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**Education for Self Reliance:
Nyerere's Policy Recommendations in the Context of Tanzania**

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Abstract

Education for Self Reliance (ESR) was the most important educational principle, which presented the educational philosophy of Tanzania. The purpose of ESR was to set down principles of education, which would serve as a revolutionary influence in the creation of the new social society. ESR is about gaining self-independence, responsibility and democratic involvement; it is education, which is meant to liberate individual from over-reliance. However, the extent to which education in most African countries like Tanzania has been able to meet its objectives in terms of creating a sense of independence is still speculative. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the general aims of Education for Self Reliance and to highlight Nyerere's recommendations for the policy of Education for Self Reliance with reference to Tanzania. The recommendations include the following: education should be of relevance to the society; educated individual must serve the society, education must be problem solving and education must be work oriented. Under these self reliance educational provisions, Nyerere comprehensively presents the direction that education should be able to take for countries like Tanzania. Overall, this paper provides a framework upon which tenets of education for self-reliance can be applied in today's education policy formulation and design of practical-oriented education systems in Africa developing economies.

Keywords: Education for Self-Reliance (ESR), Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Tanzania Education Policy, Education systems in Africa, Aims of education for self reliance, Vocational education, Practical education, Tanzania philosophy of education



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1.0 Introduction

Nyerere (1967) depicted the collective mass of society as 'self'. Therefore, Education for Self-Reliance (ESR) means delivering knowledge about 'self-reliance'. According to Nyerere, the policy of self reliance means that Tanzanian's development should depend on her natural resources. The concept of Education For Self Reliance is also about self-confidence, independence, responsibility and democratic involvement (Rahumbuka, 1974). Although ESR is supposed to liberate an individual and society, most of the African countries such as Tanzania seem to be lacking these elements as revealed by the problems facing the citizens including poverty, ignorance, moral decadence, false beliefs, social disintegration, economic dependence, exploitation and social injustice. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the general aims of Education for Self Reliance and to highlight Nyerere's recommendations for the policy of Education for Self Reliance with reference to Tanzania.

2.0 General Aims of Education for Self-Reliance

The ESR system of education in Tanzania had the following general objectives: To equip learners with knowledge, skills and attitudes for tackling societal problems; to prepare the youth for work in Tanzania's predominantly agricultural society; and to enable learners know, appreciate and develop a culture of Tanzania that preserves the national tradition, individual freedom, responsibility, tolerance and respect (Tanzania Ministry of Education, 1982). Thus ESR aimed at developing in each citizen an inquiring open mind; ability to learn from others; basic confidence in one's own position and ability to learn and contribute to the society. The education encompassed *Ujamaa* or socialist outlook, which entail a sense of individual and collective responsibility in all areas of activity and a willingness to co-operate and share on equal terms and an ability to appreciate and develop national culture (Tanzania Ministry of Education, 1982).

3.0 Nyerere's Recommendations for the Policy of Education for Self-reliance

Nyerere's policy of Education for Self-reliance contains specific recommendations, which are advocated on the basis of historical, social, political, philosophical and economic considerations of a society (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1982). The recommendations for educational reforms include: education should be of relevance to the Society; educated individual must serve the society, education must be problem solving and education must be work oriented.

3.1 Education Should be Relevant to the Society

Nyerere reiterated that education at all levels should be relevant to the community in which a learner lives. A learner should be in a position to live in a village and contribute, through work, to the development of that particular village. The foreign conception of education, that the Educated must serve the Society, which is usually isolated for the society, should be shunned and instead be replaced by value-oriented and integrated education (Nyerere, 1968).

In accordance with Nyerere's objective in the ESR which was to restructure the colonial-oriented system of education and make it relevant to the societal needs stated that:

Education has to foster the social goals of living together for the common goal. It has to prepare our young people to play a dynamic and constructive part in the development of a society where all people share equitably for the good of the group, and which its progress is quantified in relation to human well-being, not cars, prestige buildings, or other such things, whether privately or publicly owned. Therefore, our education must teach a sense of commitment to the general society and help the society to accept the standards suitable to a better future not those appropriate to the colonial past (Nyerere, 1968).

Nyerere's emphasis on the importance and relevance of education to society bears much similarity with the Russian policy of education, which stipulates that to educate a member of the soviet society means to educate that person so that he/she can understand the interests of the Russian society and that such a person shall have no personal interests which are opposed to the collective interests (Curtis, 1968). In the same way, the educational system of Tanzania should be relevant to the society in order to form an individual who can easily cope with the real situation in Tanzania and be able to utilize his/her education, in his or her own circumstances and give contribution to his/her own society. Nyerere's conviction on the power of a teacher to create the quality education reveal as he says, "the teacher's power is the power to decide whether "service" or "self" shall be dominant motive in Tanzania of 1990 and thereafter" (Nyerere, 1967).

Nyerere, in education for self-reliance emphasizes that all able bodied people including the intellectuals must work. He states:

For the truth is that many of the people in Tanzania regards education as meaning that an educated man is too precious for the uneven and devastating life which the society still live... even during the holidays we believe that young people and women should be protected from uneven work; neither they nor the society expect them to spend their time on stiff physical labour or on jobs which are not comfortable and are not pleasant...it is a reflection of the attitude we have all adopted (Nyerere, 1967).

Therefore, Nyerere urges and calls for a method of learning by doing. The practical method recommended is not only to aim at manual labor, but such learning by doing must be directed towards a productive, constructive or creative end which should lead in the long run to solving the problems of the society. Nyerere shows dissatisfaction with the students' participation or contribution in solving problems of society, when he says:

How many of our students devote their holidays doing a job which could recover people's lives without money; jobs similar to digging a drainage channel for a village, or representing the construction and explaining the importance of deep-pit latrines? Few have done such work in the National Youth Camps or through nation building schemes, organized by schools but they are the exception rather than the rule (Nyerere, 1968).

Nyerere is appealing to the educated to liberate the masses from human suffering. The concept of education emerges at the same time in Freire's book, *On Liberating Education* through his method of critical dialogical encounter. The publication of Freire's book coincides with the proclamation of Nyerere's education for self-reliance. Freire's second major educational book, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* was published in 1972. This work too advocates problem-solving education, which is called 'liberating education'. It is thus difficult to say whether or not Nyerere's policy of education for self-reliance was influenced by Freire's works. As regards relevance of education, Nyerere is establishing a delicate balance between the desire to access universal knowledge and the imperative to make that knowledge of use in our situation.

3.2 The Educated Should Serve the Society

Since it is the society, which has educated an individual, the learner has a debt to his or her respective society after his/her completion. In his speech to the University of Liberia in 1968, Nyerere showed clearly that the society invests in learners when he observed that:

We are spending large and disproportionate sums of money on a number people so that in the future, they should make a disproportionate return to the society. Just the same way as we invest in our tractor, we are investing in a man's brain: and just we expect the tractor to do much work for us which is many times as a hand-hoe, so we expect the student we have trained to make many times as great contribution to our well-being as the man who has not had this good fortune. We are giving to the student while he is at University, so that we may receive more from him afterwards. There is nothing altruistic about it; poor people can not afford financial altruism. We have the right to expect the things from university graduates and others who are professionals of any kind; we do not just have a hope, but expectation (Nyerere, 1974).

The relevance of education advocated by Nyerere has the ultimate goal of ensuring that eventually, the educated become servant of society in the struggle to eradicate disease, famine, poverty and ignorance. The learners should know that the community educates them in order that they may become effective and productive members of the society.

Nyerere's education for societal service is in line with Plato's statement that; "a fully educated person possesses not only knowledge but wisdom as well; and that he will see the moral necessity of putting his wisdom and his knowledge of all things to the service of the society in which he lives." The basic philosophy here is that the individual will contribute his service, resulting from his or her education for the prosperity of the society. The educated individual should know that he or she is a property of his or her community; hence, a person is an individual only to the extent that he or she is a member of a clan, community or a family (Mboya, 1963).

3.3 Educated Individuals Should be Integrated with Society

Nyerere has repeatedly warned that if the educated are to serve the masses of Tanzania, they must realize and recognize themselves as being part of the society (Nyerere, 1968). As De la Rue puts it, ‘no just society can be built on the bases of a privileged elite ruling a poor majority’ (Cliffe and Saul, 1973). If the educated are to serve the masses efficiently, then it is vital to ensure that the ‘servant’ is a part of the system he or she is expected to serve otherwise the service rendered will be no more than lip-service. The educated people if left to be in a camp of their own can apply methods and maneuvers, which will ultimately, ascertain their own class preservation imposing their superiority over the masses in order to keep the status quo. In this regard Nyerere comments:

Educated people in other words, can only be effective when they are full members of the society they are trying to change, involved in its good and bad fortune, and commitment to it whatever happens (Nyerere, 1974).

The educated persons should integrate themselves with the masses as well as influence them. If they do the contrary, it is a betrayal, since the society has invested in them.

3.4 Education should be Problem Solving

For educated people to serve the people and help in solving the problems affecting the society, it is implied that the educative process must involve not only training in specific skills and techniques through a method of practical work geared to problem solving, but also acquiring those habits which make him or her virtuous. These virtues will make him or her religious minded, courageous, truthful, good-natured and the like. This type of education will help him or her manage ones affairs of this world with foresight. Consequently, he will be happy and be able to contribute to the happiness of the society as a whole (Kingsley, 1962).

3.5 Education should be Work Oriented

Nyerere, as he has already indicated, prescribes that education should be work oriented and that the educated must be inculcated into a commitment to community service. He held that education should be service geared to eradicating illiteracy, ignorance, improving health standards and life expectancy, and perhaps above all the service that will enable the citizens to exploit and utilize their country’s natural resources for the benefits of the workers and peasants of Tanzania. In line with Nyerere’s view of ESR, Peter (1966) define the need for specialized education when he says, ‘education has also to prepare a comparatively smaller number of specialists in fields such as medicine, geology, hydrology, agriculture, fisheries, engineering, and textile engineering and veterinary science’.

The education provided must be vocational in orientation as opposed to the platonic culture of elitist education for its own sake. Socrates approved the training of men and women who would be engaged in specific jobs to solve the problems of ignorance, poverty and disease in society.

Socrates however warns that specialization must go with efficiency or high performance. Only through a combined approach to the problems of society can there be a pay off which ultimately benefits each individual in the society (Nyerere, 1967).

Nyerere's prescription for the educated individual to serve society does not subordinate the good of the individual to the good of the community as Plato holds. Nyerere, like Aristotle, believed that an individual acquires full happiness by being part of the society not only because man is rational but also because the individual human being, both social and political, has always lived in some kind of society (Curtis, 1965). The chief good of an individual lies in his being a member of society. This aspect shows the importance of specialization in different fields for the sake of building the whole society as one body. Each member of the society has his or her own talent, for instance being a teacher, an engineer, a farmer, a political leader among others. However, all these talents should be for the sake of building the respective society as one body. Therefore, vocational training is vital in the society. Nyerere had this vision, and this is why his ESR's system of education focused on different objectives following the different levels of education.

4.0 Conclusion

Education for self-reliance in Nyerere's viewpoint is a practical oriented education meant to provide real solutions to the societal needs. This kind of education is about work by everyone and exploitation by none; it is about sharing of the resources which are produced by fellow humans. According to Nyerere, Education For Self Reliance must set people free in order to encourage the citizens to rely upon their own developments and realize their full potentials. The educated individuals should serve the masses; they must also realize and recognize themselves as being part of the society. Thus, they should apply the knowledge and skills they acquire for the benefit of the society. However, the extent to which education systems in Africa have been able to promote self-reliance among various communities remains shaky. Thus, there is need to re-think about education systems that are practical oriented and society centred in Africa's context.

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