

JOSEPH KI-ZERBO (1922-2006) – SELF MADE DEVELOPMENT¹

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Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo is undeniably one of the contemporary African thinkers who have marked their epoch.

He is a classical intellectual moulded by the French school and university system during the colonial period who experienced in mind, body and intellect the agonies of the various abuses that colonization—its rationale, objectives and methods—inflicted upon the African, especially Black African, peoples after the turn of the century and even before. His keen awareness of his origins, his commitment to his country and people, his gratitude to his continent and the strong, healthy spirit of revolt smouldering within him combined to make him a leading activist in the early days of the national and African liberation struggles—though this constant activism was nurtured by the knowledge he had acquired in the colonial education system.

Ki-Zerbo is a true scholar indeed. He holds an agrégation in history and graduated from the Institute of Political Studies in Paris. Already at the time of his studies he personified the transdisciplinarity or 'indisciplinarity' (Edgar Morin) that later became the epistemological backdrop of the approach to African development issues that he was to advocate. 'Knowledge of only one science amounts to possessing none', as Descartes wrote in *Rules for the direction of the mind*. Ki-Zerbo has always understood this and made it a way of life. He is a passionate reader and has shown a sustained intellectual curiosity about traditional African, Burkinabé and Samo life and wisdom; these have been for him an inexhaustible, stimulating source of knowledge and inspiration for current emancipation struggles and for further development.

After finishing his studies Ki-Zerbo remained true to the spirit of his generation of intellectuals and did not fall into the role of one who sits back, affectionately but passively extolling the folksy virtues of Africa, while self-importantly resting on the laurels bestowed by the former colonial rulers. On the contrary, he understood very quickly that, far from being an end in itself, the knowledge he had acquired was in fact a weapon, a means of participating alongside the African peoples in their struggle for development. Indeed, it placed an additional responsibility on his shoulders and though he had learnt 'at the White Man's school' to 'win without being right' (Cheikh Hamadou Kane), it stirred his conscience. As someone who had been lucky enough to go to school, he felt a moral, almost sacred duty to repay the debt he owed to his country. Ki-Zerbo is an African scholar and activist par excellence.

It would be tedious in a text such as this to take full stock Ki-Zerbo's life's works and thinking, especially as he is still alive and has many more strings to his bow. Rather, we shall attempt, at least initially, to describe his role as one of the outstanding educational theoreticians and practitioners of contemporary Africa.

As if to bear out the saying that 'no one is a prophet in his own land,' Professor Ki-Zerbo is better known and appreciated abroad as an eminent, highly cultivated scientist and specialist of African history, in which he is an authority, than in his native Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta).. Yet, he stands as a symbolic figure of contemporary Black African struggles and in his own country has almost legendary status, casting his aura, omnipresent if sometimes discreet, over all the great events of Burkina Faso public life.

¹ The following text was originally published in 1999 in *Prospects: the quarterly review of comparative education* (Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education), vol. XXIX, no. 4, 1999, p. 615–627. Ki-Zerbo passed away in 2006, what cannot be taken into account in this text. The original title was "JOSEPH KI-ZERBO (1922-)".

The title is taken from a good translation of an innovative expression in French by Ki-Zerbo: "Le développement clés en tête" ('self-made development', literally 'the keys to development are in our head'). This was the title given by Professor Ki-Zerbo to the paper: *La natte des autres (pour un développement endogène en Afrique)* [Other people's mats (for an endogenous development in Africa)], published in 1992, p. 3 – 67, in. proceedings of the symposium of the Research Centre for Endogenous Development (CRDE), Bamako, 1989. Paris, CODESRIA/Karthala.

Ki-Zerbo has always been present in the national political arena, in particular through the National Liberation Movement, the party he set up in 1958. He has directly or indirectly influenced the course of events, either quietly, masterminding developments from behind the scenes, or taking a bold public stance as a convinced (if not always convincing) political player during the infrequent periods of various length when, thanks to democratic trends, political struggles and debates took place in the open.

Like most of the intellectuals of his generation, Ki-Zerbo is a politician but he is also and primarily a theoretician, a player in and fervent advocate of African history, about which he has worked hard to enlighten major intellectual circles, especially in Europe. History as an academic discipline has served as a constant paradigm in his extraordinarily full intellectual life and in the invariably bold positions he has taken on all the fundamental issues of the day concerning his continent and his country. These include political and development matters but, above all, education, to which he has made important theoretical and practical contributions.

The full and impressive variety of his work as an African historian and activist during the years of decolonization helps to provide a deeper insight into the theoretical and practical contribution that Ki-Zerbo has made to education in Africa.

Intellectual hallmarks of his thought

From the outset, one question about Ki-Zerbo's intellectual life and, more specifically, his thinking on education persists: what are the origins of his insistence on the idea of 'thinking for oneself' that he argues is the prime basis for all authentic human action and has special validity for Africa? The answer can be found in his personal history, the education he received from his traditional society, his clear preference for the classic authors of Western literature (ancient Greek philosophy and Enlightenment thought), the great pride he takes in belonging to the continent that was once the cradle of humanity and the impact of the historical process of decolonization. These seem to be the main determinants of his intellectual and social position, which may be summed up as a plea for Black Africa's identity, independence and freedom.

Ki-Zerbo can be said to have internalized early—perhaps in reaction to the dominant ideology with its particular perception and treatment of Africa and Africans—Kant's Enlightenment maxim: 'Sapere aude! Have the courage to use your own understanding!' (What is enlightenment?). The maxim that one must always think for oneself, in other words refuse the irresponsibility of servile acquiescence and, instead, assume the responsibility of reasoning independently, finds expression in the constant drive to seek within oneself and by oneself the touchstone of truth and the pathways to emancipation.

Hence Ki-Zerbo's aversion to emulation and to 'turnkey' or 'ready-made' development and his advocacy of the spirit of creativity, imagination and 'self-made' development, that is, endogenous development. Hence, too, his apparently contradictory position, that some find hard to explain, in seeking both to respect and to call upon tradition (the past, customs or received wisdom) and to make the necessary leap into the unknown. It is true that he regularly stresses the importance of viewing the past as a mere frame of reference to be taken into consideration only insofar as it places individuals in relation to their 'roots' and encourages them to realize 'from whence they come' in order to know 'where they are going' and 'how to get there'.

Depending on the political, historical and cultural context of people's lives and the extent to which they are driven by the need to wage an ongoing fight for emancipation, the issue at stake is to make individual African pupils or researchers aware that they are capable of thinking and that 'thought can only develop by itself'. All development is from the self to the self: this is the essence of the Socratic spirit engaged in making each person discover his or her power and wealth before seeking it in others, whether they be professors or foreign powers.

Ki-Zerbo's insistence on this approach as a necessary starting point for any reflection or useful action should not obscure the fact that the above-mentioned contradiction is only apparent. Ki-Zerbo is well aware that people, as he stresses, must avoid locking themselves into the straight-jacket of Kant's 'logical egoism' that he asserts encourages them to 'think alone', to turn inwards, be blind to all else and isolate themselves in solitary subjectivism—even though the author of *Anthropology* does recognize that 'thinking under the iron rule of a foreign power amounts to not thinking at all'. The current historical situation rules out this kind of

extreme, and so does objective thought, i.e. truth: those who do not verify their opinions and who do not come into contact with others and compare their views are unable to arrive at truth and thus to contribute to their own critical reflection and their own development or that of their country. The exercise of freedom of thought is indeed a personal matter but even so it is not a private matter. It is a public matter.

The contradiction nevertheless persists, above all in cultural and psychological terms: today's African intellectual is, deep down, a person of contradiction, lost between traditional roots that are slipping out of reach and a future that is both filled with uncertainty and slow to arrive because the present itself is a problem. At least Ki-Zerbo has had the merit of acknowledging this and experiencing it, not merely in a sentimental way but in practice and in his thinking on politics and education, as his academic training as a historian predisposed him to do.

Ki-Zerbo's direct involvement in the field of education began with his professional career as a history teacher. After passing the agrégation in 1956, he taught at the Lycée Buffon in Paris, the Lycée Pothier in Orléans and the Lycée Van Vollenhoven in Dakar (Senegal) before going on to the Lycée Donka in Conakry (Guinea) (1958–59) and finally, the Lycée Philippe Zinda Kaboré in Ouagadougou (then Upper Volta).

Of these milestones in his career, his short stay in Conakry, the capital of Sékou Touré's Guinea, merits some attention for obvious reasons. He was one of the intellectual patriots who, in a surge of militant pan-Africanism, rallied to the banner of Guinea as it rejected the French constitution on 28 September 1958. France immediately subjected Guinea to reprisals for having said 'No' to the referendum proposed by General de Gaulle. All French key personnel, many of whom were teachers, were subsequently recalled. For these young revolutionary intellectuals it was a question of asserting their solidarity with the Guinean Democratic Party and the people of Guinea, their anti-imperialist outlook and their determination to work to achieve genuine African independence.

But very soon President Sékou Touré (Tenaille, 1979, p. 193–95) made life difficult for them. He was terrified of intellectuals who he rightly or wrongly considered 'counterrevolutionaries', 'agents of the Fifth Column armed by international imperialism', who were there to destabilize his government and subvert his revolution. He may not have been altogether wrong, even though there were instances of clear over-reaction and misjudgment. As a result foreign key personnel very soon returned to their countries while some Guinean intellectuals chose to go into exile.

Ki-Zerbo spent only one year in Guinea and eventually, in 1960, returned home to newly 'independent' Upper Volta, a country that certainly needed him just as much. The school enrolment rate in Upper Volta was barely 4% and there was a critical shortage of key personnel at all levels of national life. Everything still had to be done for this ill-treated former colony that at best had been used for the development of neighbouring colonies in a way, of course, that suited the interests of the colonial power.

In the field of education in particular, two main challenges urgently needed to be resolved: the need to increase educational provision (by building children's school structures and by setting up teacher-training colleges) and to improve the quality and efficiency of an education system that was a faithful replica of the colonial school system. To break with this model was difficult for both objective and subjective reasons, even though such a break was— and, alas, still is—necessary.

After the unhappy experience in Guinea, Ki-Zerbo—at the time the only holder of an agrégation in Upper Volta and for this respected in his country—committed himself fully to the renewal of education in Africa. The aim to which he was to dedicate his entire life was to promote genuine and harmonious development for the benefit of the peoples of Africa and his country. To this objective, he has participated in the training of the future cadres that the country has needed and will need, contributed to the definition and later to the provision of democratic education, which he sees as the driving force of the development and emancipation of peoples, and played a key role in inter-African institutions and international forums for which education and culture are crucial concerns (OAU, UNESCO and UNICEF).

In Upper Volta he became successively, and often cumulatively with his teaching duties (at the secondary school and later at the Higher Education Centre of Ouagadougou), Chairperson of the National Commission for UNESCO, Schools Inspector and finally Director General of National Education. At the African and

global levels, he was Chairperson of the History and Archaeology Committee of the First Congress of Africanists in Accra in 1962, member of the bureau of the Congress of Africanists (1962–69), Chairperson of the Symposium on the African Encyclopaedia (1962) and Chairperson of the Advisory Commission for the Reform of University Curricula in French-speaking Africa. Later, he was one of the originators and the first Secretary-General of the African and Malagasy Council on Higher Education (CAMES) (Ki-Zerbo, 1978, back cover). Through the standardization of higher education curricula and the common definition of career promotion conditions for university teachers, this inter-African institution contributes to the achievement of African unity through education. The present list of Ki-Zerbo's responsibilities is far from exhaustive: he is a man who knows education in Africa 'inside out', with its problems and their causes, and has not finished putting forward proposals to resolve these issues.

As we can see, the epistemological benchmarks of Professor Ki-Zerbo's thought are self-confidence based on 'self-knowledge', 'thinking by oneself for oneself', a sound understanding of otherness, critical reference to the past and the irreplaceable importance of research based on popular African wisdom. It is, therefore, not difficult to see why he ascribes so much importance to education, in the full sense of the term, armed as he is with his conviction that 'the key factors of African promotion' are 'education and training' and 'African unity' (Ki-Zerbo, 1978, p. 632).

Education theory and practice according to Ki-Zerbo

Ki-Zerbo seems to have adopted a systemic approach in both his thinking and his proposed action: regular linkage between theory and practice; interdependence between the past, the present and the future; a global and integrative perception of man and development; and the adoption of a unitary approach by the African continent to its holistic and harmonious development.

His concern with transdisciplinarity reflects this very principle. In Africa, perhaps more than elsewhere, there are no disciplines, there are only problems!

Professor Ki-Zerbo has produced many specialized documents systematically devoted to education, such as *Educate or perish* (1990), but his thoughts on education are to be seen in all his works, if not always explicitly, always aptly. He thus reveals his strongly single-minded representation of education, a transverse 'phenomenon' par excellence. For a deeper insight into his thinking, it is worth taking a closer look at some of his more influential works, such as *History of Black Africa* (1978) and *Other people's mats (for an endogenous development in Africa)* (1992).

For example, it is in his famous book on the history of the Black continent that we can grasp the significance and importance of education as a means, a working tool (both theoretical and practical), rather than as an end. It is the vital link in the long process that should provide the answer to the question that he certainly considers most crucial: 'How can one be born again?' The question may sound absurd, and yet it betrays a certain nostalgia for the past; it is an existential question about the causes of the present situation of the continent that was once the cradle of humanity² but is now lagging behind for want of science, technology and knowledge.

Although Ki-Zerbo believes that African unity is paramount in relation to education and training, he looks more readily to intellectuals than to politicians to establish an 'autonomous, creative and progressive African neo-civilization', the only one capable of building a momentum for development. He has faithfully held to this conviction in addition to the other conditions for development, derived primarily from the vast field of knowledge. Of the three types of 'diversion' which he denounces as impediments to African renewal and must be avoided—'sterile diversion towards the past', 'economic diversion' and 'technocratic diversion'—the first is the one to be avoided as a matter of priority.

Each of these 'diversions' should elicit a specific intellectual reaction: combating and overcoming 'the museographical complex' about the past (which consists in physically recording the past instead of communing with it as a source of inspiration and possibly seeing it as a problem to be understood and

² Ki-Zerbo. 1992, pp. 22–24. In particular p. 23: 'The fact is that the first scientific techniques were brought to the world from the African cradle, and continued to be until the millennia during which Egypt was the teacher of Greece and the entire Mediterranean Basin.'

solved); remaining attentive to ‘the non-aligned’ people, the custodians of ‘genuine culture’, a culture which ought not be piously admired, but, on the contrary, should be thought out, rationally analysed, even criticized before it becomes the generator of the new African culture. The latter will be neither the ‘culture of our ancestors’ nor the one that is attempting to impose itself on us without our consent and sometimes against our will³. This shows just how significant a role, indeed how heavy an historical responsibility, Ki-Zerbo expects the African intelligentsia to have in education in Africa.

By ‘education’, Ki-Zerbo does not mean only Western-style school education, but also traditional education that has produced so many intellectuals, scholars and scientists (Ki-Zerbo, 1978, p. 642). Schooling, on its own, does not meet all of a person’s educational needs, indeed far from it! It is merely one of several opportunities; while being certainly the best organized, it does not follow that it is the best opportunity—this is especially true for Africa. He nonetheless often refers to school and university education and scientific research in his ongoing reflections on the conditions of development in Africa. In this regard, on good argumentative and moral grounds he attacks certain non-African schools of thought and intellectuals that, still today, persist in denying the urgent need for or the merits of developing African university education. Instead they place emphasis on basic education and elementary technical (especially agricultural) education, on the debatable pretext that Africa is too poor to sustain universities and that it is basically agricultural⁴.

Effective universal basic education is still a priority for a number of African States, given the low school enrolment rate. And literacy instruction is still a pressing development issue, considering the state of illiteracy affecting so many adults, especially in the countryside. But, left to themselves, without the stimulating contribution of the universities and scientific research that would ensure the necessary shifts in emphasis and adjustments, basic education and literacy instruction will reach an impasse and be discredited, eventually causing the disaffection and turning away of learners and their families. To be effective and efficient, they must undergo the necessary changes in structure, functioning, content and aims in order to achieve the cultural and psychological emancipation of their beneficiaries and meet their social expectations. As we shall later show in more detail, Ki-Zerbo has done a great deal in this field as well, especially in Burkina Faso.

In the meantime, we shall merely point out that he entrusts to the intellectuals, i.e. academics and researchers, a special task, the task of being leaders ‘of a spiritual migration without uprooting’, to be accomplished through the medium of education that they have received and impart. It will be achieved first of all through ‘Africanization’ of curricula and the implementation of a method of teaching that will focus primarily on cultivating a ‘new spirit’, a spirit of observation conducive to creation by unleashing the imagination and the healthy curiosity of children. Such a method perforce involves the introduction of African languages⁵.

The allusion to the limits of traditional African education, including the veneration of memory and excessive introversion, is obvious here, as is the denunciation of contemporary education, which is provided almost exclusively in French and strongly resists the use of national languages. In fact, it is now recognized that, although having had its virtues, precolonial education is inadequate to cope with the sheer range and astonishing mobility of the knowledge and references that must be assimilated and the requirements of contemporary science and culture. The oral mode of communication (the only one used in traditional education) cultivates memorization, but it is less effective than the written word in fostering intelligence and sustained reflection.

Here again, universities must play the ‘leading role’: through science and technology they must, among other things, strive to link classical education to popular education on the basis of systematic acknowledgement of the real needs and aspirations of the masses and the requirements of the contemporary world. It is also their responsibility to usher in the new culture that Africa now needs, one that demands sublimation of the past.

³ ‘It is no longer so much a question of extolling negritude but of acting. It is not a question of bemoaning a lost paradise because there is no lost paradise. It is not a question of crooning about our pain or of celebrating our past values, but of transforming our own collective self in order to there find reasons for hope.’ Ki-Zerbo, 1978, p. 643.

⁴ Ki-Zerbo alludes directly to certain international institutions (World Bank and IMF) and certain authors like Guy Belloncle, the author of *Education in Black Africa* (Belloncle, 1984).

⁵ According to Ki-Zerbo, French should increasingly be learnt ‘as a modern foreign language taking the substratum of the African languages into account’ (1978, p. 642).

On account of all these theoretical principles, we feel that Ki-Zerbo's contribution to the theoretical and practical emancipation of education can be aptly summed up by the following two equivalent bywords: 'self-made', as opposed to 'turnkey', development and 'endogenous development'.

Practical significance and implications of Ki-Zerbo's standpoint

In terms of meaning, these bywords are expressions that encapsulate what has become a real obsession for Ki-Zerbo, namely, the absolute primacy of education and the equally imperative need for self-reliance. They recur like a leitmotif in the work of this African intellectual who, proud of his origins and aware of the mission to be accomplished for his country, is deeply concerned about the careful handling needed for the present to 'process' the past in order to prepare for the future.

While, as we believe, the first byword has been sufficiently explained, some attention must be given to the second, if only to remove a measure of ambiguity owing partly to the way in which the epithet 'endogenous' could be interpreted. First, 'endogenous' does not mean 'autarky' or turning inward, or unilateral and obsessive reference to the past or to the 'traditional' way of life. Rather, it implies self-assertion as a preliminary to any dealings with others.

The limitations of the 'hand-out' or 'turnkey factory' policy and its harmfulness to Africa's development are sufficiently obvious. For a long time and all too often, others have thought for Africa and in its stead, confining it to a position of being perpetually 'under age'; sometimes it has been even considered incapable of knowing what it wants. The assumption is that people can be made happy 'behind their backs', without their participation or even having their views listened to. Ki-Zerbo refuses to accept for Africa and the Africans 'the artificial limbs that make it unnecessary for us to use our own legs' (Ki-Zerbo, 1992, p. iv). Of course he does not object to international aid and co-operation among peoples; 'contemporary civilization' is also the civilization of a world seen as a global village with its necessary and ever-growing interdependence. Nonetheless everyone must add their stone to the edifice and have their say without risk of being over-ridden and subjected to the dictates of a few.

The kind of 'endogenous development' referred to here means self-development achieved through research, training and practical action and a rejection of childlike imitation, misplaced nostalgia and isolationism. All these are the pitfalls of tendencies still to be found among many African leaders (politicians or decision-makers and intellectuals alike): the easy but deceptive tendency to copy or mimic what happens elsewhere; the tendency to lament the past, those misnamed 'good old days'; the tendency to seek in vain 'the African path to development' by isolating Africa ideologically from the general movement of an epoch to which by necessity it belongs; and, lastly, the tendency to expect benefit from the fruits of human labour that are in fact the accomplishments of some more than others. A common African saying quoted by Ki-Zerbo tells us that 'to sleep on other people's mats is like sleeping on the ground'. Even if, as Saint-Exupéry would say, being human entails being proud of the victories of other people, still, one must be aware of having taken part in the struggle. And this is exactly what Ki-Zerbo recommends for Africa: 'endogenous development' implies and requires that it should shoulder its responsibilities and bear them freely, while making its contribution to the construction of humanity.

The fact is that on many battlefronts Africa has been conspicuous by its absence, or has only appeared under cover, preferring to be under the wing of a foreign country. The excuses given in the past to justify this shortcoming are hardly admissible today. In principle Africa now has the indispensable prerequisites needed for responsible, specific participation in development: international sovereignty and the technical and intellectual skills. We say 'in principle', however, because our potential still remains all too often in the virtual realm of possibilities without managing to take hold in reality. Here again, research and development and university education will certainly be necessary. 'The mere fact that 85% of research on Africa is conducted outside Africa shows that this continent is cut off from itself and above all from its grey matter' (Ki-Zerbo, 1992).

The African brain-drain, the extraneousness of research in relation to the realities and concerns of the continent, and the paucity of the resources allocated to science are clearly among the structural causes of the tardy and flawed development of African countries. The Balkanization of African universities, a regrettable

manifestation of the Balkanization of the entire continent, further compounds the situation. It is urgently necessary, if not vital, to include universities among the preserves of national sovereignty. Unfortunately, most higher education establishments and scientific research centres are still financially dependent. Worse still, their policies are out of alignment with their priorities. No one has had the courage to assert this and denounce the present system better than Ki-Zerbo. Even more importantly, he is one of the few African intellectuals who have not only noted this painful fact but have also thrown themselves into action. In addition to the part he played in founding CAMES, several other facts attest to this commitment: first, at the conceptual level, through his constant references to 'self-made development', 'research-development', 'endogenous development', 'a 'learning society' and other such concepts, and then through his establishment and leadership of various educational and research centres.

Ki-Zerbo has not been content to criticize and indulge in intellectual speculation and facile theorizing; he has also taken practical action on the ground.

Ki-Zerbo, an education practitioner in Africa

One may wonder whether in Ki-Zerbo's case educational practice preceded educational theory or the latter inspired the former. The question is far from gratuitous and the answer is by no means obvious. He was a teacher in one form or another at various levels throughout his working career, but all teachers do not become educational theoreticians or philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Abdou Moumouni, Pierre Erny, Guy Belloncle or others. On the other hand, many educational 'theoreticians' have never been famous teachers or educators, for example Rousseau; others again, like Kane, confined themselves to just a few thoughts on the problem in their novels. As far as the African continent is concerned, Ki-Zerbo is one of those intellectuals who have successfully combined theory and practice and have been committed to putting their philosophical and political ideas and convictions into practice rigorously and consistently.

Although Ki-Zerbo has never been Burkina Faso's minister of education, his presence, implicit in some instances and explicit in others, in the determination of education policy has been constant. For example, we strongly suspect that he was the author of, and most importantly the brain behind, the first genuine reform of the country's education system in 1970, after the inconclusive experiment with rural education (1962–75); in fact, the general lines of emphasis of the 1979 reform reappeared nearly verbatim in the famous study that he directed for UNESCO–UNICEF entitled *Educate or perish*. The key ideas are the same: integral and comprehensive education encompassing all levels (basic, secondary and university education); democratization of education; linkage between education and training; narrowing the gaps between rural and urban dwellers through and in education; establishment and leadership of a 'learning society' and social integration of the school; enhancement of African culture and action to overcome an inferiority complex through the adoption of national languages and a positive interpretation of African history; education for democracy and for the defence of human rights; development of technical education, vocational training and scientific research; and unity of the continent, the main gateway being education against African disintegration.

Ki-Zerbo has remained faithful to his convictions regarding education and puts them into practice. His most fundamental credo seems to be that 'we do not develop, we develop ourselves'. His training as a historian as much as the history of his race, his continent, his country, and indeed his own personal history have all played a part in this. That same conviction led him to found the Centre d'études pour le développement africain (CEDA— Centre for African Development Studies) in Ouagadougou in 1980. CEDA, run by Burkinabé and African intellectuals, was set up as a forum for debate on a number of themes linked to development issues. This body, which he leads with young researchers in various disciplines, aims to become, through its research-action approach, a focus for cultural renewal in Burkina Faso.

In addition to his work with this centre, Professor Ki-Zerbo continues to play a leading role in national intellectual life by giving numerous lectures at various venues, whenever his wisdom and competence are required. A pilgrim to the end, he attends most African meetings, where he is graced, to his legitimate pride, with the honorific title of 'doyen', a symbol of recognition rich with connotations in Africa.

At the continental level, he helped to found the *Centre de recherche pour le développement endogène* (CRDE—Research Centre for Endogenous Development), which is based in Dakar and significantly has as

its motto ‘we do not develop, we develop ourselves’. Looking beyond this motto, which in itself embodies a whole philosophy of struggle and life, this NGO, established on an inter-African and interdisciplinary basis, could stand as the tangible expression of Ki-Zerbo’s high level of commitment and his life-long search for meaning. This is revealed in the founding principles of CRDE: ‘Research is an integral part of development, as one of the components of the right to development and also as a structural stage in all positive change. Without endogenous research, there is no endogenous development. There is no progress, even material progress, without theoretical reflection, without science and awareness of practice⁶. CRDE’s mission is to break with a practice, a pattern that has unfortunately become the norm for African organizations, in which speeches, declarations of intent and easy accusations occupy the centre. The aim here is to apprehend the contradictions, issues, risks and present likelihood of non-development in all fields; to bring up-to-date, by means of practical studies, the dynamics of the internal and external reasons why Africa is ailing, in particular by analysing the linkages between them. The Centre’s statutes proclaim that it is necessary to contribute to the building of a society that is both a positive contemporary version of Africanness and a positive African version of ‘contemporary civilization’. And Ki-Zerbo adds: ‘We thereby wish to participate in self-development through research, training and practical action’ (Ki-Zerbo, 1992).

What words could sum up better the intellectual approach and devoted commitment of a man whose profound optimism is equalled only by his faith in the future of the African continent? The future will either require education or it will not exist.

Conclusion

Professor Ki-Zerbo’s philosophy of education is, by its nature, a set of principles and professions of faith. Although his bold analyses specify conditions that are certainly realistic and achievable, they still come within the province of theory—a practical theory, but a theory nonetheless. What will be its fate? Now that the necessary components of education in Africa have been defined, we ask about its future. When it comes to actual implementation, one vital factor has yet to come into play. It should have been confronted once the debates and research by intellectuals such as those called upon by CRDE and CEDA had been completed. It is the political factor. The time has not yet come when, short of having ‘philosophers’ in power, the people in power are ‘philosophers’.

The difficulties that the philosopher Ki-Zerbo has encountered and still encounters on the national political scene seem to give cause for some pessimism. His party (successively called the National Liberation Movement, the Progressive Union of Upper Volta and finally the Party for Democracy and Progress), with its heartland in the small intellectual bourgeoisie, is obviously finding it difficult to elicit a response among the people at large, even though, under the banner of his principle of ‘critical realism’, Ki-Zerbo has never been totally absent from the national political scene (Tenaille, 1970, p. 203).

Furthermore, the continent’s political independence—one of the necessary conditions for thoroughgoing reforms in all fields, especially that of human resources training and the free definition of options for endogenous development—is still an unresolved issue, as is democracy.

But ‘the struggle goes on’, as Ki-Zerbo likes to repeat at the end of each of his political statements. With constantly renewed strength, we must persist in repeating the truth. Imperceptibly it makes headway, irrespective of obstacles. It will gradually make its mark on education in Africa. Undeniable achievements have been made here and there and there is a growing awareness, even among political decision-makers, of the inescapable need for ‘new African education’. The road ahead will certainly be a long one but there is room for hope: one day, ‘Utopia’ might become reality.

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