



Education as a Tool for Liberation: Seeking Nyerere's Understanding

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Abstract

Nyerere understood education as a tool for liberating both an individual and the society; a tool which should liberate an individual socially, economically, psychologically, culturally, physically, intellectually and spiritually. Further, education should add value to learners through effective transformation that lead to the growth of society and development of a nation. The main purpose of this paper was to examine the concept of Education as a Tool for Liberation in Nyerere's understanding. The paper presents a theoretical framework based on Dewey, upon whom Nyerere's concept of education for liberation could have taken roots from. Dewey viewed education as a problem-solving process which should liberate not only an individual but also a society. For him, a genuinely liberated society could be more splendidly achieved through education which must change as per the changing needs and prerequisites of the evolving society. The paper also covers various elements of education as a liberating tool. Nyerere brought out various liberating elements of education including psycho-physical elements, mental-moral elements, socio-political elements and economic elements of education. Given Nyerere's understanding of education, this paper is expected to provide a more realistic view of education as a liberating tool that should be used to address various contemporary societal issues.

Keywords: Education for liberation, Education as a tool, Liberating education, Nyerere's education understanding, Liberating elements of education



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1. Introduction

In his speeches, Nyerere did not separate an individual and society. He understood education as a tool for liberating an individual and society, since an individual is the member of the society. Thus, when an individual is liberated, the society too automatically enjoys that liberation. Consequently, this education would liberate an individual socially, economically, psychologically, culturally, physically, intellectually and spiritually (Hinzen & Hundsdorfer, 1982). This could create a self-reliant person in the society (a creator not a creature), because this system of education is set up in such a way that upon completion, graduates are able to create their own employment in their respective societies (Nyerere, 1967). Moreover, education liberates an individual and society from the chains of colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism and all forms of exploitation.

Nyerere's understanding of liberation retains a specific concern with self-reliance, both collectively and individually. He maintains that a truly liberated individual is a self-reliant person, free from economic and cultural dependence (Gerard, 1993). Education is essential for every person in a society. When a person gets through education and is able to apply the knowledge in solving challenges facing the society, then this person is free from community forces including; culture, ignorance, poverty and parochial ways of doing things. This paper examines the concept of education as a tool for liberation basing on Nyerere's understanding. It highlights the theoretical framework based on Dewey's understanding of education and as well presents various elements of education as a liberating tool.

2. Theoretical Framework

Julius Kambarage Nyerere's rationality of education is a standout amongst the most persuasive and broadly examined hypotheses of training. Nyerere's concept of education for liberation appear to have taken roots from philosophers and educationalists like John Dewey (1859-1952) from America, and who is accepted to be the most critical educational scholar of the 20th century (Devendorf, 2012). Dewey was the founder of the philosophical development known as pragmatism, a pioneer in functional psychology, and a pioneer of the dynamic development in education in the United States (Alphonse, 2005).

Dewey propagated the theory of inquiry which holds that education is a problem-solving process and we learn by doing and by having an opportunity to react in real life situation; it should bring about equality, liberty and fraternity (Alphonse, 2005). The education framework which Dewey promoted ought to teach democratic values such as liberation, equality, sharing among others. Dewey thought that school should reflect the community so that when children graduate from school they will be well adjusted to assume their place in society. He trusted that a genuinely liberated society could be more splendidly achieved through education which must change as per the changing needs and prerequisites of the evolving society (Devendorf, 2012).

In Nyerere's argument on allegory of the mountain, Dewey's concept of education for democracy is considered supportive. In the allegory of the mountain, those who climb the mountain of knowledge to the apex and manage to come back to the valley of challenges become the source of liberating the illiterate societal members towards realization of their political, social, economic, psychological, health and other related problems (David, 2014). Therefore, liberating education should add value to learners through effective transformation that lead to the growth of society and development of a nation.

3. Liberating Elements of Education

Nyerere brought out various liberating elements of education. These include; psycho-physical elements, mental-moral elements, socio-political elements and economic elements.

3.1 Psycho-physical elements

Education ought to set both the mind and the body of man free from psychological and physical constraints. It should liberate him/her from the chains of ignorance and enable him/her to take control over him/her-self and to enjoy his/her own environment. Nyerere argues that when a man succeed to unite his/her wrists and to liberate his arms, he can therefore liberate his feet from shackles by using his hands. He further emphasizes that a man can be free from restraint physically and still remain in captive if at all his/her mind is limited by attitudes and habits that restricts his/her humanity (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1982).

Nyerere observed that education should liberate man's mind and the body. Education creates awareness among human beings and helps them realize their potential as human beings; enhance relationship with oneself, his/her neighbour and the surrounding. This enables a man to throw off his/her obstructions which restrict his full mental and physical development liberty (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1982). Therefore, education develops human attitudes and skills and it is considered partial if it enlightens a man to find complex schemes for universal peace without teaching him/her how to provide bread for the family.

A human person is a complex being whose physical education needs exercise for his /her well-being (Locke, 1960). This is why physical education is very much emphasized in order to liberate an individual from physical constraints. Similarly, in the area of psychological liberation, the individual learner undergoes guidance and counseling in order to grow psychologically and be free from both internal and external forces that distort thinking. Education is partial and counter-productive if it only teaches man how to efficiently use and make tools but neglects his personality and his relationship with other people (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1982). There is a need for an education system that builds both hard and soft skills.

3.2 Socio-political Aspect

Education should also free a person from social and political limitations according to Nyerere. He/she should be free socially and politically, whatever the case, as he stated, “A man develops himself by joining in free discussion of a new venture, and participating in the subsequent decision; he is not being developed if he is herded like an animal into the new venture”. Therefore, education has the responsibility to liberate a person from the constraints, which prevent him/her from socializing with others. Aristotle who rightly held that, man is a political animal, destined by nature for state life, and that as a human being by nature he/she is a social animal who needs to participate in political and social matters in his/her society (Jonathan, 1995). Therefore, education should set man free from the chains which limit him/her to participate in matters of decision making, leadership and participatory democracy in the society (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1982). Liberating education helps the society to have liberative structures, and consciously participate in its governance.

Learners are expected to acquire the kind of education which will liberate them from the social and political constraints. The argument given by Nyerere above deduces that an educated individual is one who can freely socialize with others and participate in state affairs consciously. Nyerere’s social political liberation is backed by many other philosophers especially existentialists like Martin Buber with his ‘I-Thou’. Buber (1984) shows how an individual needs others for his/her existence as he says, “through the Thou a man becomes I”. Gabriel (1964) with the concept of inter-subjectivity, shows the sense of belonging as he says, “I belong to you, you belong to me, I belong to myself”. Scheler (1970) with the concept of friendship says that, “through genuine sympathy people can be together and share the same world”. Like these existentialists, Nyerere (1975) has shown the importance of social liberation, therefore, quality education has also to do with sociopolitical stability, which is a delicate issue in Africa today.

3.3 Economic Dependence

A sound education system for liberation should create competent citizens who are capable of eradicating their economic dependency and embracing self-reliance. Education which Nyerere proposes is education which enables people to be free and fully developed. Freedom and development are compatible and to explain this Nyerere gives an analogy that the two are as completely linked together as are chickens and eggs where without one the other can not exist.

Nyerere’s objective is to have a system of education, which can create a person who is capable of promoting his/her own economy. He asserts that technical and practical education is an education for creators, not for creatures. Thus a school system cannot educate a child in isolation from the social and economic system in which it operates (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1982). Nyerere argues that the only way in which you can influence people to undertake their own development is through education and leadership. Thus he stated that Tanzanian education should be set as a tool for economic liberation. Similarly, education will show its true meaning and significance if it enables

the poor, the illiterate, the marginalized and the oppressed to overcome their problem and attain freedom that is the basis of authentic human development (Gerard, 1993). When the nation makes economic plans, it should not forget that education and economies are two things which go together; education plays a greater role in economic liberation (Thompson, 1990).

3.4 Mental and Moral Aspects

Education should liberate an individual both mentally and morally; mental liberation will enable an individual to be creative and competent in making use of his/her own natural resources for the development of himself/herself and the society in general (Gerard, 1993). For Nyerere a man will work with others to use whatever resources are at hand which may be his/her own knowledge, the knowledge of others, the land, the water, or simply his/her own sweat. Thus, by this kind of self-reliant struggle, a man will be further liberating himself, because by fighting the things, which humiliate humanity, he will be increasing humanity (Eleishi, Lema, Mbilinyi, Marjorie, Rajani & Rakesh, 2004). Therefore, mental liberation will make members of the society to be creators rather than skillful users of tools, and to be self-confident and self-reliant rather than marketable commodities (Gerard, 1993).

Moral liberation will enable the individual to value and use properly what he/she has discovered or created by his/her intelligence. For example; an individual with creativity can come up with scientific discoveries; if he/she is not morally liberated, he/she will abuse this discoveries by degrading humanity. According to Nyerere (1975), a good quality education is that which brings an integral liberation of an individual including mental and moral liberation. He held that ethics are important in schools.

4. Features of a Liberated Person

Nyerere tried to show the difference between a liberated and unliberated person by using two different Swahili words; “Msomi” (A person whom education has not transformed) and “Aliyeelimika” (A person whom the education has transformed). According to Nyerere, the former is a person who has lead through books and is “a learned friend” as lawyers say but the latter is a person who has fully integrated and applies in life what he/she has studied. This implies the liberated person is able to appropriately use the knowledge acquired to his/her own situation.

The target of educational system is to set free individuals into skillful users of tools and make them creators not creatures (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1982). For this target to be successful, there must be a sound and authentic system of education; well-planned curriculum and education content. This type of education can be measured or seen in the features of a liberated person. These features are briefly highlighted as follows:

First, a liberated person is one who becomes an active member of the society; he/she gives contribution to it, and is aware that it is the society, which has educated him

(Nyerere, 1969). Similarly, a liberated individual will see the moral necessity of putting the wisdom of his knowledge into use for the common good of the society.

Second, an educated person should be able to fit into the communities from which he/she comes from (Nyerere, 1969). At this point, this educated person will be of importance in solving the challenges facing the community and building the societal capacities by bridging the gaps for society's need.

Third, a liberated individual is one who uses his/her education properly for the benefit of the society not as a tool for its exploitation (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1982).

Forth, a liberated individual is a self-reliant person who can be creative and productive in the society, for the sake of his/her own community. On the other hand, unliberated individual will spend his/her life sucking the community to the maximum and contributing the minimum (Hinzen and Hundsdorfer, 1982).

Fifth, a liberated person is one who integrates himself/herself with the masses, does not isolate from the community, and tries his/her level best to counteract the temptation of intellectual arrogance.

Sixth, a liberated person fosters the social goals of living together, working together and having a sense of commitment to the total community, that is, all of us have a need to belong but not all of us will have an identical concept of community.

Seventh, a liberated individual is one who has an inquiring mind; who is able to learn from what others do, and reject or adapt it to his/her own needs; and have a self-confidence, value others, and is valued by them for what he/she does but not what he/she obtains (Nyerere, 1969).

Eighth, a liberated person recognizes that his/her task is not yet ended, as Nyerere used the maxim. For he will reject disease, poverty and ignorance similarly as he rejects slavery, knowing that these are effective in destroying the humanity of man as an overseer.

Ninth, a liberated person is a creative person whose education has made him/her an integrated person, and has received a holistic formation. These make him/her to be transformed in character, hence, making him/her come out strongly and liberate the society with that knowledge and the skills he/she has acquired from that education.

Without these features, one cannot be said to have education that liberates; education that sets one free and the very society he/she lives. Thus, education for liberation should be understood as an integral education which is holistic.

5. Conclusion

Having undertaken a diligent review of education as a tool for liberation, it clearly comes out that quality education can liberate an individual and therefore, a society. Nyerere's proposals for educational system in Tanzania and Africa puts forward invaluable need for clear vision of society in terms of what it ought to be. Nyerere asserted that since an individual is a product of the society, then when he/she is liberated, he/she should share the liberation with his or her society. Similarly, education should also develop the subjectivity; uniqueness of each individual. This subjectivity or 'self' should be the one that thinks, decides and acts. This, in turn, should ensure that educational products are creators and not submerged creatures. Education then becomes a tool for liberating, not only an individual but also the society at large.

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