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The implications of Nyerere's theory of education to contemporary education in Kenya

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The question of relevance regarding education in human society is perennial. In the developing countries, education is considered to be a panacea for development. In Kenya, various efforts at curricular review and reform have time and again been undertaken to address the relevance of education. This paper attempts to analyze Nyerere's theory of education with the view to render salient ideas that can contribute towards the formulation of worthwhile theories of education in the context of Kenya's 21 century realities. Accordingly, Nyerere's views, namely, 'education for self reliance' and 'education for liberation' are analyzed. Consequently, it is evident that contemporary education in Kenya is inadequate in several ways. It is therefore recommended that education in Kenya should embrace a multidimensional orientation that ensures the liberation of the individual, leading to the attainment of self reliance.

Key words: Education for self-reliance, education for liberation, ideal education.

INTRODUCTION

Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the former and founding president of the united republic of Tanzania, is known not only as one of the world's most respected statesmen and an articulate spokesman of African liberation and African dignity but also as an educator and an original and creative educational thinker (Kassam, 2000).

Before we embark on explicating his ideas on education, a brief biography is worthwhile. He was born in 1922 near Musoma, Tanzania. After his primary and secondary education, Nyerere proceeded to Makerere college Uganda, where he obtained a diploma in education in 1945, after Makerere, he returned to Tanzania and taught at St. Mary's school until 1949, when he was awarded a scholarship to Edinburgh university from where he graduated with a master of arts degree in 1952. Upon his return home he began to take an active part in Tanganyika politics. In 1954, he founded TANU (Tanganyika African National Union) and was subsequently elected member of Parliament during Tanganyika's first election in 1959, he became the first chief minister of the country 1 year later and was sworn in as prime minister of Tanganyika in May 1961. During the first presidential

election in 1962, Nyerere won the elections and become the first African president. He continued to be re-elected as president until mid 1980s when he retired from the presidency as well as active politics. He however, continued to actively participate in regional and global issues until his death on October, 14th 1999 (Bennaars, 1984; <http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/research/edu20/1999nyerere>) Apart from his involvement in politics, Nyerere was an articulate theorist of education whose views deserve explication.

Nyerere's views on education can be located within the nationalistic ideological view of education in Africa. Characteristic of this position is the view that education has to reflect and sustain national priorities, aims and aspirations. In addition, it has to translate the national ideology into curriculum (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986).

In line with the above view, Nyerere's publications articulate education for independent Tanzania and by extension, for Africa. Such publications include: education for self-reliance (1967), education never ends (1969/70), our education must be for liberation (1974) and adult education and development (1976).

A basic theme that runs through all these writings is that of education for self-reliance. Nyerere first articulated this idea in 1967. Later, he reflected upon this view and modified it into education for liberation.

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In this paper, Nyerere's views on education are examined with a view to determine the extent of their relevance to contemporary theory of education in Kenya. This analysis is concerned with 3 aspects. First, an exploration of possible theoretical contexts of his views on education is undertaken with a view to obtaining a basis for an intelligible discussion. Second, an examination of education for self-reliance is undertaken. This is followed by an analysis of education for liberation as espoused by Nyerere. This is followed by a delineation of salient views that can enrich contemporary education in Kenya.

Theoretical framework

The liberal theory

Liberalism envisions the ideal society to be one that embraces a wide range of individual liberties. These include, personal dignity, free expression, religious tolerance, right to own property, freedom of association, transparency of government, limitations on government power, the rule of law, equality, free market economy and free trade (Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/Liberalisms>).

It is incumbent upon government to uphold these freedoms in order to guarantee stability and peace. In addition, liberalism tends to encourage representative democratic governance. Here, the elected representatives are guided by the rule of law under the overall guidance of the constitution. Enshrined in the constitution are the rights and freedoms of the individual which must be safeguarded by the government.

Within the liberal milieu, it is evident that the enjoyment of individual freedoms and rights often infringe on other peoples' freedoms leading to tensions and conflicts. For instance the right to accumulation and ownership of property promotes social stratification. In addition, liberalism enhances capitalism. Nyerere's vision of society was based on Ujamaa philosophy that essentially under-scored anti-capitalist socio-economic milieu. In this case, Nyerere's world view tends to be at variance with liberalism. Next, the conservative theory is examined.

The conservative theory

Conservatism is a term used to describe political philosophies that favour tradition and gradual change, where tradition refers to religious, cultural or nationally defined beliefs and customs. The term is derived from latin, *con servare*, to preserve; "to protect from loss or harm". Since different cultures have different established values, conservatives in different cultures have differing goals. Some conservatives seek to preserve the status quo or to reform society slowly, while others seek to return to the values of an earlier time (Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservatism>).

Conservatives focus on preservation of the status quo. Within the status quo, a given order is supposed to be tirelessly conserved. For instance, conservatism consi-

ders society to be an organic unit that is hierarchical in nature. Social classes are, therefore, complementary and ought to be preserved. Conservatism is usually propagated by the elite who employ state machinery to protect and preserve the status quo in society. Nyerere's world view tends to cohere with the conservative theory to some reasonable extent.

First, he espoused Ujamaa as the basis of social and economic development. By Ujamaa, Nyerere meant three things: Work by everyone, fair sharing of resources collectively produced and respect for human dignity (Hinzen and Hundsorfer, 1979). Essentially, indigenous African communalism was to be adopted and adapted to post independent Tanzania. In addition, Nyerere advocated for the adoption of indigenous values such as respect for the wisdom of the elders.

The Marxist theory

The Marxist interpretation of society considers competition for material resources and wealth as the main cause of conflict. The social classes emanating from possession of property creates antagonism between them, one of which becomes the dominant or ruling class. The ruling class controls not only the means of material production but also the ideas of the epoch. In essence state machinery, state ideology and even religion are used to maintain the status quo.

Soon the contradiction between the forces of production and social relations become apparent leading to a class struggle that result into the overthrow of the dominant class. Here, the victors become the ruling class (Harrison-Barbet, 2001).

The Marxist vision of the ideal society is one that involves true community in which the individual will be able to cultivate his gift and achieve personal freedom. Nyerere's vision of an egalitarian society based on indigenous value system tends to reflect a Marxist social paradigm. In his book titled "Ujamaa- the basis of African socialism" (1968), he argues that pre colonial African societies were classless and socialist. He castigates capitalist societies as 'man-eat-man societies'. However, Nyerere does not advocate for a revolution of the masses in order to embrace his African socialism.

The foregoing reviews of theories depict a scenario where Nyerere's ideas relate more with conservatism and Marxism. Whereas Nyerere does not categorically state specific affiliation to any one of them, he tends to embrace certain tenets of the two theories. Next, an examination of Nyerere's view on education for self reliance is undertaken.

Education for self reliance

The term self reliance comprises two distinctive words. "Self" and "reliance". In this case a look at each of their meaning is important. Self in ordinary usage of the term may refer to the human being as "the agent" or the "I" of

the individual human being. It has to do with the individual's conception of his soul and body as being distinct from other souls and bodies (Blackburn, 1994). From a philosophical perspective, three broad theories emerge with regard to the self. These are: materialism, spiritualism and existential phenomenology.

Materialism and spiritualism belong to the essentialist's conception of the human person. Self in this regard is conceptualized as a thing, substance or an essence. In answer to the question, what entity does 'self' consist of? Materialists contend that it is virtually composed of matter. It refers to the empirical body with all its perceptions (Hume, 1978)

On the other hand, spiritualists perceive man as a soul. Here, self comprises the spiritual element of man. These being the case, the essentialist view of the human person pose a dilemma. In addition, he/she is basically a body or material. Such a dichotomy necessitates an attempt to reconcile the two positions. Such an attempt is evident in existential phenomenology. For instance, leading existentialists such as Heidegger and Hursell emphasize consciousnesses of things as they appear to the human person (<http://www.mythosandlogos.com/whatep.html>). As such, the material and spiritual/idealistic nature of the human person converge in order to make sense of reality.

Unlike essentialists, existentialists view the individual person in a two-fold manner. Accordingly, he/she is both a body (matter) and consciousness (spiritual) in unity. In other words, the human person is an embodied subjectivity. In addition, as a subject, he/she is transcendent. Transcendence here designates two important elements. First the individual person is incomplete, secondly, he is a project/ quest, that is, he strives to become more than he is (Macquarrie, 1986). Next, the concept of "reliance" is discussed.

"Reliance" points to a state of being that are dependent on something or somebody else. It refers to a bond of relationship where subject 'A' clings onto subject or phenomenon "B" for its being "A" and "B" in this case embrace an inter- subjective relationship. Viewed together, self-reliance refers to a situation where the embodied subjectivity, that is, the human person relies upon himself, for his being. Having defined "self-reliance" in general terms, let us now explicate Nyerere's idea of education for self-reliance.

Nyerere and education for self-reliance

In education for self-reliance (1967), Nyerere comprehensively presents the need for a radical definition of organization and content of education in Tanzania. The need arises from his diagnosis of the major pitfalls of inherited colonial education. Essentially, colonial education was founded upon the principle of capitalism. As such, colonial education entailed several features. First, it tend-

ed to promote a class of elites, thus encouraging inequality and class structure. Second, it divorced its participants from society and discouraged them from unconditional service to the community. Third, it tended to be formal, stressing book learning and dispensing traditional informal knowledge and wisdom. Finally, it tended to be unproductive, discouraging students and pupils from hard work. Post independent education in Tanzania simply imbibed the colonial aims and curricula, and thus enhanced its subsequent ideals.

For instance, post independent Tanzania embraced socialism or Ujamaa, as its socio- political and economic theory. The theory of socialism stood for three things; work by everyone and exploitation by none, fair sharing of resources which are produced by joint efforts, equality and respect for human dignity. This being the case education was of necessity to serve the purposes of independent Tanzania, by encouraging the growth of the projected socialist values (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1979).

Nyerere's envisaged condition for "self-reliance" puts society at the apex of concern. Anything that could promote the common good was regarded as of ultimate value. He placed a high value on the co-operative instincts of human beings.

Self-reliance in this case is the attaining of economic and cultural independence at a corporate level. This condition is likely to ensure that Tanzania will look to itself, in economic and cultural matters. It is apparent that the "self" depicted here is that of the mass of society, rather than representative of any concrete individual. It is an impersonal rather than personal life.

Nyerere's post 1967 educational ideas depict a shift or departure from the view of 'self' as a collective mass of society. Instead, Nyerere (1974) tends to advance the view that education should be for liberation.

A juxtaposition of this latter purpose of education with the initial definition suffices to demonstrate the shift of view. Initially, Nyerere (1967) viewed the purpose of education as being, to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society and to prepare the young people for their future membership in the society and active participation in its maintenance of development (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1979).

Initially, education was viewed as a means to transmit culture and fit individuals into society. The individual is thus subordinate to society. In the latter view of "education for liberation" the individual is given prominence. This does not imply that Nyerere abandons the initial values invested in the society, rather, Nyerere seems to have come to terms with the society individual polarity or else he would drown into a myopic state of mystifying the human condition.

At this point, Nyerere realized that to assign absolute value to society would reduce man in society to an object, whereas to grant the individual person ultimate value would contradict existential reality. In order to obtain a more

more realistic human condition, Nyerere opted to affirm the importance of society and that of the human person as a subject. Implied here are the view that each individual is unique as well as a member of society or mankind.

The quotation below captures Nyerere's later stance on education and provides a basis for further analysis of education in terms of liberation. In 1967, I defined the purpose of education as being the transmission from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society and their active participation in its maintenance or development. Today seven years later, I still think that this was a good definition intended to cover all kinds of societies. It was designed to be universal, objective and descriptive. As a guide for action, it therefore needs some expansion and emphasis, especially for Africa. The primary purpose for education is liberation" (Hinzen and hundsdorfer, 1979). Granted that the primary purpose of education is here designated as liberation, it becomes necessary to be clear on the concept of liberation.

Nyerere and education for liberation

The concept of liberation in philosophical terms can be understood in various ways. First, viewed from the stand point of logic, it implies "being freed from" what appears inhibiting, from constraints, in order to be able to do certain things. In this case, liberation presupposes a constraint whose removal enables man to do certain things. Second, when we view "liberation" from the stand point of philosophical psychology, it presupposes the specific entity or element to be liberated. Here, it may refer to either physical or mental constraints being removed. From the ethical point of view, liberation has to do with the ethical worth or value attached to the state or processes of liberation (Njoroge, 1990).

Looking at Nyerere's interest in the human phenomenon and not pure philosophical enterprise, we note that he does not restrict himself to any one sense of liberation. Rather he argues in an eclectic manner. To illustrate this point the following citation is useful: Development is for man, by man and of man. The same is true of education. Its purpose is the liberation of man from the restraints and limitation of ignorance and dependency.

Education has to increase man's physical and mental freedom to increase control over themselves, their own lives and the environment in which they live. Education has to liberate both the mind and the body of man. It has to make one more of a human being because he is aware of his potential as a human being and is in a positive, life-enhancing relationship with himself, his neighbors and his environment. The idea imparted by education or realized in the mind through education, should therefore be liberating ideas, that is, the skills acquired by education should be liberating skills. Nothing else can be properly called education. Teaching which induces a slave mentality or a sense of impotence is not education at all it's an attack on

the minds of man (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1979).

The above citation indicates the eclectic nature of Nyerere's view of "liberation". First, he coheres with what we have termed the logical view. Here liberation points to certain restraints and limitations that need removal. Such removal leads to the state of being where an individual is able to carry out certain tasks. Second, he embraces what we have termed a philosophical psychological view of the term "liberation". Central to this view is the identification of the essence of liberation. Nyerere argues that liberation should be directed to both the mind and the body. In this case, it has to attend to both the physical and the mental needs of the individual, meaning, the whole person. Finally, he underscores the value or worth of liberation to the human person.

Having identified the sense in which Nyerere perceives the term "liberation" certain observations concerning the idea of liberation are necessary. First, Nyerere perceives liberation as an on going process, involving systematic eradication of physical and mental impediments to freedom. For instance, Africa primarily needed political liberation during the colonial era. This was of necessity to be followed by eradication of political, economic and social structures at variance with the African subjectivity. However, post independent Africa has and continues to preserve euro centrism which has tended to make the African perpetually dependent. Such tendencies have forced the African to seek outside his own subjectivity, the criteria for worthwhile knowledge, skills and even ethical and aesthetic judgment. It is apparent that for liberation to be complete, it needs to be both physical and mental, either successively or simultaneously.

Second, Nyerere tends to stress on mental liberation as the key to the attainment of genuine humanity. Comparatively, physical freedom is of little or no consequence if the mind remains fettered. For instance, in spite of the political freedom attained in Africa, there still remains a form of imprisonment. Prevalent in this case, is a helpless resignation to circumstances. Third, Nyerere views the tasks of education as primarily the emancipation of the human person. Thus, he views education as a process of expanding the individual's freedom.

Arguably, education has to liberate both the mind and the body of the human person. It has to remove certain restraints and limitations to development, including poverty, disease, slavery, colonialism, ignorance and dependence. In Nyerere's view this can be achieved by releasing liberating ideas and skills to the mind of learners. This, he hopes is likely to increase control over themselves, their lives and their environment. The envisaged ideas and skills are radical in nature, such that they can shake people out of their resignation to the confines of fate and enable them to become aware of the things that they, as members of the human race, can do for themselves and for the society (Nyerere, 1973). In this case liberating education should make the individual aware of two things, his/her own humanity and his/her power as a human being to use circumstances rather than be sub-

merged in them.

Furthermore, Nyerere's view of education implies rational approaches to education in the sense that education should arouse curiosity and provoke inquiry. In this case, old assumptions and established practices are to be challenged. In their place, the human person should be able to think for himself, make his own decisions and execute these decisions. The main target of such an approach is the cultivation of the 'self' that is free and self dependent. The foregoing assertion does not in any way, exalt a state of individualism; rather, it tends to underscore the essential role of free people in building up a free society. Moreover, a society of liberated individuals tends to be preferable for the realization of self-reliance and development.

Implications of Nyerere's ideas on education to contemporary education in Kenya

The themes of 'education for self-reliance' and 'liberation' underscore Nyerere's vision of the ideal education. These themes are relevant to contemporary education in Kenya. For instance, the necessity of freedom as a pre-requisite for creativity is worthwhile. In essence, both physical and mental liberation are vital to realize self-reliance. Moreover, liberation as conceptualized in dynamic terms is relevant. It implies a continuous process of praxis where the individual is able to reflect and act in overcoming obstacles in his/her environment.

The development of relevant education, to fight ignorance and enhance economic growth has preoccupied the Government since independence. Immediately after independence in 1963. The sessional paper No. 10 of 1965 on African socialism and its application to planning in Kenya set a policy and pace for fighting illiteracy, ignorance and poverty in the country. Since then, the education sector has been subjected to more than ten reviews by state funded special commissions and working parties. The major reviews include: The 1964 Ominde commission, the 1976 Gachathi report, the 1981 presidential working party on the establishment of the second public university, the presidential working party on education and manpower training for the next decade and beyond and the 1998 master plan on education and training task force (Abagi and Olweya, 1999). These reviews are an indication of the extent to which the government and other stakeholders have gone in search for a policy framework and laying strategies to make education serve the nation and meet the country's development needs.

However, these efforts at curricular reform in Kenya have failed to fully address fundamental principles of education. A case in point is the four fold rationale for the present 8-4-4 system of education. First, the system aims at responding to the challenge of national development. Second, the system is assumed to consist of a more relevant curriculum due to its practical oriented curriculum that encompasses a wide range of employable

opportunities. Third, the 8-4-4 system aims at ensuring equitable distribution of educational resources. Finally, it aims at offering technical and vocational education, particularly, to equip students graduating from every level with scientific and practical knowledge that can be utilized for self employment, salaried employment or further training (Nasongo, 1997). The Kenya vision 2030 further underscores the outlined rationale with more emphasis on science, technology and innovation in education for rapid technological development.

Based on the stated rationale, it is noticeable that the economic development aspect tends to be the overriding aim of education in Kenya. That is, once one attains certain employable skills, practical or otherwise, then such a person is considered a successful product of the education system. Apparently, this view is limited since the human person comprises of various dimensions, the economic dimension being one, albeit an insignificant one. Besides, the development aspect emphasized in the economic pursuit is conceived in a rather limited manner. It is often misconstrued to imply the realization of visible aspects of modernization, in terms of large buildings and complex machines (elements of technological advancement), to the relative neglect of the intellectual foundations of genuine development.

In addition, the pedagogical process of education tends to emphasize the cognitive dimension reflected in the largely examination based focus and the meritocracy associated with it. In the final analysis, education tends to ignore the imparting of knowledge and skills for life, rather, it focuses on selection and placement of the few who pass examinations at the detriment of the majority who fail to perform well. Thus, the process of liberation of the human person is not attained. Similarly, the vision of self-reliance as advocated by Nyerere remains a mirage. At the same time, over emphasis on examinations tends to exclude the realization of other dimensions of education, namely; creative, dialogical and normative dimensions that are essential to the attainment of genuine education (Njoroge and Bennaars, 1986). It is apparent that the prevailing scenario of education in Kenya needs transformation if it is to address the myriads of challenges facing the country, namely absolute poverty, high levels of mortality, squandering of public resources and ethnic conflicts (Ombaka, 2007).

Conclusion and recommendations

In this paper, we have examined Nyerere's views on the ideal education for Africa. This task consisted of examination of educational ideas against the theses of "education for self-reliance and "education for liberation". In the process, we have been able to delineate distinct ideas which in our view form Nyerere's contribution to the understanding of the ideal education for Africa.

Accordingly, it is worthwhile to underscore the fact that education being a social activity, needs to be founded on

a clear social theory with well established tenets. In Nyerere's Tanzania, this was well in the theory of "Ujamaa" or African socialism. In this case, education is to target the realization of well conceptualized national aspirations. Education should also develop the subjectivity that is unique to each individual. This subjectivity or 'self' should be one that can think, decide and act. This, in turn, should ensure that educational products are creators and not submerged creatures and mere consumers.

In addition, the subjectivity that is envisioned in existential terms should be achieved through the process of liberation. Here, liberation is perceived as a dynamic term and as a process, it presupposes inhibitions both in the physical and mental realms. The continuous struggle to overcome these inhibitions is what should constitute education. Finally, the entire educational enterprise should aim at "self-reliance". The subjectivity envisaged and realized through the process of liberation points to the element of the 'self' meaning that the ideal education should develop an individuality that can rely on itself. Consequently, self-reliant individuals point to a self-reliant society.

An overview of Nyerere's ideal education reveals certain positive contributions: First, Nyerere proposes the invaluable need for a clear vision of society in terms of what it ought to be in ideal terms. Such a vision takes into consideration what we feel is Nyerere's second contribution, thus a clear or stated theory of man. The two elements should be given fundamental consideration when viewing education for Africa. Nyerere has considered both aspects and presented education for Africa, as education for self-reliance.

The above orientation is subject to a glaring limitation. To peg an ideal education on a stated social theory is restrictive. It assumes that the human person is reducible to a particular essence. However, in reality, the opposite tends to be the case. Otherwise, it would have been possible to conclude that the apparent disintegration of Ujamaa policy in Tanzania has brought education for self-reliance to nullity.

Finally, it is time to re-think the theory of education in Kenya. In the process, a clear vision of the human person and the ideal society should be established upon which curricular and pedagogy should revolve. Perhaps, this may ensure a genuine basis for a tenable vision 2030.

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