

Response

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Reed's essay comes as a long awaited challenge for us to take a better look at ourselves as educational providers in Africa. We are challenged to take a more realistic view of both our successes and failures. He achieves this by highlighting selected incidents in the life of the North American segment of our church. He draws informative conclusions which serve as principles, and landmarks that can be ignored only at our own peril as institutions of higher learning. The lessons he arrives at are worth repeating here and they are as follows:

- Lesson # 1: From the very beginning, the Church of the Nazarene has believed that educational preparation is essential to effective ministry and to the Christian life.
- Lesson # 2: The Church of the Nazarene's educational aims will always be better served when a spirit of cooperation exists between its educational providers, rather than a spirit of competition.
- Lesson # 3: The Church of the Nazarene recognizes the need for a strong agency that will advocate, coordinate, develop, and strategically deploy our educational resources.
- Lesson # 4: The Church of the Nazarene's educational providers have shown a consistent willingness to change with the times or to shift paradigms in order to meet new needs and challenges.

Understanding our history will not only give direction for where we are going but will sensitise us of our present status - hence, leading to an appreciation of our identity. Such an identity lies in the recognition of our cultural diversity which enriches the African tapestry. Africa has experienced a lot of development in all spheres of life, of which education played a vital role. There were also numerous harsh realities which to a certain extent shaped the world-views of our people. The saying is true, 'once bitten...twice shy'. The continent has survived colonialism and its ravaging effects, apartheid and the hatred it breeds as well as economic deprivation despite the abundance of vast natural resources. There have

been wars and persistent civil disorders, hunger and malnutrition, natural disasters, as well as diseases that culminate in the loss of life. Lesson # 4 is a recognition of the need for change thus keeping our education providers on the sharp edge of effectiveness.

The Church of the Nazarene has invested huge sums of money and continues to do so towards the professional preparation of men and women for various roles of ministry. Missionaries have done a commendable job on this continent and the ball is now in the court of the indigenous people. The question that comes to mind is: Has Africa learnt anything from her rich heritage? Are we now free of the “think and do for us” syndrome? There is the need to address the problem of a brain-drain from the church into the secular world. We hope the opportunity is abundant for those already trained to exercise their expertise and leadership skills to the highest structural level of the church (local, district, field, regional and even general). This can compliment our efforts as educational providers!

I fully concur with Reed’s lessons #2 and #3 as these are fully in line with the structure and direction education is taking on the continent. While there is room for development, ANCA (Association of Nazarene Colleges in Africa) has been the foundation for the realization of the African dream and NES (Nazarene Education Services) has played the pivotal role of stirring all the education providers to realise their potential. ANCA has brought together at various times all the stakeholders. This has enabled them to get to know one another and foster a spirit of cooperation and sharing of ideas. This has been the beginning of greater things, as this will later develop into an easier exchange of faculty, students, and other resources.

As Reed has drawn valuable information from the history of our counterparts in the West, it will be a good thing if those same concepts were to be identified from the immediate history of the Church of the Nazarene in Africa. Our history will thus need to be well documented in such a way that it will help us avoid repeating some of our errors. We need to involve everyone in doing this (especially at the grassroots level) in order for our education to be meaningful and thus avoid a situation of “us-and-them” between the different segments of the church and the educational providers. The lessons identified in the essay will help us to remain rooted in a solid foundation which will help us to cope with the times while remaining unshaken.