CRITIQUE OF KENYA EDUCATION SYSTEM TOWARDS ACHIEVING TRAINEE SELF-RELIANCE: AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE

Khisa Alfred Simiyu[1i],
Werunga Khisa Stephen[2]

[1]Department of Educational Foundations,
Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology,
P.O Box 190-50100,
Kenya
[2]Department of Education Management,
Kibabii University,
P.O Box 1699-50200,
Kenya

Abstract:

Education and training has been a tool for economic, social and political development of any state towards realizing the common good for all. Ancient Greece philosophers identified the human person as a critical player in state development agenda and therefore the goal on human empowerment is key and central in the process of attaining the "good" life in a state. Thus, according to Aristotle, the state has to take full control of the education of the young towards becoming responsible citizens. The study interrogated the goals of education, critically examined the concept self-reliance, analyzed the epistemological, metaphysical and axiological tenets of existentialism and synthesized the implications of existentialism in education and training Kenya for self-reliance. The study found out that the empowerment process is dual in nature, individual student and state development. The individual development has been emphasizing skill development at the expense of economic and values. It is therefore necessary to embrace multidimensional orientations in reforming education and financing education and training that do not enslave the trainees after graduation.

Keywords: goals of education, self-reliance, existentialist perspective

1. Introduction

Education in the world has always been an agenda for any political class, political parties and even the government of the day because of its vital role in social, economic and

---

[i] Correspondence: email khisaalfred@gmail.com

political development of the state (Mackatian C., *et al.*, 2016). The empowerment agenda has always been a state responsibility. The relevance of education therefore provokes every state to plan, manage and control education activities including curriculum formulation to attain the set goals and development agenda above all individual and national empowerment.

The government that takes over the education system has always centralised the operations for instance France. Other states practice military socialist approach whereby the state has total control over education theory and practice, secularism, physical and military training, political indoctrination and emphasis of science-oriented curriculum. For instance, Mexico, Cuba, Russia. In Cuba, for instance, it is the sole responsibility of the state to educate the young and even find placement opportunities as interns in the country or over sees.

Highly decentralized systems on the other hand accept tolerance and democratic principles of expression, innovation and individual freedom. Japan and USA have adopted this kind of orientation and the products of education are vocal in terms of advocating for human rights and freedom. Thus, each political orientation has its own orientation of students towards a specific fulfilment. However, the kind of fulfilment has always been changing in the contemporary world and to absolutely say actualization has been found in education seems a challenge. The excesses of any state involvement in education are not checked by education theory and practice, can limit the attainment of certain goals of education.

In Kenya, all education reforms have had a documentation to guide the reorienting of education and training towards achieving the goals of education. However, the overemphasis of liberation from colonialism bore some fruits, an economic empowerment and self realization of the individual trainee remain crucial in the 21st century in order to handle upcoming crises of life. The study therefore interrogated education goals in Kenya in the light of existentialism and critically established how existentialism has guide theory and practice in education and practice towards attaining trainee self-reliance.

2. Problem of the Statement

Globally it is the work of the government in collaboration with other stakeholders to facilitate education financing, infrastructure, teacher employment and remuneration, facilitation of curriculum review process, assessment and evaluation and sometime professional development and future job placement of the graduates. In the light of Ancient Greek Philosophers, it is the sole role of the state to educate its young and prepare them for future roles. However, despite the formation of commissions, introduction of *Kazi Kwa Vijana Initiative*, Youth Enterprise Fund, and other youth programmes there is still an increase in the rates of unemployment among 8.4.4 graduates. In addition, the mode of financing adopted by the state of loaning tertiary level students and at the same time apportioning penalties that accrue over a long period

of time becoming a burden for the young to bare. The study therefore critically interrogated the national goals of education towards attaining self-fulfillment among the 8.4.4 graduates in Kenya.

2.1 Objectives of the study
1) Analyze the epistemological, metaphysical and axiological tenets of existentialism.
2) Interrogate national goals of education towards achieving self-reliance in Kenya.
3) Establish how existentialism has facilitated the realization of trainee self-reliance.

3. Methodology

The study being philosophical in nature adopted purely qualitative approach in examining literature available in the online journals, commission reports and textbooks. The study adopted analytic method in tracing the epistemological, metaphysical and axiological assumptions of existentialism and the critical method in establishing the educational implications of the tenets of existentialism in realizing self-reliance.

4. Literature review

4.1 Theoretical foundations
Empowerment process in education has been conceptualized as a liberation agenda (Sanga, 2016), a governance technique (Ongori, 2009) and finally a tool for distractions (Lawson, 2011). The concept of self-reliance or fulfillment can only be grasped when all the three are evaluated altogether. The key assumption in the three shows a principle of handing over decision making, tools of trade, knowledge, attitudes to a generation for future individual survival.

4.2 Dialectic materialism
This embraces human capital orientation that aims at equipping trainees with skills, knowledge and attitudes that facilitate personal, social and economic well-being. It is also a process of capacity building and strategic mobilization of the human resource for modernization, increased production and match with world economies. This theory is also known as Marxist theory because it was proposed by Karl Marx () (Kiruki, 2004). The understanding of the society according to Marxists is that in the society there is competition for material resources and wealth as the main cause of conflict. The social classes emanating from possession of property creates antagonism between them, one of which becomes the dominant class called the *bourgeoisie*. (Nasongo, J., & Musungu, L., 2009)

The bourgeoisie controls both the means of material production and the ideas of the epoch. In essence state machinery, state ideology and even religion are used to maintain the status quo. (Kiruki, 2004) The revolution brought as a result of class struggles always elevate the bourgeoisie as the victors thus making the proletariat more

vulnerable and in need of the jobs. The Marxist vision of the ideal society is one that involves true community in which the individual will be able to cultivate his gift and achieve personal freedom. (Nasongo, J., & Musungu, L., 2009)

4.3 Existentialism

This is also known as the humanization theory. The 21st century man is a "new man" exposed to different fields for instance: bio engineering with cloning issues, medical sciences, art and literature with fiber optic devices limitless in terms of boundaries and restrictions. Despite encountering and participating in the technological advancements, Socratic dictum "*know thy self*" still call on man to realize the self .The existentialist theory emanates from a group of 19th century scholars who attempted to search for the possibility of man towards self-realization (Raosaheb, 2016).

The philosophical ideologies of existentialism were propagated by: Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Karl Theodor Jasper (1883-1969), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Gabriel Honore Marcel (1889-1973) and Jean-Paul Charles Aymard Sartre (1905-1980).

4.4 Metaphysical, Epistemological and Axiological assumptions of existentialism

The rational school of thought holds to the Cartesian view *"cogito ergo sum"* and the emphasis of the development of the mental faculties. The return to emotions is real and the occurrence of feelings driving towards a great heightened feeling ultimate reality is disclosed. It is, therefore, man who is the only true reality that exists and has purpose and meaning. The physical universe, the world, Angels and supernatural forces lack meaning and purpose. The primacy of man as a project of discovery is therefore key for the existentialist perspective.

Knowledge as such is knowledge when man's existence is acknowledged as primary to essence. Existence precedes essence. The primary knowledge "thy self" is most crucial and key knowledge to all other types of knowledge thus it's intuitive in nature and thus can only be acquired in a personal way.

Finally, the character and moral formation of man is within his own abilities and not restricted to existing norms, Deity, or external forces. Human natures dictate subjectivity in terms of moral values in addition, man is striving towards authenticity, therefore, responsibility and facticity crops in his day to day life and therefore practice his power to choose with a certain level of responsibility. With such a spirit, man has the ability to go beyond social norms and religion to define his own norm thus attaining authenticity.

4.5 Tenets of existentialist perspective

Existentialism being a growing series of attitudes that has found and still finding philosophical expressions in the most gifted writers, specific principles keep on recurring and manifesting in their literature and argumentation. There exist seven principles of existentialism namely; subjectivity, disbelief in God, choice as the ultimate elevator,

anguish(anxiety), nothingness, absurdity and death (Raosaheb, 2016).On the other hand, anguish, freedom, responsibility, commitment and absurdity seem to be outstanding (Kauka, 2018). This study shall attempt to exhaust all principles that have been developed over time by existentialists.

From the epistemological, metaphysical and axiological assumption, some tenets of existentialism evolve to promote the philosophical thought of the movement. Man being condemned to be free (Sartre as cited by (Kauka, 2018); he is the only project that he has. And therefore, nothing is pre-determined or defined for him (Raosaheb, 2016).Thus subjectivity and disbelief in God enable man to venture in the unknown with fear and trembling however hoping for the very best. Man being the centre of existence, all reality is vetted by him and for him therefore subjectivism from an anthropocentric way is exhibited (Kauka, 2018).

Faced with a paradoxical nature of the freedom of man, freedom of choice and choice of freedom, man by nature condemned to be free, choice is inevitable and therefore failure to choose is also a choice made however with consequences and responsibilities to be accepted (Kauka, 2018).

In the process of being faced with many options, the state of making choices on behalf of humanity and choosing one among many and committing to the very choice comes with mixed feeling known as anguish (anxiety) in fear and trembling because of lack of security and element termed umbra (Kauka, 2018) man has to decide anyway.

It's this tension within a human being faced with choices that calls for self-transcendence towards the discovery of the self that draws one into absurdity. This can be associates with incoherence, meaninglessness or inconsistency (Kauka, 2018) related to the example given by Soren Kierkegaard about Abraham sacrificing his only son Isaac. Faith, therefore, cannot be rationalized but only leapt into.

Finally, but not the least the notion of being and nothingness is common in human realities. Human existence is towards a definite end called death. It is a pure fact like birth. Nothingness therefore is the only possible revelation of being (Raosaheb, 2016).

4.6 National Goals and self-reliance in Kenya

With the coming of colonialist in Kenya, education system was aligned based on segregation line. Hindu, European and African Indigenous schools were set up to offer education on racial lines. The *Harambee* and *Nyayo* philosophies sought to alleviate poverty, poor health and hunger from the society and thus education was a tool key for the development agenda. (Cheserek G.J and Mugalavai, 2012)

The setting up of the Ominde commission (1964) to envision the ideology of self-rule education was too foster national unity and empower the Kenyan youths for the white-collar jobs that the colonialists were living vacant. This trend is seen as a human capita approach towards liberation from enslavement both physical and psycho social. The Ominde commission (1964) outlined six national goals; however, Kenya Institute of Education (2009) revised and gave the following goals of education:

1) Foster nationalism, patriotism and promote national unity.

2) To promote the social, economic, technological and industrial needs for national development. Education should prepare the youth of the country to play an effective and productive role in the life of the nation.

- Social Needs. Education in Kenya must prepare children for the changes in attitude and relationships which are necessary for the smooth process of a rapidly developing modern economy. There is bound to be a silent social revolution following in the wake of rapid modernization. Education should assist our youth to adapt to this change.

- Economic needs. Education in Kenya should produce citizens with skills, knowledge, expertise and personal qualities that are required to support a growing economy. Kenya is building up a modern and independent economy which is in need of adequate domestic manpower.

- Technological and industrial needs. Education in Kenya should provide the learners with the necessary skills and attitudes for industrial development. Kenya recognizes the rapid industrial and technological changes taking place especially in the developed world. We can only be part of this development if our education system deliberately focused on knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help prepare the youth for these changing global trends.

3) To promote individual development and self-fulfillment. Education should provide opportunities for the fullest development of individual talents and personality. It should help its recipients to develop their potential interests and abilities. A vital aspect of individual development is character building.

4) To promote sound moral and religious values.

5) To promote social equality and responsibility. Education should promote social equality and foster a sense of social responsibility within an education system which provides equal education opportunities for all. It should give all learners varied and challenging opportunities for collective activities and corporate social services irrespective of gender, ability or geographical environment.

6) To promote respect for and development of Kenya's rich and varied cultures.

7) To promote international consciousness and foster positive attitudes towards other nation.

8) To promote positive attitudes towards good health and environmental protection

4.7 Existentialism and aims of education

From the above national goals of education, it is clear that Kenya as a state is committed towards individual trainee empowerment towards exploiting personal abilities and self-realization. The aims of education, thus places, the 8.4.4 graduate to fully develop integrally by engaging critical thinking, decision making, use of hand for skill acquisition in technical subject and finally applying the knowledge by producing items to solve societal problems.

The Kamunge Commission (1988) on the other hand treated self-reliance as vocationalization. This is the inclusion of technical subjects into the curriculum to

empower trainees at all level with relevant skills for employer suitability. Vocatioalisation avails skills, attitudes and knowledge for hands on works and industrial placement (Audu R., 2013).

4.8 Existentialism and curriculum

The Kenya education system has exposed the trainee to the study of humanities, art, literature, drama etc. to expose learner to contemporary realities; The drama festival that are held by the Hospice of National Drama Festival in the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth, Gender and Culture has envisioned existing societal themes for instance, corruption, gender inequalities etc. this has exposed learners to skills, attitudes and knowledge vital for personal orientation towards making decision and responsible citizenship.

The incorporation of social sciences in the curriculum for instance social studies, Social Ethics have exposed the trainee to the synthesis of the role of citizens to a society. The development of a society is primarily vested in a single individual and collectively community development is achieved through the spirit of responsibility, commitment and sacrifice.

4.9 Teaching methods

The adoption of project-based learning method, field trips and demonstration methods in teaching of science course, technical subject and humanities has kept on orienting trainees towards innovation and creativity. Participation in the trade fairs, science congress and innovation exhibitions by students across the country is a clear indication that learning by doing is being practiced at the class room level. Essay and plays has also been adopted in the religious education, Literature and role plays in social sciences. Sartre valued essay and play, he himself wrote several essays depicting plays in normal life set up (Mart.C.T, 2012).

4.10 Role of the Teacher

The overemphasis of individuality in existentialism places the student at the centre of all the learning process. The teacher's role therefore becomes a guide, role model, a passive creator of educational situations for students to discover themselves. The journey towards authenticity for a learner requires a competent trainer. Full of enthusiasm, love for the process and equipped to facilitate discovery and shaping of trainees' future without imposing self-norms to the students.

4.11 Teacher learner relationship

In the emphasis of I –thou Relationship the teacher being a passive member, the student becomes the active agent of learning process. Content and curriculum are introduced to the learner by the teacher objectively. In this case the teacher being aware of learner inabilities stimulate learning through dialogue and establishing close communion for the

sake of understanding (Kauka, 2018).weak and average learners are all give attention and understanding is key in the process of learning.

4.12 Challenges towards realizing trainee self-reliance
a) Exam orientedness
The overemphasis of student grades at all 8.4.4 levels has oriented educational practitioners towards academic training, equipping learners with survival techniques and employability. Self-realization has been left unattended to and thus moral formation and character training are not being attended to (Amutabi, 2003) (Sanga, 2016).

b) Limited resources in schools
One of the major challenges of education in Kenya toward realizing education goals is infrastructure, lack of human resource to transmit the content and implement curriculum. The increase in enrollment at all levels due to free primary education, free basic education and subsidized tertiary education has led to swelling of class size thus limited training materials and trainers to handle the increased class size. This has compromised on quality of training and the limited learning environment (Otara, 2013).

c) Systemic economic burden
Koech commission (1999) reported that educational constraints by the government can only be addressed by introducing cost sharing among education stakeholders in funding of education. County Bursaries, Constituency Development Fund Bursaries, Government Capitation and Higher Education Loans Board Loan have all been introduced to supplement parents/guardians' fees. However, developments in the loaning scheme have developed a system of accruing penalties over the graduates thus making it an economic burden for the graduates to repay the loans amidst employability crisis. This is a challenge in terms of finding a suitable and sustainable mode of financing education (Otara, 2013).

d) Political interference
Political party manifestos have always incorporated education in their agenda. Promises like use of laptops by grades 1-3 pupils project (Jubilee regime), milk project by the KANU regime),issuance of sanitary towels to girls and other road side shows have always confused teachers in the implementation of curriculum since overemphasis on such ideologies live individual learners void of self-exploitation only attending to government agenda (Mackatian C., Imbovah M., Imbovah N. and Gakungai D. K., 2016).

4.13 Critic of existentialist perspective
Though we have highlighted the relevance of the perspective in terms of curriculum formulation, content, teacher role, teacher learner relationship, nature of learning environment, there some aspects of existentialism when implement in full the national goals of education cannot be achieved because they conflict the social norm.

First and foremost, the overemphasis on humanization, critique of robotization and mitigating dogmatization in learning institutions has been well emphasized in the education system in Kenya in has facilitated trainee character formation, discovery and

innovation, skill empowerment and attaining of friendly learning environments (Kauka, 2018).

On the other hand, elements of subjectivism in education which places man to be the measure of everything and making him a demigod, has introduced atheistic attitudes which discredit society, religion and other institutions yet they play a critical role in moral and religious values education and training. This can be dangerous in a contemporary world where youths have enrolled to technology for other forms of training and they can be dangerous to the self and society at large (Kauka, 2018).

Thirdly, despite the ultimate elevator being choice, freedom without responsibility is not freedom at all. The excesses in education advocating for students' rights have given room for picketing, strikes, arson attacks because of an existing state of anarchy where everybody thinks he is right and this rigid stand points cause tension and break communion in the learning institution. Thus, teacher and state authoritarianism can be introduced to bring balance (Raosaheb, 2016).

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The achievement of national goals of education in Kenya has remained a challenge due to the political interferences which do not favor education theory and practice. In addition, party manifestos do not incline education and practice in the light of a philosophical foundation. It is therefore wise for 8.4.4 education system to adopt a multidimensional approach in realigning education theory and practice towards realizing the national goals of education and in this case trainee self-reliance. The excesses of freedom due to learner centred approach can also be controlled by adoption of an inter-subjectivity approach in curriculum implementation where the role of the teacher as guide and model is still relevant in guiding trainee towards self-realization.

5.1 Recommendations
Setting up a directorate responsible for youth training, empowerment and employability. Currently, the situation seems confusing to trainees since tertiary education has overemphasized university education over technical colleges education and training. Such arrangement shall remove job discrepancies and segregation and hurdles due to inability to have letter of good conduct and HELB clearance.

Improvement on financing of education. Rather than enslavement by loaning and imposing of heavy penalties monthly, education and training to be facilitated through government subsidy and guardian/parental input.

All education reforms to be rooted in a theoretical framework rather than mere party manifestos that only last for a season. In addition, Student empowerment process to involve all stakeholders in order to avail relevant training materials, human personnel and infrastructure in order to revitalize the training process for self-reliance and economic empowerment.

Lastly adoption of a multidimensional approach in education and training to reform curriculum, improve content and for Teacher training can encourage new knowledge, adoption of new innovations and practices from other countries, individuals and even partners in training to enrich the formation of the individual trainee towards the critical situations in future.

Conflict of Interest Statement

No conflict of interest among the publishers about the content and publication of this paper. Each author certifies the He has no commercial associations (e.g. consultancies, stock ownership, equity interest, patent/licensing arrangements etc) that might pose a conflict of interest in connection with the submitted article.

About the Authors

Khisa Alfred Simiyu, currently a senior Technical Education Trainer and a postgraduate student at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, MA (Philosophy of Education), Education Foundations Department. Holder of BED (Technology Education-BCT option) Moi University, BA (Philosophy) Urbaniana University, Diploma Philosophy and Religious Studies (Consolata Institute of Philosophy) and Diploma in Project Management (Kenya Institute of Management). Areas of interest: Philosophy, Philosophy of Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Teacher Education and Training, Education Policy, Curriculum Studies, Building Construction Practice. Member of Research gate and Academia.edu.

Werunga Khisa Stephen, currently a part time lecturer at Kibabii University in the Department of Educational Management. Holder of MED (Admin) Kenyatta University and BED (SC) Egerton University. Areas of interest: Philosophy of Education, Education Policy, and Curriculum studies, Education Planning, Education Financing.

References

Amutabi, M. (2003). Political interference in the running of education in post-independence Kenya: A critical retrospection. *International Journal of Education Development, 23*(2), 127-144.

Andafu, E., & Simatwa, E. (2014). A Critique of the Kenyan system of education in view of the Freirian Concept of education: A philosophical perspective. *International Research Journals, 5*(8), 331-347.

Audu R., I. C. (2013). Human Capital Development in Technical Vocational Education (TVE) for Sustainable National Development. *Journal of Education and Practice* , Vol.4, No.7, pp 100-106.

Cheserek G. J. and Mugalavai, V. (2012). Challenges and Reforms Facing Kenyan Education System in the 21st Century: Integrating the Principles of Vision 2030

and constitution 2010. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 471-478 Vol. 3, No. 4.

Chowdhury, M. (2016). Emphasizing Morals, Values, Ethics, And Character Education in Science Education and Science Teaching. *The Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Science*, Volume 4 - Issue 2 pp 1-16.

Gülcan, N. (2015). Discussing the importance of teaching ethics in education. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2622 – 2625.

Kauka, E. O. (2018). An Analysis of the Nexus of Existentialism in Education. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, Volume II, Issue XII, pp 228-232.

Kaymakcan R., &. M. (2012). Values in the Curricula of Religious Education and Social Studies in Primary Schools in the Context of Local-Universal Dilemma*. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 12 (2) Supplementary Special Issue PP 1588-1591.

Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) (2013). *Craft Certificate in Building Technology Syllabus and regulations.* Nairobi: Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development.

Kiruki, J. K. (2004). *Introduction to Critical Thinking.* Eldoret: Zapf Chancery Research Consultants and Publishers.

Lawson, T. (2011). Empowerment in Education: liberation, governance or a distraction? A review. *Power and Education*, Volume 3 Number 2 pp 89-103.

Mackatian C., Imbovah M., Imbovah N. and Gakungai D. K. (2016). Development of education in Kenya; Influence of the political factor beyond 2015 Mdgs. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 55-66 Vol 7.No 11.

Mart C. T. (2012). Existentialism in two plays of Jean-Paul Sartre. *Journal of English and Literature*, Vol. 3(3), pp 50-54.

Mulenga, D. C. (2001). Mwalimu Julius Nyerere: a critical review of his contributions to adult education and postcolonialism. *International Journal of Life long Education*, 446-470 Vol 20 No. 6.

Muricho, P., & Chang'ach, J. (2013). Education Reforms in Kenya for Innovation. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 3*(9), 123-145.

Nasibi W. M., N. (2003). *Instructional Methods: Teaching Across the Curriculum.* Nairobi: Strongwall Africa.

Nasongo, J., & Musungu, L. (2009). The Implications of Nyerere's theory of education to contemporary education in Kenya. *Educational Research and Reviews, 4*(4), 111-116.

Niculescu R. M., &. N. (2013). Religious education an important dimension of human's education. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, PP 338-342.

Ongori, H. (2009). Managing behind the scenes: A viewpoint on employee empowerment. *African Journal of Business Management* , Vol.3 (1), pp. 009-015.

Otara, A. (2013). The Future of Education and its challenges in Africa. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol.2 No.9.

Raosaheb, M. V. (2016). Existentialism: A philosophic standpoint to existence over essence. *The South Asian Academic Research Chronicle A Peer Reviewed Refereed and*

Indexed International Inter-disciplinary Open Access Monthly e-Journal, Vol III Issue 1 pp 13-20.

Republic of Kenya (1981). *Second University in Kenya (Mackay Report).* Nairobi: Government Printer.

Republic of Kenya (1964). *Kenya Education Commission.* Nairobi: Government Printer.

Republic of Kenya (1976). *Report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies (Gachathi Report).* Nairobi: Government Printer.

Republic of Kenya (1988). *Report of the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond, (Kamunge Report).* Nairobi: Government Printer.

Republic of Kenya (1999). *Report of the Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya (TI QET) Koech Report.* Nairobi: Government Printer.

Sanga, I. (2016). Education for self-reliance: Nyerere's Policy Recommendations in the context of Tanzania. *African Research Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, Vol.3 No. 2.

Wanyama P. M., &. C. (2013). Education Reforms in Kenya for Innovation. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 3 No. 9 pp 124- 145.