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African Voices in Education

African Education: Mirror of Humanity

Babacar Diop

INTRODUCTION

Today, even if specialists in palaeontology and prehistory continue to research different stages of human evolution in an attempt to locate the first centres of settlement and dispersal, one has to admit that a strong tendency exists to acknowledge that the beginnings of this technological, intellectual and artistic adventure are to be found in Africa.

DW Phillipson (1993:2) has aptly underscored this light coming from the African continent:

the archaeologists and prehistorians of other regions have much to learn from the African record not only for its unparalleled evidence for the earliest period of human development, but also methodologically ... Africa also provides excellent opportunities for contrasting the testimony of archaeology with that of linguistic and oral historical studies and for interpreting the meaning of rock art in the light of the belief systems of recent peoples ...

Is it not all the more natural then that this very continent should provide a light worthy of interest for the history of education?

This intuition is shared by the French specialist in antiquity, Henri Jeanmaire (1975:164), who, in a well-known work dedicated to the rites of adolescence in Hellenic antiquity, published for the first time in 1939, pointed out:

... the African continent offers an observation field particularly interesting for the study of forms of civilisation which have disappeared elsewhere. Black Africa in particular, relatively isolated owing to a number of geographic circumstances and which has, in part, escaped transformations which have elsewhere altered former features of civilisation, has conserved with quite noteworthy distinctness, the marks of former cultural 'transgressions' which make several of its present

civilisations the remarkable *witnesses* [our emphasis] of the state of affairs which has been rendered unrecognisable or altered elsewhere since a more or less early antiquity.

The author, who wanted to understand the structure of family cults and penetrate the mystery of the orgiastic cults in the ancient Greek universe¹ or the mystery of the foundation rites in the ancient Roman universe,² attempted to find a comparison with contemporary African situations.

THE AFRICAN GAMUT

Henri Jeanmaire has endeavoured to isolate the important trends and characteristics supplied by African cultural regions.

Although southern and northern Africa are worthy of much attention, the author has focused mainly on so-called middle Africa, namely the subequatorial region, which offers more similarities to civilizations of European antiquity.³

African civilizations in general do not only provide information about ancient forms of religions, myths and mysteries; they also contain ancient forms of social regulation (choice of rulers, role of secret societies, mechanisms of decision-making, limitation of spheres of influence, etc).

One of the most interesting aspects concerns the mechanisms of transition from childhood to adolescence (Jeanmaire 1975:172 et seq.). The psychological and institutional preparation with the help of the sociopolitical or religious organs, the structuring of the roles played by the community and the family, the recreational and/or utilitarian aspects, the frequency of the ceremonies, the norms (positive or negative sanctions) are reviewed and analysed.

Admittedly it is possible to detect superstitions, the so-called 'irrational' aspects (sacrifices, offerings), but the essential point for the groups under consideration is to 'renew the vitality of the protecting spirit' (Jeanmaire 1975:182).

Throughout the cults practised by the populations of West Africa (the Bobos) or southern Africa (Zulus, Hereros, Ovambo, etc) it is possible to determine the real, albeit variable, frequency of the ceremonies, the preparation in novitiate form, the parts played by the masters of ceremony, the godfathers, and the guides, the respect, gender characteristics (man/woman),⁴ ethnic or clannish characteristics (scarifications), multidisciplinary and multifunctionality (medical and dietetic practices, initiation to aesthetics, rhetorics, and conflict resolution, etc).

This education gives importance to endurance, focuses attention on the security of the group (existence of special paramilitary groups), develops solidarity and *esprit de corps*, reserves a part for sexual initiation, and cultivates not only modesty and humility but also emulation.

THE EQUATORIAL-TROPICAL PRISM

Jeanmaire's specific approach has enabled him to re-examine the particular place of masks and brotherhoods in the Central African universe. He therefore dwells on occultism (1975:187), esotericism (1975:188) with, at times, their xenophobic and misogynous impact (1975:188), attempting to explain these phenomena by the effects of political and social disintegration.

West Africa, especially, presents forms of social organization which have as a base 'not consanguinity, but relations between people of the same age and sex' (Jeanmaire 1975:209). As a result there is a marked cult of solidarity, fraternity, mutualism, well observed by Charles Monteil (quoted by Jeanmaire 1975:211-212):

Those who have undergone the *solé* (initiation) together become united for life: they are *fulani*, peers, twins, for they were introduced to sexual and social life on the same day. Wherever they are and whatever their respective backgrounds, two *fulani* regard each other as equals, even if one is a chief and the other a slave ... As a rule, therefore, the *fulani* is the friend on whom one can rely with absolute confidence ...

A flanton comprises, generally, young people who come from three consecutive *solé*: it is therefore a combination of three flambolo (groups of people of the same age) ... each flanton is independent but it remains on the best of terms with its immediate neighbours ... when there is a conflict within a flanton, the neighbouring flantons intervene to restore peace.

Admittedly, militaristic deviations can be noted, as in the case of the Belli education among the Vey of Liberia,⁵ and these sombre notes deserve attention if one wishes to understand in part the chaotic situation on the continent. Indeed we cannot reflect on our present destiny without analysing the grafting between the ancient values and the modern values in a context of accelerated globalization, fashioned by a boundless liberalism with its share of all types of trading (currencies, money, merchandise including migrants, men, women, children, drugs, weapons, etc).

Already in the 1960s, at the beginning of the African independences, certain intellectuals had turned their attention to the destiny of traditional African education.

For example, Abdoulaye Sadji,⁶ the Senegalese writer, contemplated the question in an essay entitled *African Education and Civilization* (1964). It is revealing, moreover, that most of this author's works fit into a dynamic current either of positive assessment of African traditions or of describing the clash between African and Western cultures.⁷

Through his essay on African Education one can distinctly perceive that Abdoulaye Sadji experiences some difficulty in responding to those who contest historic depth in African civilizations; here is how he evokes the conceptions about African civilizations:

the black man from the forest or semiforest regions of Africa is still at the stage where his behaviour is not the result of philosophic thinking but the result of simple *adaptation* to the natural environment. [sic]

Historians and ethnologists who take the opposite view to those who denigrate the black race reveal to us the existence, perhaps in the distant past but real in terms of facts and documents, of a negro civilization during which the Blacks already knew how to work metals and 'weave garments' ... [our translation]

And Sadji indicates that there is a debate as to whether these brilliant civilizations (Ghana, for example) can be attributed to 'authentic Blacks or men of Semitic origin' (Sadji 1964:24–25) [our translation].

Evidently Abdoulaye Sadji does not seem to support the theories of Cheikh Anta Diop on the anteriority of Negro civilizations or on Negro Egypt, the initiator of certain Mediterranean (Graeco-Latin) and Near Eastern (Hebrew and Arab) civilizations; he seems to develop a theory about Africa, held dear by the supporters of Negritude, particularly of the Senghoran vision, which, incidentally, Cheikh Anta Diop criticizes for lack of historic perspective.⁸ It is also possible that Sadji has the same attitude as Césaire who, whilst morally supporting Cheikh Anta,⁹ does not have the scientific arguments to reinforce the hypotheses of the Senegalese physicist-Egyptologist.

Abdoulaye Sadji has paid much attention to clothing (1964:25 et seq.) when recording aspects of African civilization. With regard to the stages of initiation, he dwells longer on weaning and circumcision. Naturally, even if he does not attempt to go back into prehistory or African antiquity, as a disciple of Cheikh Anta Diop would have done, he cannot refrain, as we have already shown, from reflecting on contacts with other civilizations, in particular Islam (1964:42 et seq.). Further, he displays an awareness, like Jeanmaire, of parallels between contemporary African civilizations and European civilizations in antiquity (Graeco-Latin especially). Here is how he concludes the comparison (1964:67): 'The two examples of Greek and Roman education prove that there is nothing new under the sun and that the education, such as it was given in the past to the youth of Senegal, drew its resources from a very ancient wisdom.' Professor Michel Woronoff upheld this point at the symposium 'Black Africa and the Mediterranean World in Antiquity' in Dakar in 1976. Woronoff, in his paper 'Parallel Structures in the Initiation of Young People in Black Africa and in Greek Tradition', pays tribute to Jeanmaire, whilst stressing the limitations of his work.¹⁰

After a quick review of works on the topic in Africa and in the rest of the world ('Black Africa and the Mediterranean World in Antiquity', NEA, Dakar, Abidjan 1978:238–239), he stresses the significance of the African case (1978:240) and points out some important lessons which can be drawn from this rich experience: affirmation of biological identity (1978:250), introduction to responsibility (1978:247), specialization (1978:248), solidarity (1978:248).

The important debates which followed his report enabled Professor Oumar Kane, a historian, to reconsider the global dimension of African education.¹¹ The discussions made it possible to reconsider the importance of the geographic contexts of the economic activities, the specificity of the agrarian and/or maritime civilizations (Symposium 1978:149), the interaction of the ethnic groups, and particular social classes or categories.¹²

If African initiation allows for the affirmation of strong identities, of assumed personalities, if it encourages the practice of endurance, the achievement of exploits, it prepares for the handling of the law of opposites: remedy/poison, life/death, etc. Through rebirth dialectic space becomes larger, and cyclic practices are not in contradiction to a spiral evolution.

Michel Woronoff, besides, did not fail to have recourse to the authority of LV Thomas in order to explain a few situations which seemed somewhat comical to him: 'When adults aged sometimes thirty or thirty-five years undergo initiation, out of formalism, "the famous Diola formalism", they continue to receive advice on how to have children and on the mysteries of reproduction, as if they did not know. This indicates clearly that there has been a type of change in the initiation, due to general economic conditions which have altered' (Symposium 1978:263-264).

NEW CHALLENGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

The need to take historical evolution, and hence lessons from the past, into account in order to be able to establish a viable educational project has not been overlooked by organic researchers, whose concern has been to go along with the action of the political leaders. Such was the case of Roland Colin who was very close at the same time to Léopold Sédar Senghor and Mamadou Dia — allies, then adversaries, on the political scene in Senegal.

In his thesis entitled *Education Systems and Social Transformations* with, as subtitle, *Continuity and Discontinuity in the Socioeducational Dynamic Currents — the Case of Senegal*, he refers to most of the works which we have mentioned (that is, Thomas Sadj, etc).¹³

He devotes the first part of volume I to precolonial society (1980:51).

His approach is midway between that of Jeanmaire (on the scale of the whole of Africa) and that of Abdoulaye Sadj (focusing on the Wolof-Iebu); in fact, Colin, for his part, has chosen to compare the Wolof, Sereer and Pulaar practices. This enables him to define six stages in the evolution of individuals.

English meaning	Sereer	Wolof	Pulaar
1 Infancy from 0 to 2 years	xeq, robtatin	perlit, perantal	tugge
2 Early childhood from 2 to 6 years	0 njaj 0 ngor (m) /o ndew (f)	gune	SukaaBe tokos Be
3 Childhood from 6/7 to 12 years	o njaji (m) or nde ban dong / o ndew (f)	xale, njagamar (f)	cukalon
4 Adolescence from 12 to 20/25 years	o fes or o sanget (m); o toog - njegemaar (f)	aat njulli berloót waxambaa -ne (m); sëqlu janq (f)	sukaaBe (m), boombi (f)
5 Active adults from 20/25 to 60/70 years	o mak (m) o tew or jeeg (f)	borom kër (m) jeeg (f)	hellifauBe (m); seemedbe (f)
6 The elderly from the time when they are no longer able to work m = male f = female	o nogoy	kilifa (m) mag (m, f)	mawBe raneeBe

After noting the similarities between this listing and that drawn up by Western psychologists (1980:55), the author studies successively:

- intrafamily and preinitiatory education, paying particular attention to the antenatal phase and to birth and weaning, to the function of the grandparents and of the uncle, to the role of stories;
- initiatory education;
- postinitiatory education.

Like Abdoulaye Sadji, he has devoted part of his reflections to the clash with Islam (1980:108 et seq.) in order to analyse the osmosis, the graftings or the points of resistance, as the case may be. This enables him, for example, to distinguish the evolutionary difference between the Wolof and Sereer systems, the former characterized by 'duality balanced with difficulty between a politico-military system increasingly showing its domination over a Sérèr type laman [landkeeper] system. Lineal education is unable to restore the counterbalance once the influence and

domination of the colonial empire have intensified the military force from the top down, and broken the continuity of social rapports through trade dealings, from the bottom up' (1980:146) [our translation].

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

In order to properly trace the channels for an enriching future, one must keep in mind the articulation between formal, non-formal and informal sectors of the educational domain. As to the formal sector, Cheikh Anta Diop (1979) particularly stressed the importance of national languages in writing about the African renaissance.

The Necessity for an Education Based on the African Languages

A person learns better in the mother tongue because of an indisputable accord between the spirit of a language and the mentality of the people who speak it. Moreover, it is clear that years of delay in acquiring education are thereby avoided.

I quote an example. Take the following statement: a point which changes position creates a line. In order for a young African to fully comprehend this statement (and this yet remains to be seen), he needs a minimum of six years at school to master the foreign language's syntax and know sufficient vocabulary. The same statement could have been given in Valaf (for example) to the seven-year-old child the day he started school; in the previous case, six years had to lapse before giving it to him at the age of thirteen, six years during which much trouble was taken to create from nothing a less suitable instrument of instruction for him than that which he had from birth.

If one implemented an education using the medium of an African language, one would soon be aware of many an error; among others, one would see that the Negro, far from being devoid of logic, could even make light of the abstract difficulties of mathematics and that what is an obstacle for him is rather the symbolism of mathematics taught in a foreign language which he does not know well. The Negro is obliged to make a twofold effort: to assimilate the meaning of the words and then, by means of a second mental effort, to grasp the reality expressed by the same words. Often these poor teaching methods lead to a complete rupture with the real, with which contact is only re-established slowly; this would not have happened if the person had been taught in Valaf. A reality expressed in the mother tongue has a certain something that is banal about it, hence the African is sufficiently in command to know how to master it, on the one hand, and, on the other, the chance of any error as to the meaning of the words is negligible. The case is quite different if the reality is expressed in a European language. In this event the reality is as if wrapped in a watertight membrane, separating it from the intellect, the latter only adhering to phrases and terms as if they were magic formulae and which, in themselves, constitute knowledge. And it is by this psychological process that, in our case, the memory acts as a substitute for

rationale and, for this reason, the intellectual faculties are not even given the opportunity to be put to the test so that they can be judged.

Furthermore, the study of languages is of all the more historical interest since we are unaware — until now — of any ancient script. Indeed, by studying how languages have evolved from each other, a sort of linguistic chain can be formed, starting with the first and proceeding to the most recent language, a chain which would teach us about a clearly very significant period of our history. That is why research on African history requires linguistic skills.

The cultural problem above all else is therefore the following: that of the creation of languages appropriate to the speaking needs of all African nationals of whatever cultural level. But this problem in turn presents difficulties about which we have no delusions.

The notion that European languages are more widely spoken in Africa than native languages is false. What is true is that European languages are spoken in the large centres by a handful of intellectuals, thereby giving the impression that they are widely used, whereas the entire inland mass speak the mother tongue; and it is out of preference for what is easy, laziness, lack of will and lack of decisiveness, a morbid preference for intellectual and moral enslavement, that we endeavour to content ourselves with European languages, not for deliberate, practical reasons. It is often alleged that the mass is uneducated and illiterate: it is easier to teach it an alphabet than a foreign language.

It is commonly argued that Africa will never know linguistic unity. Africa needs linguistic unity no more than Europe does. But it is entirely wrong to think that this apparent multiplicity of languages poses a serious obstacle to the formation of a native culture. Indeed, barely four of the 600 languages generally cited are of any importance, the rest being mere variants spoken by a small group — as were European regional dialects: Basque, Gascon, etc. Now, when a dialect is only spoken by a handful of people, it constitutes neither the base of a culture nor an obstacle to such. In Africa, therefore, there are not 600 languages but only four that can be developed to become the medium of the entire African thinking. And this depends solely on the firm will of the Africans and a decision on their part for intellectual and moral emancipation.

Among the difficulties to be overcome is that of the adaptation of the terms and the necessary modification of the echo of certain words in the native conscience so that a definite form of literature can be created; this would require a veritable revolution of our psychological conscience.

It is common to mention the example of the Gauls whenever people shrink from tackling difficult problems. One even tries to prove that this is the action of ineluctable historical law. We consider that these are two distinctly separate situations. In fact we are unable to see how the different tribes of Gaul could have deliberately rejected a Roman influence. There is an essential difference between our situation vis-à-vis the rest of the world and theirs vis-à-vis ancient Rome. For humanity has since acquired a new factor in the course of its evolution: the

possibility of expanding culture within the people thanks to modern means for the diffusion of thought: press, radio, cinema. By reason of all these modern methods of propagation, which are peculiar to the modern world, there are more possibilities of acquiring knowledge, and consequently more possibilities for effective action. It therefore seems strange to us that this aspect of modern life can be cited when intellectual enslavement, the opposite of what it should bring about, is accepted.

Despite all these difficulties, we have realized that, by extending the meaning of words, by giving a scientific definition to certain others which until now only had a general meaning, and by implementing a few quite legitimate rules which conform perfectly with the spirit of the Valaf language — which we take as an example — we could have a vocabulary sufficient to permit the use of Valaf for all secondary education in Senegal, and even for a large part of higher education. From basic geometrical definitions to differential and integral calculus, there would thereafter be nothing that we could not adequately express in Valaf; and we do not despair of going further. Highly important works, even those marking the great turning points in human thought, could also be translated.

We remain convinced that it will suffice for the black nations to wish to make the same effort as the European nations, in order for the former to achieve similar results with the development of their languages. (Cheikh Anta Diop 'Quand pourra-t-on parler d'une renaissance africaine', an article published in the *Musée Vivant*, special issue number 36–37 November 1948:57–65, and again in *Alerte sous les Tropiques*, Présence Africaine 1990:35–38.)

As regards the non-formal and informal sectors — in other words, society, relations between the communities and within the family, in short, traditional, popular and extracurricular education, Diop (1979) comments as follows: 'The entire African people is divided by ethnic barriers which we, through ignorance, believe to be impervious; this is detrimental to the sense of unity demanded more than ever before by the historic circumstances in which we find ourselves.'

How Can the Problem be Solved?

In proving an indisputable blood relationship between the Sérères, the Valafs, the Saras (the people of the 'labret-wearing negresses'), the Sarakhollés, the Toucouleurs, the Peuls, the Laobés, I pronounce henceforth absurd any ethnic prejudice among nationals aware of these different groupings. This principle should be applied throughout Africa by our brothers from other regions.

Social Barriers

Within the ethnic barriers there are social divisions formed by the stratification of African societies into castes. Although greatly diminished, particularly in the towns, these divisions continue to separate numerous elements of society.

Precipitating their removal is a way of hastening the fusion of all the social strata and of all the African groupings into one people.

By explaining the origin of the castes, the historic circumstances in which they were created, their absurdity in the new economic structure and the present danger in which they find themselves, I am endeavouring towards solving the problem of the entire division of all the elements which should be united in a common struggle.

Absence of Modern Methods of Expression at the People's Level

The importance of this last matter is evident as soon as one presents the problem in the following way.

What can be done for the average African so that he may acquire a modern way of thinking (the sole guarantee for adaptation to modern life) without being obliged to use a foreign language, as this would be an illusion?

If one is in agreement over this manner of presenting the problem, immediately the need is felt to give importance to the study and development of the African languages in order to render these suitable for expressing the exact sciences (for example, mathematics, physics), technology, philosophy, etc.

By creating a scientific Valaf vocabulary (for physics, mathematics, etc) particularly by translating into Valaf the résumé of the most modern theory of physics (the relativity of Einstein, the résumé of the Marxist doctrine, and even musical tunes (such as the Marseillaise), by creating a modern Valaf poetry, I believe to have contributed to eliminating certain prejudices regarding an alleged natural inadequacy of our languages, all the while indicating the only realistic path which will lead us to authentic culture and to the adaptation of modern science to the African national soil.

I must confirm that I have analysed all the objections that an African could have raised in this regard, that I have made a preliminary study of the genius and the origin of the Valaf language, which I chose as an example, and that I have given much thought to the philosophic aspect of the matter, to micronationalism, and other issues.

Problems with Regard to Extracurricular Education of the People

If we wish to effectively address the African people with any educational goal in mind, we will soon realize the necessity for resorting to African languages. Preliminary work to render these languages suitable for expressing modern reality in its entirety would mean eliminating the major obstacle to extracurricular education of the people.

Finally, one of the principal interests of this research programme is that it should serve as a basis for a culture henceforth conscious of itself, with all that it comprises in the way of reinforcement of the African personality.

It is essential to point out that this work does not aim to establish the imperialism of some territory or other; it serves as an example of a principle which should be

applied throughout Africa.' (Cheikh Anta Diop 'Vers une idéologie politique africaine', an article published in *La Voix de l'Afrique*, see the *Bulletin de l'Association des Étudiants du RDA*, and reproduced in *Alerte sous les Tropiques*: 52–54.)

An Educational Agenda for Africa

The African experts convened by the regional office of Unesco in Dakar in preparation for the Jomtien International Conference of Education (1990) could also not ignore the importance of putting African educational problems into perspective after an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of traditional education.

They defined 'two referential axes, the vertical one which is oriented from the chronological upstream towards the downstream of time, and where realities as determinative as genetic and parental ancestry, age, etc are found. The horizontal axis refers to alliances and associations with other lineages, other young people (age groups, etc). The biological and the sociocultural always interfere to create the rights and duties of the child with respect to others' (Ki-Zerbo 1990:36).

They reduced the different stages of African education to the following:

- The first biophysical integration with the first rupture which weaning constitutes.
- Integration into a specialized society which attaches importance to self-education, special training.
- Initiation, where the reference axes (vertical and horizontal) merge. This system of education had strong points which could be summarized in a word — the importance of 'related knowledge':
 - 'relation of general knowledge to practice;
 - relation of education to production;
 - relation of education to society;
 - relation to culture through the mother tongue as well as through the immersion of the elements of knowledge into cultural practices (games, masks and religious rites, dances, music, sport, etc);
 - finally the relation of this education to recognized ethnic values ...' (Ki-Zerbo 1990:40).

This system also had its weak points amongst which the experts have listed:

- 'a poor level of abstraction and generalization ...;
- a poor coefficient of accumulation and diffusion.

This education was also not open enough to others outside each ethnic or even village group.

Finally the initiation rites were sometimes excessive (mutilation), indeed even fatal' (Ki-Zerbo 1990:39).

As much as we think we should be cautious about the formulation of the first weak point listed,¹⁴ I think it is important to stress the limitation, which is partly

explained by the blocking of written traditions at a certain moment in African history. In fact, Africa (which developed several systems of writing, as Professor Theophile Obenga has shown in his work *Africa in Antiquity* (1973), knew no phenomenon comparable to that of the printing revolution which occurred in Europe at the beginning of modern times.¹⁵

For this reason, after the great clashes with the other large Near Eastern or Mediterranean civilizations, we are witnessing a 'silent disintegration which, to a large extent, explains the current problems and collapse in the education system' (Ki-Zerbo 1990:41).

African societies have had their foundations shaken; a type of economy as well as political systems which generally serve the interests of foreign or autochthonous minority groups, middlemen, have been imposed on them.

The men are in the mines, the fields, the factories, on the construction sites, 'the women, after bearing the children, have to rear them alone and prepare the present-day Negro slaves' (Ki-Zerbo 1990:42), and 'the African towns are often not the driving forces behind the African countrysides, but miserable showcases and dumping grounds for a distant centre, whose achievement they are structurally incapable of repeating' (Ki-Zerbo 1990:45).

Is there any reason for giving up? Certainly not! On the contrary, attention must be paid to the new growth on the dunghill; this new growth generally constitutes forms of positive adaptation to new situations in order to take up past and new challenges which are the struggle for democracy, self-sufficiency with regard to food, health, peace, the preservation of the environment, etc ... And in this new adventure Africans will be keen to reappropriate new communication technologies, by developing in them specific contents in accordance with their history and their aspirations.

And in the combat for the new African orientation in educational processes, African civil society will have to consolidate the work that it initiated within the framework of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (Hamburg 1997) and the Seventh MINEDAF (Durban 1998).

We hope that the perspicacity already apparent on these occasions will become more marked during the meeting at Dakar in April 2000 which has been set up to evaluate the Declaration of Jomtien in 1990 regarding Education for All.

THE PLACE OF EDUCATION IN THE REVITALIZATION OF THE PAN-AFRICAN IDEAL

When considering Pan-Africanism, problems relating to strategy and tactics were often eclipsed by declarations of good intent and the publication of enthusiastic programmes. Those who did give some thought to questions of strategy and tactics did not fail to question themselves on the concepts and notions, the consequences and the domains of intervention. They are certain to reflect on the place of the educational processes in the birth and resurgence of the Pan-African project.

The Concepts and Notions

Those who drew up the manifesto for CIFAN (Initiative Committee for Federalism in Africa) had well perceived *Pan-Africanism* as the ideology and policy of the Pan-Negrism working class. For them the considerations had made manifest their limits, economic regroupings and military alliances likewise.

The latter had therefore chosen a federation of associations of states and communities which had been affected without restraint. In their mind African federalism is open to the Blacks of the diaspora.

BF Tchigoua had added to the Pan-Africanism/Pan-Negrism perception the problems of the *African nation* and the *Negro nation*. His view was to reject the idea of the formation of a single nation in a foreseeable future and to agree to confront concrete problems within the subregional boundaries. Unity would not necessarily signify the formation of a single federal state and a single nation. The expression 'African nation' would refer to a group of states sharing a certain number of ideals and values such as *solidarity*, *social justice*, autonomy with respect to the outside world. (See Tchigoua 1991:51–62.)

Professor Amin Samir is of the opinion that one cannot ignore the Arab element in Africa: 80 % of Arabic speakers are African. Africa on the whole is a diverse continent. There is no single African culture. There are African cultures.

Professor Samir (1990:45) reminds us that relations between the countries north of the Sahara 'have been neither better nor worse than relations between all the peoples, including those between the Blacks themselves'.

Another division which slows down the unifying processes is that between regions that are French-speaking, English-speaking, Portuguese-speaking, etc. Within Senegambia abundant examples reveal the cultural and linguistic affinities between African countries.

This information is drawn from implicit or explicit assessments of experiences in the past. Tafsir Malick Ndiaye (1992) thus indicated the occurrence of several obstacles along the path of unifying experiences: among other problems, he cites the ideological contradictions between systems of government, the design of foreign powers, the distinct personalization of power in Africa.

A clear awareness of the objectives, as well as the obstacles at potential and virtual level, will make it possible to determine the domains of intervention.

The Domains of Intervention

One of the first tasks, both for the groups who have already drafted projects and for those groups in the process of formation, has been to identify the domains of intervention.

In this respect, the Senegalese preparatory committee for the First Congress of States and Peoples (CNP – Panaf 92) published a list of suggested subthemes for communications and reports. The following domains were noted: *political* (rights

and liberties, state, system and political regimes), *economic and financial* (agriculture, finance and currency, infrastructures, economic planning, economic integration), *sociocultural* (arts, education, languages, religions, scientific, technological and media matters, subregional and international cooperation).

The objectives of another group of the Pan-African movement, actuated by the Nigerian Osahon, were defined thus: *ideological* (liberating and protecting the African conscience), *political* (defending and protecting the interests and rights of the entire black race), *economic* (encouraging blacks to be self-sufficient), *scientific and technical* (introducing adaptable, adequate and flexible techniques, products and ideas), and *cultural* (identifying positive aspects and ensuring their predominance).

It now remains to be seen how clear, realistic policies can be implemented in order to achieve these objectives.

So as not to extend beyond the limits defined, we will endeavour to develop educational issues which are at the crossroads of human issues.

Research — Information — Education — Animation

Those who drew up the CIFAN manifesto rate the importance of information among the minimal psychological conditions. Information and research are inextricably linked.

The different movements which claim to have their roots in the Pan-African project have considered that such a task requires organizational support in various forms: national committees, district departments, institutional bodies in schools and universities, in companies, in political parties, in trade unions and in NGOs.

Education — if one needs to be reminded — can serve to consolidate the unity of a group in the affirmation of its cultural identity, and it can serve as a springboard for developing peace, for expanding the economy and, to a certain extent, for resolving conflicts.

But it can serve to justify aggression towards other groups and to incite violence and hatred.

This action is more or less easy according to the degree of homogeneity within the group considered. If the entire group is complex, it is necessary to institute a systematic policy to ensure the peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups who are connected historically, geographically, economically and politically.

Different approaches are possible; what is essential is to ensure that the ethnic groups cannot impede the development of the African nations, and neither must the nations suffocate the ethnic groups.

In the educational programmes, therefore, for both the formal and informal sectors, the question of national and African unity must find a choice place. The information section dealing with the realities of the continent and with the history of its civilizations must be handled correctly.

As a result of initiatives taken in the Mandingo milieu, an entire community of erudite people today use the Nko alphabet in Guinea, Mali and the Ivory Coast. Exchanges of information and experiences take place between them.

Other initiatives exist in the Al Pulaar milieu. Discussions have, in some cases, brought about a project for creating a Peul or Al Pulaar trans-state political entity (which extends beyond the present frontiers of the different states where the Al Pulaar community is represented).

Did not Professor Cheikh Anta Diop say: 'the most revolutionary reforms would concern the teaching of history' (*Jeune Afrique* No. 1155, 23 February 1983:37)?

In his opinion this subject should be taught in all university faculties. Correct information can help to bring down certain artificial barriers (White Africa/Black Africa/Hamitic Africa/authentic Negro Africa). It can also help to form a clear awareness of historic relativity. One would then see how a certain people, dominated today, blocked in its initiatives, reduced to its primitive state, is, in fact, heir to a brilliant civilization.

We were given the opportunity in 1990 of witnessing, during the launching of the International Year of Literacy (at the IBA Mar Diop Stadium in Dakar, Senegal), scenes of great Wolof chauvinism. It was evident that the youth responsible for these excessive outbursts had not been educated along the lines of mutual comprehension between ethnic groups.

Africans would realize that a certain phenomenon of civilization, esteemed or disparaged in one area, is perceived differently elsewhere (for example the phenomenon of castes).

It would likewise be possible to greatly reduce incidents of irredentism by proving the permanence of immigrant influxes. It would then be possible to demystify autochthony.

Africans would also realize that no people is more courageous or intelligent than any other. Everywhere people have tried to adapt to their environment and fought against injustice.

Finally they will understand that they have one common destiny. Indeed, a portion of the continent which falls into an invader's hands is a bastion which has collapsed.

Another subject worthy of particular attention is linguistics: interesting experiments in the teaching of second languages in Mauritania, for example, have shown that the youth of the different ethnic groups are very receptive. Had it not been for the deadlock orchestrated by chauvinistic milieux, in particular the Beydaan in the government, the linguistic and national issue in Mauritania would have made great progress.

Even better, a successful experiment in any country can be examined and elaborated in another (the *Spider* newspaper and the *AALAE Review* have played an important role in this field).

The information section should be coupled with that of education, which must be theoretic and practical. Projects such as the MDT (Management Development

Training) and the TAP (Technical Assistance Project) have enabled NGO members of the AALAE (African Association for the Literacy and Education of Adults) to make exchanges over these essential issues.

The results of this education must, in turn, be brought to the attention of the NGOs and governments in the form of journalistic information or of a permanent programme of educational activities such as meetings, seminars, symposiums.

But in order to realize this ambitious programme, we need resources of a human, material and financial nature.

- Men and women exist: they must be sought out, exchanges between them must be encouraged, they must be assisted in their education. Structures exist (Association of African Universities, BREDA [Bureau Régional de l'Unesco pour l'Éducation en Afrique, in Dakar], Unesco, etc): they must be used to their best advantage.
- The material and financial elements must first be sought out on the continent. Several associations and projects have collapsed or risked collapsing because they have relied principally on foreign financial backing, as was proved by the AALAE affair.
- The piloting of a strategy presupposes resources and particularly the creation of pools of human resources, as well as the establishment of networks which stimulate creativity and healthy competition.

In this way, even if one structure disappeared, there would be others to pursue its objectives in another form.

The AALAE wanted to develop unity and solidarity between teachers of adults from the same country, from a subregion, on the continent. It developed solidarity with the rest of the world through ICAE (the International Council for Adult Education). This reflection on education and training serves to highlight the importance of making assessments.

However, this must not exempt us from reflecting on our attitude towards influential and authoritative powers (economic, religious, customary and political). Consequently, we must do all we can to avoid being transformed into an institutional static power, whose sole preoccupation is to maintain itself, and which repeats the same errors as many social, political, cultural and economic structures.

A choice must be made between the course of responsibility and that of opportunism (see Fouler 1990). Responsibility goes hand in hand with freedom of thought and action, and with emancipation from every form of domination likely to be permanent and absolute.

Endnotes

- 1 '... the type of family structure involving ancestral beliefs and cults, in which Fustel de Coulanges has taught generations of philologists to recognize the basis of the antique City, finds its counterpart and its best commentary in the social system spread generally throughout almost all the populations of the equatorial and subequatorial region, and particularly amongst the agricultural communities of western Sudan. It is interesting to note that it is precisely within these same civilizations, which — according to the conception described above — represent a cultural stratification easily linked to the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean world, that can be observed, as we will see, the development of institution where the connection with the orgiastic cults and Hellenic rites becomes obvious, a connection which has been established by the observers themselves.' (Jeanmaire 1975:166)
- 2 '... let us at least recall the interesting page on which Leo Frobenius has recorded traditions concerning the foundation rites of the walled cities in the Sudan, as directly described by Mandingo informants; it is superfluous to note that they inevitably evoke the foundation traditions of the Latin *oppida etrusco rito*.' (Jeanmaire 1975:166)
- 3 By studying the distribution of local civilizations in large zones from the north to the south of the continent, one obtains, in a way, the equivalent of what an ideal section would give, in the countries of the northern hemisphere — in Mediterranean Europe for example — showing superposed civilization strata through the ages. Generally speaking also, southern Africa — even if we confine ourselves to the black populations of this region — brings us face to face with a more *ancient* [our emphasis] state of the institutions, of which a more *evolved* [our emphasis] form predominates in the average zone of Congolese, Guinean or Sudanese societies. The northern zone, in its turn, offers more modern, even if archaic, features, in comparison with the culture of western Europe. If these North African features can be defined as medieval, the subequatorial features ... on the other hand, take us back several millennia before our era to the period which immediately preceded the development of the Mediterranean civilization.' (Jeanmaire 1975:165–166)
- 4 Although the author seemed to think at one stage that initiation applied solely to boys (Jeanmaire 1975:173), he revised his thinking (1975:182 and 186) to include feminine rites.
- 5 '... the descriptions of the Belli type education have awakened among European informants recollections of the Spartan education' (Jeanmaire 1975:129).
- 6 The author, born in 1910 in Rufisque, after studies in the Arabic (Koran) and French languages (primary and secondary schools) was employed as a teacher, then as an inspector of primary education until he died in 1961.

- 7 Readers might recall that the author wrote, in collaboration with Léopold Sédar Senghor, *La Belle Histoire de Leuk, le Lièvre* for children. He published other works: *Tounka, une Légende de la Mer* (Paris, Présence Africaine 1952); *Maïmouna* (novel) (Paris, Présence Africaine 1958); *Nini, Mulâtresse de Saint-Louis* (Paris 1954); *Moudou Fatim* (short stories) (Diop Publications, Dakar 1960).
- 8 This criticism reappears in *Civilisation ou Barbarie* (1991: 279). Cheikh Anta Diop believes that in order to correctly define cultural identity, particular emphasis must be given to historic, linguistic and psychic dimensions. The fact is, the supporters of Negritude have been too specific as regards this third factor.
- 9 Cheikh Anta Diop pays tribute to Césaire for this attitude in the preface to *Nations Nègres et Culture*, 1979 edition, TIP, 5.
- 10 'H Jeanmaire was the first to present a systematic account on the topic, placing the accent on the light which Africa could throw on the obscure legends or misunderstood rites in Greek Antiquity. At present, if the ideas developed by Jeanmaire on Spartan cryptology or on the role of the young community in the Achaean world have been questioned in part, if his ethnosociological information appears somewhat dated, his essential thinking nevertheless remains valid and is integrated in recent studies on agrarian societies' (Symposium 1978:237).
- 11 Professor Kane had attached importance to the mystical, technical, socio-professional dimensions, the relationships between young people and adults, boys and girls, the physical and moral elements (Symposium 1978:261).
- 12 Thus Jean-Georges Texier had asked Mr Woronoff if the different tribes (or ethnic groups) about which he had spoken to us had, at one time, been conquerors or if they had had very pronounced military characteristics (Symposium 1978:257).
- 13 This thesis was defended on 17 December 1977 at the University of Paris V, and was published by the workshop responsible for the reproduction of theses, University of Lille III, 1980.
- 14 Consult in this regard the work of Powell & Frankenstein (1997).
- 15 Concerning Africa and writing systems, the book of Simon Battestini, *Écriture et Texte, Contribution Africaine* (1997), is very interesting.

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