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JULIUS KAMBARAGE NYERERE

(1922-)
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Julius 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. Before launching his political career, he was a teacher, and as a result of his writings on educational philosophy and the intimate interaction between his political leadership and educational leadership for the country, he is fondly and respectfully referred to by the title of 'Mwalimu' (teacher) by Tanzanians and others. This is Gillette's view of him:

Indeed, part of Nyerere's charisma lies in the fact that, before launching his political career with the founding of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in 1954, he was a teacher and that his concept of his role as national leader includes constant reassessment, learning and explanation, i.e. education in the broadest sense. Since Independence, and particularly since the threshold year of 1967, Tanzania has been something of a giant in-service seminar, with Nyerere in the professor's chair (Gillette, 1977).

Many features of his educational philosophy have a universal relevance and have inspired many educators and educational and development organizations around the world. In particular, his educational philosophy has often been regarded as an appropriate and rational educational alternative for many Third World countries. It has to be understood in the light of the realities of underdevelopment, perpetuated by colonialism and nascent capitalism in many Third World countries, including the United Republic of Tanzania. More specifically, it has to be understood in relation to changing the inherited Western model of education in a poor and developing country aspiring to a self-reliant and socialist development, for, in the final analysis, it is the goals of egalitarianism and human-centred development that characterize Nyerere's political ideology.

Nyerere's philosophy of adult education and adult learning is considered very progressive amongst the international adult education community and non-governmental organizations engaged in development work. His philosophy of adult education resonates with the concepts of 'conscientization', empowerment and liberation very akin to the ideas expressed in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, while his ideas on adult learning are very similar to the theories and principles of adult learning of such renowned adult educators as Malcolm Knowles of United States and J. Roby Kidd of Canada. It was because of his vision of, and commitment to, adult education that he was approached to become the Founding Honorary President of the International Council for Adult Education in 1973.

The bulk of this article is devoted to an examination of Nyerere's educational philosophy; it is followed by a short section on the major changes and reforms that have taken place in the Tanzanian education system.

Brief background on Nyerere's career

A very brief account of Nyerere's educational and political careers needs to be given in order to fully understand the origins and context of his educational philosophy. Julius Nyerere was born in Butiama, in the north of the United Republic of Tanzania, in April 1922. He was the son of a Zanaki chief. Educated at Roman Catholic mission schools, he was baptized a Catholic at the age of 20. After teacher training at Makerere College, Uganda, he taught until 1949, when he went to the University of Edinburgh on a government scholarship, the first Tanganyikan to attend a British university. He received a master's degree in history and political economy in 1952 and returned to teach in Tanganyika. During the course of his studies at Edinburgh, he translated Shakespeare's *Julius Ceasar* into Kiswahili. In 1954, Nyerere was a founding member of the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), of which he was elected president. He was briefly a nominated member of the Tanganyikan Legislative Council in 1954 and 1957. Abandoning teaching for full-time politics, he pressed the case for Tanganyikan independence at the United Nations in 1955 and 1956. He was elected to the Legislative Council in 1958 and reelected in 1960, when TANU won seventy of the seventy-one seats. Nyerere became Chief Minister of Tanganyika's first cabinet and was designated Prime Minister on the achievement of full independence in December 1961. In January 1962 he resigned the premiership to devote himself to party affairs. The following December, when Tanganyika became a republic, he was elected President. He became President of the United Republic of Tanzania after the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964 and was reelected to successive five-year terms beginning in 1965. After retiring from the presidency in 1985, he remained Chairman of the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), or Revolutionary Party, formed in 1977 by the merger of TANU and the Afro-Shirazi Party of Zanzibar. He retired from CCM's chairmanship in 1990.

Tanzania's development ideology

To understand Nyerere's philosophy of education, it is necessary to briefly outline the particular nature of development ideology that Nyerere espoused.

During the formulation of Nyerere's educational philosophy, the United Republic of Tanzania's development goals and strategies were based on the policy of socialism and self-reliance enshrined in the Arusha Declaration of 1967 (Nyerere, 1968*a*). Socialism laid stress on the concept of equal opportunity and the need to reduce social inequities. As Nyerere stated: 'The objective of socialism in the United Republic of Tanzania is to build a society in which all members have equal rights and equal opportunities; in which all can live in peace with their neighbours without suffering or imposing injustice, being exploited, or exploiting; and in which all have a gradually increasing basic level of material welfare before any individual lives in luxury' (Nyerere, 1968*e*, p. 340).

In the context of the United Republic of Tanzania's realities of poverty and underdevelopment, the Arusha Declaration emphasized the need for mobilizing human resources for self-reliant development rather than relying on capital or material resources: 'The development of a country is brought about by people, not by money. Money, and the wealth it represents, is the result and not the basis of development' (Nyerere, 1968*a*, p. 243). The three prerequisites of development identified were land, good policies and good leadership.

The focus of development was realistically put on the rural areas, since about 90% of the people live there and the majority of them depend on subsistence agriculture. Rural development was further based on encouraging people to live and work together on a cooperative basis through the formation of organized villages or *ujamaa* (a Kiswahili word meaning 'familyhood', the concept on which Tanzanian socialism is based).

In addition to raising the standard of living, Tanzanian socialism also aimed to develop a particular quality of life which is people-centred. It attached commitment to the belief that there are more important things in life than the amassing of riches, and that if the pursuit of wealth clashes with things like human dignity and social equality, the latter will be given priority 'for the purpose of all social, economic and political activity must be man' (Nyerere, 1968d, p. 316).

It is only through the development of *people* rather than *things* that people's true freedom and human dignity can be preserved. The development of roads, buildings and agricultural production, and so forth are regarded only as tools of development. 'A new road extends a man's freedom only if he travels upon it' (Nyerere, 1973c, p. 59).

The commitment to socialist and self-reliant development required participation of the people in the planning and decision-making processes pertaining to their own development. (See, for example, Tanganyika African National Union, 1971, p. 9.)

In *The Varied Paths to Socialism*, Nyerere noted the danger of a situation that lacks the participation of the people:

If the people are not involved in public ownership, and cannot control the policies followed, the public ownership can lead to fascism not socialism [...] socialism is only possible if the people as a whole are involved in the government of their political and economic affairs (Nyerere, 1968c, pp. 309-10).

In a nutshell, development in the United Republic of Tanzania was conceived in terms of a more equitable distribution of wealth and the absence of exploitation rather than in terms of the gross national product alone. Development is not confined exclusively to increasing economic production and productivity, but includes all-round development of the people in terms of their education, health, nutrition, housing, child care and the like, and, above all, the achievement of a particular quality of life which is people-centred. Development plans and policies should be focused on the majority of the people, and that means rural development. Development also stressed the importance of people's active participation in, and control of, their own development.

Nyerere's educational philosophy

Nyerere's educational philosophy can be analyzed and classified under two main headings: education for self-reliance; and adult education (including lifelong learning, and education for liberation).

EDUCATION FOR SELF-RELIANCE

The bulk of Nyerere's educational philosophy is contained in his 1967 policy document entitled *Education for Self-Reliance* which deals with formal schooling (Nyerere, 1968b). This policy has some parallels with Mahatma Gandhi's 'basic education' proposal, particularly in relation to the introduction of productive work and self-reliance in schools, as well as a 'radical restructuring of the sociology of school knowledge' (Kumar, 1989). Basically, *Education for Self-Reliance*:

- (a) makes a critique of the inadequacies and inappropriateness of colonial education;
- (b) outlines the kind of society the United Republic of Tanzania is trying to build;
- (c) examines some salient features of the education system that existed around 1967 in the light of the newly declared goals and strategy of socialist development; and
- (d) proposes changes designed to transform the education system in order to make it more relevant and appropriate in serving the needs and goals of a socialist society with a predominantly rural economy.

According to Nyerere, colonial education was based on the assumptions of a colonialist and capitalist society, and was therefore designed to transmit the values of the colonizing power and to

train individuals for the service of the colonial state. It induced attitudes of subservience, human inequality, and individualism, and emphasized white-collar skills. The content of colonial education was largely alien and the entire education system was organized by racial segregation.

Nyerere analyzed four basic features of the Tanzanian education system existing in 1967. He was particularly concerned about how it discouraged the integration of pupils into society as a whole and promoted attitudes of inequality, intellectual arrogance, and individualism among those who entered the school system.

1. Formal education is basically elitist in nature, catering to the needs and interests of the very small proportion of those who manage to enter the hierarchical pyramid of formal schooling: 'We have not until now questioned the basic system of education which we took over at the time of Independence. We have never done that because we have never thought about education except in terms of obtaining teachers, engineers, administrators, etc. Individually and collectively we have in practice thought of education as a training for the skills required to earn high salaries in the modern sector of our economy' (Nyerere, 1968*b*, p. 267).
2. The education system divorces its participants from the society for which they are supposed to be trained.
3. The system breeds the notion that education is synonymous with formal schooling, and people are judged and employed on the basis of their ability to pass examinations and acquire paper qualifications.
4. The system does not involve its students in productive work. Such a situation deprives society of their much-needed contribution to the increase in national economic output and also breeds among the students a contempt for manual work.

Given the realities of a poor, underdeveloped, and agricultural economy and the cherished goals of socialist transformation, Nyerere proposed an alternative educational model designed to reorient the goals, values, and structure of education.

According to Nyerere, education must serve the common good and foster the social goals of living together and working together. Education must help in the development of a society in which all members share its resources fairly equally. Education must inculcate a sense of commitment to society. In addition to the inculcation of social values, education

[...] must also prepare young people for the work they will be called upon to do in the society which exists in the Tanzania—a rural society where improvement will depend largely upon the efforts of the people in agriculture and in village development. This does not mean that education in Tanzania should be designed just to produce passive agricultural workers of different levels of skill who simply carry out plans or directions received from above. It must produce good farmers; it has also to prepare people for their responsibilities as free workers and citizens in a free and democratic society, albeit a largely rural society. They have to be able to think for themselves, to make judgements on all issues affecting them; they have to be able to interpret the decisions made through the democratic institutions of our society, and to implement them in the light of the local circumstances peculiar to where they happen to live.

It would thus be gross misinterpretation of our needs to suggest that the educational system should be designed to produce robots, who work hard but never question what the leaders in government or TANU are doing and saying. [...] The education provided must therefore encourage the development in each citizen of three things: an enquiring mind; an ability to learn from what others do, rejecting or adapting it to his own needs; and a basic confidence in his own position as a free and equal member of the society, who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains (Nyerere, 1968*b*, p. 274).

In terms of the organizational changes in the education system, Nyerere proposed three principle and interconnected changes: the entry age into primary school; the content of the curriculum itself; and the organization of the schools. The primary school entry age would be raised from 5 or 6 years to 7 years so that the student is older, more responsible and more mature on leaving school. Primary education would be restructured in such a way that it becomes a complete education in itself, rather than simply a preparation for secondary education. Similarly, secondary education

would not simply be a preparation for higher education. The major purpose of the education system should be to prepare people for a meaningful and productive life, and for service in the villages and rural areas:

We should not determine the type of things children are taught in primary schools by the things a doctor, engineer, teacher, economist, or administrator needs to know. Most of our pupils will never be any of these things. We should determine the type of things taught in the primary schools by the things which the boy or girl ought to know—that is, the skills he ought to acquire and the values he ought to cherish if he, or she, is to live happily and well in a socialist and predominantly rural society, and contribute to the improvement of life there. Our sights must be on the majority—it is they we must be aiming at in determining the curriculum and syllabus. Those most suitable for further education will still become obvious and they will not suffer. For the purpose is not to provide an inferior education to that given at present. The purpose is to provide a different education—one realistically designed to fulfil the common purpose of education in the particular society of Tanzania. The same must be true at post-primary schools (Nyerere, 1968*b*, p. 282).

The reorientation of the school curriculum has to go hand-in-hand with de-emphasizing the importance of formal examinations, which merely assess a person's ability to learn facts. Furthermore, it is necessary to abandon examinations that are geared to an 'international standard' or practice regardless of the country's particular problems and needs.

Another change Nyerere proposed in the organizational structure of schools is that they must become both social and economic centres for the local communities, so as to make them an integral part of the society and economy:

Each school should have, as an integral part of it, a farm or workshop which provides the food eaten by the community, and makes some contribution to the national income. [...] This is not a suggestion that a school farm or workshop should be attached to every school for training purposes. It is a suggestion that every school should also be a farm (Nyerere, 1968*b*, p. 283).

Such a reorganization of schools involved both pedagogical and attitudinal implications. It would contribute to the integration of theory with practice, as well as the integration of mental with manual labour. The assessment of student performance would take into account both academic abilities and the work done for the school and community. In terms of societal attitudes and values, students would learn the meaning of living together and working together for the good of all. In this way, their commitment to the development of their own society would be strengthened.

In summary, *Education for Self-Reliance* proposed the following changes in the educational system:

1. It should be oriented to rural life.
2. Teachers and students should engage together in productive activities and students should participate in the planning and decision-making process of organizing these activities;
3. Productive work should become an integral part of the school curriculum and provide meaningful learning experience through the integration of theory and practice.
4. Examinations should be downgraded.
5. Children should begin school at seven years so that they would be old enough and sufficiently mature to engage in self-reliant and productive work when they leave school.
6. Primary education should be complete in itself rather than merely serving as a means to higher education.
7. Students should become self-confident and co-operative, and develop critical and inquiring minds.

Nyerere's philosophy on adult education, lifelong learning and education for liberation is in many ways a natural development of his ideas embodied in *Education for Self-Reliance*, particularly those relating to some of the inherent limitations and inadequacies of formal schooling. While in *Education for Self-Reliance* Nyerere addressed himself primarily to the needs and conditions of the United Republic of Tanzania, his writings on adult education, lifelong learning, and education for liberation deal with educational issues on a more general and universal level, as well as with those pertaining specifically to the United Republic of Tanzania. His concepts of lifelong learning and education for liberation can be subsumed under his philosophy of adult education, which, for purposes of analysis, can be placed under four main headings, albeit with some overlap.

The role of adult education in development. Nyerere's conviction about the role of adult education as a means of development and as a part of development has been recognized by many development planners, economists and educators. In addition to imparting knowledge and skills, he looks on adult education as basically a political process.

The starting point of Nyerere's conceptualization of the role of adult education in social change and development is pegged to the purpose of education in general as well as to the purpose of development as a whole. Accordingly, starting from the premise that the purpose of development is liberation, the purpose of education:

[...] is the liberation of Man from the restraints and limitations of ignorance and dependency. Education has to increase men's physical and mental freedom—to increase their control over themselves, their own lives, and the environment in which they live. The ideas imparted by education, or released in the mind through education, should therefore be liberating ideas; the skills acquired by education should be liberating skills (Nyerere, 1978, p. 27-28).

Similarly, Nyerere argued that adult education has to be directed at helping people to develop themselves:

It has to contribute to an enlargement of Man's ability in every way. In particular it has to help men decide for themselves—in co-operation—what development is. It must help men to think clearly; it must enable them to examine the possible alternative courses of action; to make a choice between those alternatives in keeping with their own purposes; and it must equip them with the ability to translate their decisions into reality (Nyerere, 1978, p. 28).

In the process of doing things and acting on reality, the individual has no choice but to co-operate with others, and therefore education for liberation is also education in co-operating with others. However, learning will not have the desired liberating impact on the people if their learning is oriented to obtaining a certificate,

[...] for such a desire is merely another aspect of the disease of the acquisitive society—the accumulation of goods for the sake of accumulating them. The accumulation of knowledge or, worse still, the accumulation of pieces of paper which represent a kind of legal tender for such knowledge, has nothing to do with development (Nyerere, 1978, p. 29).

According to Nyerere, one of the primary and most significant functions of adult education is to arouse consciousness and critical awareness among the people about the need for and possibility of change:

The first function of adult education is to inspire both a desire for change, and an understanding that change is possible. For a belief that poverty or suffering is 'the will of God' and that man's only task is to endure, is the most fundamental of all the enemies of freedom (Nyerere, 1978, p. 29).

The second function or stage of adult education is to help people to determine the nature of the change they want and how to bring it about. These two functions of adult education are quite similar to what Paulo Freire refers to as a process of ‘conscientization’, in which he argues there is a need to change the adult’s pessimistic and fatalistic perspective of reality and enable that person to acquire a ‘critical’ vision of his or her environment (Freire, 1970).

In the context of the United Republic of Tanzania, Nyerere outlines three main objectives of adult education. The first objective is to shake Tanzanians out of a resignation to the kind of life they have lived for centuries past; the second is to help people learn how to improve their lives; the third is to help people understand the national policies of socialism and self-reliance (Nyerere, 1973a, p. 137-38).

The definition and scope of adult education. Nyerere’s definition of adult education is very broad. Again it emphasizes the need for social change:

Adult education [...] incorporates anything which enlarges men’s understanding, activates them, helps them to make their own decisions, and to implement those decisions for themselves. It includes training, but it is much more than training. It includes what is generally called ‘agitation’ but it is much more than that. It includes organization and mobilization, but it goes beyond them to make them purposeful (Nyerere, 1978, p. 30).

The broad scope and role of adult education requires two types of adult educators, according to Nyerere. The first group consists of what he calls ‘generalists’—political activists, educators, community development workers and religious teachers. Such people, he argues, cannot be politically neutral by the very nature of their work, for their important role is to activate the people and arouse their consciousness: ‘Adult education is a [...] highly political activity. Politicians are sometimes more aware of this fact than educators and therefore they do not always welcome real adult education’ (Nyerere, 1978, p. 31).

The second group of educators needed for adult education are what he calls ‘specialists’ with a wide range of professional expertise in health, nutrition, child care, agriculture, management, literacy, and so on.

Nyerere’s definition of adult education also incorporates the concept of lifelong learning and learning that is associated with work, normally referred to as workers’ education. Two quotations serve to illustrate his viewpoint:

Education is something that all of us should continue to acquire from the time we are born until the time we die (Nyerere, 1973a).

To live is to learn; and to learn is to try to live better (Nyerere, 1973a, p. 138).

On the question of making learning an integrated part of working life, Nyerere argued that:

If we are to make real progress in adult education, it is essential that we should stop trying to divide up life into sections, one of which is for education and another, longer one of which is for work, with occasional time off for ‘courses’. In a country dedicated to change we must accept that education and working are both parts of living and should continue from birth until we die (Nyerere, 1973b, p. 300-01).

The methods of adult education. Nyerere defines an educator’s approach to adult education on the basis that adult learning is voluntary; adult learners have to participate in identifying their own learning needs and interests, and their learning needs to be centred in their own problems and experience: ‘The teacher of adults is a leader, a guide along a path which all will travel together. The teacher of adults is not giving to another something which he possesses. He is helping the learner to develop his own potential and his own capacity’ (Nyerere, 1978, p. 33-34).

The organization of adult education. On the question of developing an organizational structure for the provision of adult education, Nyerere recognizes that there is no ideal pattern. Therefore, the type of organization has to take into account the needs and resources of a given country as well as its cultural traditions and political commitment. One necessary condition he underlines is the need to allocate resources for adult education as part of the national budget. Adult education has to be given a priority within the overall development plans of a country, and the extent of that priority will have to be determined by a political decision. However, he warns, it would be a mistake to try to duplicate for adults the kind of establishment that exists for children in terms of staff or buildings. He does not underestimate the complex and enormous task of organizing effective adult education on a mass scale: 'There is a saying that nothing which is easy is worth doing, and it could never be said that adult education is not worth doing' (Nyerere, 1978, p. 36).

Philosophy versus practice

A detailed examination of the Tanzanian education reforms² in terms of the application of Nyerere's educational philosophy to actual practice is beyond the scope of this article. However, it is necessary to make some broad and general observations.

First of all, it should be pointed out that the United Republic of Tanzania's attempts to build a socialist and self-reliant society through political, economic, social and educational actions have largely failed. Since 1986 in particular, the United Republic of Tanzania has been steadily veering to the right. The country is now much more integrated into the capitalist world system than it was at the time of independence.

Within the overall failure of achieving socialism, the United Republic of Tanzania's educational experiment, inspired and driven by Nyerere's educational philosophy, has produced a mixture of successes and failures. As noted by Samoff in his detailed case study on education in the United Republic of Tanzania, a major explanation for this combination of some success and some failure 'lies in the complex intersection of external and internal dynamics, and especially in Tanzania's unique mix of socialist vision and peripheral capitalist practice. [...] The Tanzanian experience suggests both the potential and the limits for nonrevolutionary noncapitalist development and its accompanying educational reform' (Samoff, 1990, p. 210). Many of the problems that Nyerere addressed in an attempt to transform the education system and educational policies still persist. Even during the peak of socialist construction, Nyerere himself made the following admission: 'I am becoming increasingly convinced that we in Tanzania either have not yet found the right educational policy, or have not yet succeeded in implementing it or some combination of these two alternatives' (Nyerere, 1974).

The policy of *Education for Self-Reliance* has not been fully implemented in the totality of its philosophic concepts as well as in its practice. A number of contradictions have arisen in the process of translating theory into practice.³

Commenting on the United Republic of Tanzania's inconsistent educational strategy, Joel Samoff notes:

Tanzania's transition is stymied. Its socialist vision is regularly obscured and often overwhelmed by its capitalist practice, both within and outside education. Frequently denounced, the modernization orientation is equally frequently reasserted, with both local and foreign support. [...] The Tanzanian experience points to the powerful obstacles, and perhaps the limits, of a nonrevolutionary transition (Samoff, 1990, p. 268).

However, some major achievements in the United Republic of Tanzania's educational endeavour cannot be denied. To quote Samoff again:

Tanzania seems to offer a success story of educational reform. In a brief period, a very poor country has introduced institutional changes that reach nearly all its citizens. Primary education is essentially universal. Initial instruction uses a language and draws on experiences and materials that are familiar to everyone. Tanzania and Africa feature prominently in the curriculum at all levels. A national board sets and marks examinations. Tanzania's adult literacy is now among the highest in Africa [about 85%]. Although affluence clearly enhances the likelihood of academic success, poverty does not preclude it.

These accomplishments in turn provide the foundations for other programs. Nutritional and prenatal information can be disseminated much more widely. Agricultural improvement programs can reach remote farmers. Members of cooperatives and unions can monitor their leaders more effectively. Tanzanian citizens evince a pride in their language and their country that derives neither from chauvinistic propaganda nor from xenophobia, but rather— notwithstanding their relative poverty—from a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. In the two decades since the end of European rule, these are major achievements (Samoff, 1990, p. 209).

As for adult education, there is no doubt that it has achieved a remarkable degree of success. In fact, the innovative and phenomenal developments witnessed in adult education justifiably constitute a 'revolution'.⁴ The United Republic of Tanzania is recognized in many parts of the world, especially among Third World countries, as having made substantial and exciting strides in adult education. Adult education has served as one of the greatest means of mobilizing the people for development. In terms of education for liberation and conscientization, the masses of the people have, by and large, discarded their fatalistic outlook on life and emerged with more self-confidence and hope in the possibilities for improving their living conditions.

Notes

1. *Yussuf Kassam (United Republic of Tanzania)*. Senior associate/consultant, E. T. Jackson & Associates, Ottawa, Canada. Formerly director of programmes for the International Council for Adult Education, Toronto; Associate Professor of adult education at the University of Dar es Salaam (1970-79); and director of the Institute of Adult Education (1979-81), United Republic of Tanzania. His fields of competence include literacy, adult education and participatory research. Author of *The Adult Education Revolution in Tanzania* and co-editor of *Participatory Research: An Emerging Alternative Methodology in Social Science Research*.
2. For a more detailed survey of educational changes in the United Republic of Tanzania, see Hinzen & Hundsdorfer (1979).
3. For a critique of *Education for Self-Reliance*, see Cliffe (1973) and Mbilinyi & Mwobahe (1975).
4. For a full account of the adult education revolution in Tanzania, see Kassam (1978), and for the impact of literacy, see Kassam (1979).

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