

# Julius Nyerere's Philosophy of Education: Implication for Nigeria's Educational System Reforms

by

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## Abstract

Julius K. Nyerere's philosophy of education is one of the most influential and widely studied theories of education. Policy-makers have continued to draw from it for policy re-engineering. In this paper, the Nigerian educational system is examined in the light of the philosophy. This approach is predicated on the informed belief that there are social and historical commonalities between Nigeria and the society of Nyerere's philosophy. To this end, it is argued that the philosophy holds some important lessons for Nigeria's education. For this reason, there is need to inject some doses of its principles in the body polity of education in Nigeria. Therefore, the paper identifies three areas where the principles of the philosophy can be practically invaluable for Nigeria, i.e., school financing, curricula development and entrepreneurial education, in and an the final analysis, the paper identifies the linkage between national philosophy of education and national developmental ideology; and argues that a national philosophy of education of any country must be embedded in the national development ideology which the country's philosophy of education must drive.

**Key Words:** Nyerere, Nigeria, Philosophy of Education, Tanzania, Ujamaa, Self-reliance, Development

## Introduction

Education has been defined in two broad ways. On the one hand, education has been defined as the process by which a society, through certain formal and informal institutions, deliberately transmits its cultural heritage from one generation to another. George Kneller and Julius Nyerere belong to this school of thought. On the other hand, education has been defined as the process of constant reconstruction of experience, rather than transmission of past values, in order to make it more meaningful and capable of solving present problems. John Dewey and Aristotle belong to this school of thought. These two definitions have their merits and limitations. For instance, as a method of “transmission” education often lead to indoctrination with past mistakes; and as a method of “reconstruction” education often lead to unhealthy materialism.

From time immemorial, education has remained a vital tool used by the State to perpetrate its values and develop itself. This is to say, that by employing the instrumentality of education the State has been able to achieve its national development objectives, which traditionally include poverty reduction, disease control and prevention, transmission of national values, literation of the citizenry, and general socio-economic progress. Despite these lofty mandates entrusted on educational system generally, some States have remained backward and stagnated. The blames of the backwardness is often heap on education. For there is a saying, that a State is only as developed as its education.

The role of education in national development cannot be overstated. The stage of development attained by a country is analogous to its state of education. National development is appraised in terms of mental and physical indices. It is education that bequeaths the psychological attitudes and physical skills which enable the citizenry to bring about national transformation. A poorly developed and/or maintained educational system cannot bring about the needed transformation. The development and maintenance of any educational system is a policy issue. It is philosophy of education that provides us with deep and wide-ranged approach to understanding educational issues and problems (Oshita, 2011). The interplay of education and philosophy can, and do, have positive influence on development. While education exposes us to array of information regarding the posture development should take, it is philosophy that teaches us to maintain open and critical mind in the midst of diverse ideas (Oshita, 2011).

In Nigeria, the capacity of the country’s educational system to bring about the desired development has been hampered by problems and issues. A lot of studies have been embarked upon to determine these issues and problems. One of the key issues identified by scholars is education financing. Funding is a critical aspect for educational development to occur. It is funds that are used to develop the human and physical infrastructure of the educational system. The criticality of education financing can be abstracted from the recommendation of UNESCO that 26% of annual budget of developing countries should be devoted to educational development. Cordelia Nwagwu (2011) reports that due to dwindling revenues, Nigerian government has continued to spend less than 3% of the country’s GDP on education. Godwin Azenabor (2005) notes that:

Owing to inadequate funding, education in Nigeria has undergone tremendous changes for the worst. The astronomical expansion coupled with dwindling resources and under-funding have led to deterioration in institutional facilities and services. Poor funding militates against effective curriculum development (p.15).

Funding of educational institutions in Nigeria seems to be pegged against the colonial system. Ukeje and Aisiku (1982) notes, that during the colonial administration, colonial government usually gave stipends to schools. This grant was usually meagre due to the fact that those schools were run by missionaries. But that policy of meagre grant has continued even with the takeover of schools by government in the 1970s. This problem of poor funding has contributed immensely to falling standards of education in the country.

Another major problem militating against educational development in Nigeria is the problem of irrelevant curricula. This problem is historical; and it is due to the fact that the present system of Nigeria was inherited from colonialism with insignificant modification. Curriculum is the foundation document of any system of education. The curriculum streamlines the values and culture of that society. But in Nigeria, as Azenabor (1999) observes, the curricular in Nigerian schools, to a large extent, follow alien patterns of European countries; thus, Nigerians who are the recipients of the foreign models are alienated from their own culture because the education does not find meaning in the context of their culture. And because these curricula were designed to address cultural issues peculiar to those countries, Nigerian students who study them become redundant and alienated from the society upon graduation. Other issues and problems that undermine the Nigerian educational system are: poor quality of teachers, examination malpractice, brain-drain syndrome, deteriorated infrastructures, industrial unrest, cultism; supervisory failures, quota system syndrome, conflict and terrorism, and political interference (Francis, 2015; GCPEA, 2014; Ibanga, 2014; Aluede, Idogho & Imonike, 2012; Ndifon & Ndifon, 2012; Nwadiani, 2011; Otokunefor, 2011; Nwagwu, 2011; Ajani & Ekundayo, 2008; Azenabor, 2005; Azenabor, 1999; Ekpo, 1996).

It is therefore in consideration of these issues and other related subjects that this paper seeks to examine the Nigerian educational philosophy and system in the light of Julius Nyerere's philosophy of education. The goal is to analyze Nyerere's philosophy of education and see if it holds any relevance for Nigerian educational system. This study is important because, as Azenabor (1999) notes, "periodic and constant examination of issues, problem and prospects of educational system of any country serves as a constant reminder to educational planners" (p.68). This study is also significant because it contributes to the debate regarding what form or posture Nigeria's educational system should assume.

## **A Brief History of Education in Nigeria**

There is balanced of opinions among historians of education that formal education in Nigeria evolved from three influences – traditional/indigenous, Islamic and Christian. The three educational backgrounds aimed at moulding moral and virtuous persons who were also equipped with necessary skills and aptitudes to contribute to the development of the society as a whole.

History of education is as old as the earliest human being. The traditional educational system in the country is therefore as old as the founding of various tribes and ethnicities that make up the political entity called Nigeria. In fact, man is known as one of the beings with a strong instinct to preserve and perpetuate his values – to achieve this, he devised various schemes by which he can transmit his ideas and values to a successor generation. Man is also a social animal by nature. He is from birth curious about his environment – therefore he has strong desire to explore the environment and learn more about it. Human being also has strong desire towards self-preservation – he wants to be around the earth as long as possible. To achieve this, he explores nature and seeks knowledge from others which he can use to achieve his goal. Hence, the Annang have a saying: *ese 'se idet k' ibuo agwo efat*, one learn social ethos and lifestyle from others. These features characterised the traditional society and influenced the educational system it adopted – and by extension it is the reason for formal education today.

Traditional educational system was aimed at equipping individuals and members of the community with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes that would help them function effectively in the society. In other words, the system aimed to prepare individuals to acquire vocational skills for daily living and to train them in morals. In later development, since the society had accumulated this knowledge through experience and the sayings of the ancestors, therefore, they needed to transfer this knowledge to successor generations. To attain these goals, the traditional educational system employed folklore narrated by elderly members of the community as well as taboos, dance, songs, etc. From these means and stories, good morals and virtue were impacted. In terms of vocal training, the child was either made an apprentice to an artisan or learned vocation from his parents. (Girls in particular were not sent out to learn trade but rather learned from their mothers). This was the system of education that was in vogue in Nigeria until the advent of Western and Islamic educational systems.

Islamic educational system was the first non-indigenous educational system introduced in the country. Kazeem and Balogun (2013) note, that Islamic education in Nigeria is as old as the advent of the religion in the country – because Islam is practiced simultaneously with its own form of education. They further state that Islamic education is made to go together with Islamic religion because without the former the later cannot be understood. It is through Islamic education that the teachings and values of Islamic religion can be propagated. In addition, the educational aspect of Islam is seen as a form of worship which makes the practice of the religion complete (Khalid, 2016).

Mkpa (2016) states that Islamic education was first introduced in the country through the ancient Kanem-Borno Empire between 1085 and 1097 when the King of Kanem, Umne Jilmi embraced Islam and became zealous of its learning. From there the religion and its educational system spread to other parts of northern and southwest Nigeria mainly through the activities of traders from the Middle East. Mkpa (2016) also states that Islamic education brought with it Arabic learning which was the language of the Quaran. The jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in 1804 furthered Islamic religion and its educational system and opened it up for women to access. Khalid (2016) avers that the jihad led to proliferation of Islamic schools in the north and southwest. Abdullahi Bayero, returning from Mecca in 1934, opened a school for training of Islamic teachers in Arabic language, arithmetic and other Islamic subjects as well as English language (Mkpa, 2016).

As the religion became more firmly established and spreading from the north to the southwest, Quaranic schools were opened in the premises of mosques and in the houses of Mallams. By 1913 there were 19,073 Quaranic schools with an enrolment of 143,312 pupils (Ukeje & Aisiku, 1982). The Quaranic schools were organized into Makarantar Yara (Nursery), Tittibiri (Elementary) and Adult stages – whereby at Makarantar Yara stage the child is trained in memorising *ayats* of the Quaran, at the Tittibiri stage he is trained in the alphabet and grammar of Arabic language and at Adult stage he is introduced to other subjects of Islamic education, such as poetry, logic, rhetoric, jurisprudence, algebra, theology, etc (Fafunwa, 1974).

The purpose of Islamic education in the country was “to produce a good character and righteous man, he who worship Allah the creator and acts according to the dictates of Shariah” (Kazeem & Balogun, 2013). The purpose was also to raise Islamic teachers who would spread the religion and its values. But also Islamic education, at a higher level, was also aimed to produce men who are versed in the sciences, medicine, engineering, mathematics, jurisprudence, etc (Kazeem & Balogun, 2013). To achieve this, Islamic education (not at the higher level) used methods of indoctrination and imitation.

Western educational system was the last to be introduced into the country; and it was a mixture of secular and Christian scholarship. According to Ukeje and Aisiku (1982), Western education began in Nigeria in 1842 with Wesleyan Missionary Society in Badagry. This was followed with the entrance of the other missionary societies into the geographical space that was later known as Nigeria. As noted by Ukeje and Aisiku (1982) “the missionary societies founded schools whenever and wherever they established stations” – as a means of proselytising. The school system varied as each mission operated own educational system until it was standardised into infant, primary and secondary categories following the introduction of the Nigeria education code in 1926. Later, the university system was introduced into the country beginning with the establishment of Higher College, now Yaba College of Technology, in 1932. The establishment of the Yaba College followed the introduction of three-tier system of education in the country by E.R.T. Hussey in 1930 which divided up the educational system into elementary, middle and higher levels (Ukeje & Aisiku, 1982).

It is noteworthy that when Western education was introduced into the country by Christian missionaries the goal was to raise Christian individuals with good moral character. They also aimed to raise individuals who would be able to propagate the Gospel. As a result grammar schools were opened where students were taught English grammar, Christian religious knowledge and arithmetic – so that they could read the bible and also able to communicate with the white missionaries whom they were to serve as messengers.

When colonial government later made in-road into the educational system it was for their need for colonial administrative support and to train elites who would be used in the indirect rule system. From thence the Western educational system gradually shifted its focus from training merely grammarians to training individuals who could serve as clerks, secretaries, teachers, messengers, interpreters, etc. Technical colleges were later opened to train individuals who could work in factories and mines as artisans. However, the activities of the nationalists (who returned from their schooling overseas) forced them to develop educational plan which focused on national development. Today the goals and strategies of Nigerian education system have changed following political independence. These goals and strategies are documented in the National Policy on Education (NPE) 2004.

From the brief account above, it could be observed that with the possible exception of traditional educational system, the foreign educational systems introduced into the country were not focused on development of the Nigerian society. Rather, they were focused on developing the religion that brought it; and later the colonialists used it as a means of entrenching their indirect rule system. Islamic educational system focused primarily on producing good Muslim individuals, who could recite the Quaran at least and live the values of Islam. As Bidmos (2014) notes, Islam believes that:

The rationale for education of man revolves around the purpose of creation which means the assignment divinely decided for man... and that if the major assignment for man is to serve God, his preparation i.e education must take cognizance of both the service and the one to be served God (p.22).

In the same vein, Western educational system aimed principally at raising Christian individuals who could read and teach the bible as well as live Christian values. For as the Bible says:

By these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is weariness to the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandment; for this is the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12.12-13: KJV).

Now, if the whole duty of man is to serve God, his preparation, that is, education must be geared towards a service to God. That is to say, education aimed at physical and social development of the society is not definitely encouraged in Christian religion as it is condemned as worldly. Here again the Bible derides geocentric development:

I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun (Eccl. 2.3-6,11: NIV).

This could have been the reason Western (Christian) educational system did not place premium on the development of the society. Their emphasis on rather developing the moral character of the individuals in accordance with Christian doctrines can be linked to their doctrines of afterlife and contemptuous temporality of the earth, as it is evident in these biblical verses:

In my father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (John 14.2-3: NIV).

And:

Do not love the world or anything in the world... The world and its desires [shall] pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever (I John 2.15,17: NIV).

In the light of these, each of them either attempted to either Islamize or Christianize the individual. They did not come to raise great minds particularly because of the prejudice held by some western philosophers – Hume, Kant, Hegel, etc – that the black intellect was incapable of philosophic and lofty thinking. Hence, they sought to make African assimilate either Arabic or European lifestyles as the case were.

Traditional system of education was stagnated because of its inability to develop a more systematic method of learning, and because of its inability to develop a lettering system. It was also limited because it was a closed system – as a result it could not adopt and domesticate foreign concepts that were relevant to it. This problem can be linked to its method of indoctrination which made it to see anything not derived or fitted into the ancient and traditional pattern as irrelevant, aberrant and moral affront.

The traditional system, like Islam and Christian systems, placed premium on transmitted ideas rather than on experimental knowledge, reflection and reconstruction of experience. The major credit of the traditional educational system is that it did not hold racial-bias prejudice held by Western thinkers and it focused its activities to the development of the physical environment rather than heaven – at least its doctrine of reincarnation encouraged the people to create and bequeath a better world to the future since they will always come back to live in it.

## **The Purpose of Education in Nigeria**

Education, whether it is formal or informal, has a purpose. The purpose and goal of education in Nigeria is contained in the Section I of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 2004. According to the document, “no policy on education, however, can be formulated without first identifying the overall philosophy and goal of the nation” (NPE, 2004, p.1). This therefore means that the purpose of education in Nigeria is to serve as the vehicle towards achieving the national goals and philosophy of Nigeria. As outlined in the NPE 2004, the national goals and philosophy of Nigeria are as follows:

- (a) To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice.
- (b) To promote inter-Africa solidarity and world peace through understanding.
- (c) To build a free and democratic society.
- (d) To build a just and egalitarian society.
- (e) To build a great and dynamic economy.
- (f) To build a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

To achieve this goal, education in Nigeria therefore must be directed towards:

- (a) The inculcation of national consciousness and unity.
- (b) The inculcation of the type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- (c) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around.
- (d) The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

In consequence, education has to be oriented toward inculcating the following values:

- (a) Respect for worth and dignity of the individual.
- (b) Faith in man’s ability to make rational decisions.
- (c) Moral and spiritual principle in inter-personal and human relations.
- (d) Shared responsibility for the common good of society.
- (e) Promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children.
- (f) Acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance.

## Tanzania's Development Ideology

Chris Akpan (2009) argues that to understand a person's ideas and conceptions, we must understand the component parts but we cannot understand the parts unless we understand the whole. To understand Nyerere's philosophy of education we have to first understand the underpinning ideology of the society from which the philosophy evolved and to which it belongs. Every philosophy is a product of the culture and history of the society of the philosopher (Chimakonam, 2015; Ozumba, 2015). Every philosophy is time-bound and culture-specific, tailored to address the ills of that particular society in the first instance and that of the global community by extension. For this reason, Kwame Nkrumah argues that:

When we study a philosophy which is not ours, we must see it in the context of the intellectual history of which it belongs, and we must see it in the context of the milieu in which it was born. That way we can use it in the furtherance of the cultural development and in the strengthening of our human society (p.55).

Now, it is important to note that during the formulation of Nyerere's educational philosophy, Tanzania was an African society whose national philosophy and developmental goal were based on the policy of socialism and self-reliance enshrined in Ujamaa and popularised in the Arusha Declaration of 1967. And Nyerere's educational philosophy was designed to serve as the instrument to achieve these socialist goals.

We have said that we want to create a socialist society which is based on three principals: equality and respect for human dignity; sharing of the resources which are produced by our efforts; work by everyone and exploitation by none. We have set out these ideas clearly in the National Ethics; and in the Arusha Declaration and earlier documents we have outlined the principles and policies we intend to follow (Nyerere, 1982, p.239).

The doctrine of socialism, according to Nyerere, was to build a society in which all members have equal rights and opportunities; a socially harmonious society in which all live without suffering or imposing injustice, being exploited, or exploiting; and in which all have a gradually increasing basic level of material welfare (Sheikheldin, 2015). This is a direct anti-thesis to capitalism which emphasizes individualism, competition, might and mindless mobilization of material resources. And the doctrine of capitalism, in this wise, necessarily leads to exploitation.

In the context of Ujamaa, socialism emphasizes the need to mobilize human resources for self-reliant development. This means a reliance on the human self rather than relying on material resources. In fact, Nyerere was quoted as stating that "the development of a country is brought about by people, not money. Money, and the wealth it represents, is the result and not the basis of development" (See Kassam, 2000). Nyerere saw money only in terms of instrumentality, a means to desired end and not as an achievement, a goal.

It is only a developed self that can use the money or material resource to further develop the self for the self. (The self here should only be understood within the context of Ujamaa which emphasizes communal living). The notion of anthropocentric development seems to be the development philosophy of the African; for in Annang a proverb states: “agwo adi imó, affõñ ikpu ikpu”, human being rather than material possession is the real wealth.

Tanzania 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 amassing riches, and that 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.’ 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 regard only as tools of development. ‘A new road extends a man’s freedom only if he travels on it’ (Kassam, 2000, p.3).

To this end, the focus of development was rightly put on the rural areas where a vast majority of the citizenry lived. The commitment to socialist and self-reliant ideology required participation of the people in the entire developmental process. And for this to happen, the people must live together in a cooperative basis. To achieve this goal, education became a veritable tool. For as Nyerere put it:

The education provided by Tanzania for the students of Tanzania must serve the purpose of Tanzania. It must encourage the growth of the socialist values we aspire to (Nyerere, 1982, p.252).

## **Julius Nyerere’s Philosophy of Education**

Nyerere’s philosophy of education is contained in his post-Arusha policy directive on education which was issued in March 1967 (Kassam, 2000). It was entitled “Education for Self-Reliance.” It analyzed the system and attitude of education as they evolved in Tanganyika and then went on to demand an educational revolution which was intended to address the needs and social objectives of Tanzania. According to Yusurf Kassam, Nyerere’s philosophy of education “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’” (Kassam, 2000, p.3). Nyerere’s educational philosophy was designed to address the defects in the existing educational system which was inherited from the colonialists.

Some of the structural problems of the then existing educational system was that it promoted attitude of inequality, intellectual arrogance, and individualism among those who entered the school system. Moreover, the system breed the notion that education was only synonymous with formal schooling; laid too much emphasis on paper qualification which was obtained by passing written examinations; divorced the students from the society; and breeds among the students contempt for blue collar work.

The education which the formal school system provided in Tanzania was the opposite of the nature and needs of the Tanzanian society. Nyerere argued that the educational system Tanzania inherited from the colonialists “was not designed to prepare the young people for the service of their own country; instead it was motivated by a desire to inculcate the values of the colonial society and to train individuals for service of the colonial state” (Nyerere, 1982, p.273). The colonial administration’s interest in education stemmed from the need for local clerks and junior officials. To address this problem, Nyerere evolved a philosophy of education based on Ujamaa which encapsulates the cultural philosophy and need of the people. According to him:

[Education] must also prepare young people for the work they will be called upon to do in the society which exists in Tanzania – 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 to produce passive agricultural workers of different level of skills 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 judgments on all issues affecting them (Nyerere, 1982, p.240-1).

Nyerere educational philosophy was designed not to produce robots but human beings endowed with critical and creative thinking capabilities. This was the stark opposite of the educational philosophy bequeathed by the colonial administration – which was intended to produce passive individuals.

Moreover, Nyerere’s educational philosophy also proposed for organizational restructuring in the areas of curriculum, school organisation and administration, as well as enrolment and admissions. In the area of curriculum, Nyerere argued that the school curriculum must de-emphasize formal examinations, which merely assess the students’ ability to learn facts.

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 types 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 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... The implication of this is that the education given in our primary schools must be a complete education itself. It must not continue to be simply a preparation for secondary school... Similarly, secondary schools must not be simply a selection process for the university, teachers college, and so on. They must prepare people for life and service in the villages and rural areas of this country (Nyerere, 1982, p.245-6).

Nyerere argued that what the majority of citizens needed was epistemic capacities in history, values, civic ordinances and some skills necessary to earn a living. He argued that eventually most people would earn living from self-employment, while a few will be on government wage bill. To this end, the education Tanzania needed was that which was capable of preparing the citizens to become self-reliant. Above all, graduates should be able to fit into and serve the community from which they come. Therefore Nyerere queried:

Is there any reason why students at such institutions should not be required as part of their degree or professional training to spend at least part of their vacations contributing to the society in a manner related to their studies.... For example, the collection of local history, work on the census, participation in adult education activities, work in dispensaries, etc, would give students practical experience in their own fields (Nyerere, 1982, p.252).

In the area of school enrolment, Nyerere proposed that the primary school age should be raised from 5 or 6 years to 7 years so that the student could be older and more responsible on leaving school. This aspect of Nyerere educational philosophy at that time was praiseworthy for the fact that life expectancy at the time was considerably higher than what is obtainable today. And for students who would be involved in physical work, age maturity was indeed important.

In summary, Nyerere's philosophy of education was designed to achieve the purpose and goals of Tanzania. The philosophy conceptualized the goal of the nation's curricula and the method to achieve those goals. In fact, Nyerere's philosophy of education was basically a system of method of achieving the national goals of Tanzania. One of such goals was to inculcate the spirit and consciousness of socialism into the Tanzania student. Two, the philosophy was to aid prepare the Tanzanian student for a life in a rural albeit agro-based economy.

Three, the philosophy de-emphasized paper qualification rather it recommended that the student contribution to community development should form part of the sessional assessment of the student. Four, it showed how agro-based educational institution could be functional and independent of external grants. These are some of the basic tenets of Nyerere's philosophy of education – a philosophy formulated after rigorous critique of the colonial educational philosophy Tanzania inherited at independence.

## **Nyerere's Philosophy of Education: Lessons for and Relevance to Nigeria Educational System**

To determine any possible relevance of Nyerere's educational philosophy to Nigeria educational system, it is important to first of all reiterate that Nyerere's educational philosophy was based on the cultural context of Tanzania and was directed to address the needs of Tanzania at the time. Despite this fact, there are a number of principles which it articulated that transcend and outlive the time and social context of Tanzania.

To begin, it is important to consider the following facts. One, Nyerere's educational philosophy was based on the social, economic and political system of Tanzania which was essentially socialist. Two, Tanzania was predominantly a rural population whose basic economic activity revolved round agriculture. Three, Tanzania had very few schools which were unable to welcome more than 80 per cent of those who wanted enrolment (Nyerere, 1982). Four, the two colonies that formed Tanzania were colonized by Britain that also bequeathed a colonial education legacy to them. These are the social facts that underpinned Nyerere's philosophy of education.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that though Nigeria and Tanzania may share similar cultural history (particularly pre-colonial historical affinity), the social conditions of today's Nigeria are not the same as that of Tanzania which inspired Nyerere's philosophy of education. One, Nigeria operates a capitalist economic and socio-political system. Two, Nigeria economy is urban and petro-based rather than rural and agro-based. (Although recent rebasing of the economy indicates that agriculture contributes more to the GDP than does Petroleum). Three, Nigeria has millions of educational institutions as compared to Nyerere's Tanzania. These are some of the areas where there are differences of social context. However, both Nigeria and Tanzania inherited their educational system from the colonial Britain.

Having highlighted the differences and similarities in social milieu of Nigeria and Tanzania, therefore, we can see the kind of students Nyerere's educational philosophy was to prepare would find it difficult to live in the contemporary Nigeria. Nevertheless, there are some lessons from Nyerere's philosophy of education which are relevant to Nigerian educational system reforms. First, the system of education in Nigeria should be designed to serve the interest of Nigeria first and foremost. To achieve this will require a total overhaul of the curricula in our schools. Azenabor rightly observes that:

Our [Nigeria] educational system naturally leads to unemployment because the products are not trained to generate jobs independently. We introduce foreign courses that are redundant and unproductive into our schools curricula just because they are being offered in Western countries... Education is supposed to prepare one for life in his society, but the Nigerian Educational System divorces the pupil from the society in which it is supposed to prepare them (Azenabor, 1999, p.70).

To stem this problem, our curricula must be re-designed to reflect our cultural identity and our social, economic as well as political needs. This means our educational system must be re-orientated from being a corridor to obtain meal ticket, to institution that is capable of moulding morally incline human character who is capable of standing on his own.

Two, to mitigate the problem of funding of our educational institutions, programmes should be designed that will make our schools to be financially independent. This means the government must be ready to stop meddling in the administration of the school; therefore it should grants academic freedom especially to the universities. School autonomy also means that government shall no longer spoon-feed the schools. School autonomy further translates into financial autonomy in terms of revenue generation, financial administration and financial sustainability. Our school, from primary through secondary to tertiary levels, must begin to be self-reliant.

Schools must, in fact, become communities – and communities which practices the precept of self-reliance. ...This means that all schools, but especially secondary schools and other forms of higher education, must contribute to their own upkeep; they must be economic communities as well as social and educational communities. 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 total national income (Nyerere, 1982, p.147).

Kolawole Ogundowole (2007) observes that self-reliancism is not merely the ability of a people to control their resources and consequently their socio-economic destiny but it “demands of all and sundry competence, dedication, confidence, national awareness, and above all, originality, inventiveness and creativity which are necessary facts for self-respect and self-realisation” (p.26). Designing and planning our educational system to be self-sustaining holds the capacity to radically address the problem of funding which has bedevilled our educational system for too long. Nyerere’s philosophy of education therefore offers us readily available concepts to rejig our school funding model.

Three, to solve the problem of unemployable graduates viz. unemployed graduates Nyerere’s educational philosophy should be used as a guide, in re-engineering Nigeria educational system towards enabling it prepare students to be self-reliant through engaging in agricultural enterprises and other entrepreneurial activities. Bassey Ubong (2011) is right in suggesting that:

African, nay developing countries, should have a philosophy of education that produces persons that can stand on their own after school.... There is an urgent need for a reorientation towards education for self-reliance rather than education for job-seeking. All schools should have their curricula to reflect a reasonable dose of entrepreneurship (p.108).

The form of entrepreneurship we recommend here is agro-based entrepreneurship. Engagement in agricultural activities will promote urban agriculture but it will also draw the graduates and students out of the cities; so the new philosophy should also provide guide towards preparation of students for rural living. This would even de-populate our already crowded cities. And it would also create jobs among our unemployed graduates and school leavers.

## **Conclusion**

This study will be incomplete without making the following observation that it will be delusional to assume that the notions distilled and presented here are in any way exhaustive. It is important to recognize the fact that there is room for improvement in the study. It is also important to recognize that there may lay within Nyerere's philosophy of education far more transcending and fundamental values than I have been able to observe. However, I want to assert that the implication of Nyerere's educational philosophy for Nigeria may hold equally true to some other countries, particularly African countries south of the Sahara and countries of the Caribbean.

Finally, the article discusses the implications of Nyerere's philosophy of education for Nigeria. It highlights the characteristic features of the philosophy and analytically model how those properties can be deployed to re-engineer the Nigerian educational system towards serving the need of the country. Even though Ubong (2011) argues that "Nigeria does not really have a definite national philosophy of education" (p.107); from the study we have seen that there is an urgent need for Nigeria to revisit the "existing" educational philosophy of the country to make it become consistent with the country's needs. The overall structure and superstructure of a country's "national philosophy on education can positively or negatively affect virtually all aspects of life and all sectors of the nation." (Ubong, 2011, p.108). The need to revise the methods and goals of teaching and learning in our schools cannot be overemphasized. Curricula are meant to act as the engine of any educational system, Nigeria curricula should be redirected to reflect our indigenous values and serve our needs. This is one of the major lessons to learn from Nyerere's philosophy of education. Education for Nigeria must be founded on locally made indigenous philosophy of education of Nigeria. Philosophy of education is the bedrock of any educational system.

Moreover, there is need to rethink our national goals in the light of the current realities; and develop a national development ideology and philosophy of development for the country for the first time. As seen from our study, education is a vehicle design to drive development. The World Bank (2002) states that education is fundamental to nation building and social development.

As Osunde and Omoruji (2011) note, without education development leaps on one leg; for education serves as instrument to fight against poverty, disease, ignorance, backwardness. Education and development go hand in hand. Without national development ideology for a country, their philosophy of education can be said to be incomplete or at least castrated. This may be the reason Bassey Ubong and C. O. Oladapo argue that Nigeria does not have a national philosophy of education. Indeed, philosophy of education must be embedded in development ideology. National philosophy of education is design to drive the development ideology of the country. It is therefore very important for Nigeria to urgently develop an indigenous national philosophy for the country to drive development.

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