religions have existed for decades and cannot be carpeted in the education arena. Likewise, no matter the condemnations and derogatory sentiments directed towards Black Culture by Europeanised and Arabized African academicians and moralists, the indigenous culture vibrates and manifests powerfully in people's every day relational engagements. It is therefore paramount for the educationists to take the lead in engaging cultural and religious leaders in scrutinising cultural, religious, and secular language expressions to arrive at common values that inform learning in the cultural context of Uganda. The dialogue approach does not necessary mean that the parties abandon their convictional inclinations but the collective approach can help to avoid separatists education curriculums and bring to display inclusive education curriculum that communicates the language of Africans. An advisory council set up composed of cultural, religious, and academicians to steer the development of a contextualised education curriculum is very key at this stage.

b) Policy Formulation: Successful projects do not sprout in a rush like the way the current competence education curriculum has been massively rolled out in Uganda. The growth trend of any project venture takes a great deal of time and brain cracking laboratory trials. It is on the basis of reliable and valid project trials that undisputed policies are proposed to be enacted by government to enforce implementation of indigenised education curriculum. Therefore, the role of advisory council at this stage would be to: draft Africanised education curriculum, amalgamate the curriculum with foreign language concepts that are at play on the international market

environment, pilot the curriculum to test for consistence and validity, make adjustments as per the feedback registered from pilot samples, and finally propose education curriculum policy reforms to be legislated.

c) Awards and Honours - Recognizing Contributions

African society is a universe that builds intellectual confidence, prowess, dignity, respect, prestige, and aspirations through rituals and symbols. Rituals are coloured with rewards of honour.

Rituals are important rewarding moments that everyone looks forward to partake to progress towards attaining productive space among Elders and afterlife Ancestors. If then, the education curriculum is to yield results, it ought to display contextualised intellectual innovations of the changing times at every education transition levels and underpin the visualized community engagement outcomes with ceremonial honorary rewards. Honorary rewards in recognition of attained intellectual innovations ought to be symbolically reflected. Well displayed visual African prestigious symbols in terms of unique vestments are most likely to inspire many to aspire for greater innovations.

To achieve a foreign contextualised indigenous education curriculum involves a great deal of work. The cooperation process cannot sail on a smooth road. Challenges such as unresolved religious-tribal-political conflicts, insufficient funding, failure to provide transparent accountability, unclear references of work, and hidden selfish interests of some people are most likely to affect the process. Nonetheless, the coming together of cultural, religious, and government bodies to contextualise the education curriculum towards alleviation of poverty in Uganda will be advantageous in many ways, thus: skills and resources will be shared, creative solutions will be realised, duplication of efforts will be minimised, and individual-family-community inputs and accountabilities in the education process will be fostered.

Conclusion

European tailored education curriculum has been in force in Uganda since colonial days. Its implementation has yielded positive and negative results. The negative outcomes in the current digital age associated with the increasing levels of economic poverty has wrestled educationists and policy makers to revisit the curriculum implementation methodologies. To bridge the gaps, a competence based curriculum bench marked from Asian countries has been flagged off. However,

without collective involvement of cultural leaders, theologians, and secular educationists in the development process of an integrated education curriculum that speaks the language of Africans, the rolled out curriculum is most likely to take decades to smoke people out of economic poverty in Uganda.

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