

Review Article

Interrogating Individual Learner Development in Kenya's 8-4-4 Education Policy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The 8-4-4 education policy marks the most singular attempt at a substantial reform of Kenya's education landscape since the independence policy. Its distinctive character is the attempt to move from "the manpower model and the social demand model to a new method that will deal with the challenges of the system at that time and hence reform the system of education to 'self-reliance'" (Korir, 2016). The previous (independence) education policy framework generally produced learners who were more fixated about "the labour market, in terms of the attitude towards work, new skills and new expertise" (Korir, 2016). Thus, most of its graduates, soon became unemployable, not only due to the shrinking opportunities (Ojiambo, 2009), but also due to their fixated attitudes and job training. It would appear that such learners had not successfully been educated to the full realization of a sense of intrinsic individual worth and development. Moreover, the challenges of the independent education system served to indicate the limitations of the human capital theory in linking education to the national economic development and securing the place of the individual development of the learner. The 8-4-4 education policy was therefore contemplated to fill both the individual and socio-political gap between the outcome of Ominde's and Gachathi's quantitative policy framework on one hand, and on the other hand, the country's inability to absorb the graduates.

2.0 The Pillars of the 8-4-4 Education Policy Framework

The main goals of the 8-4-4 education policy focused on the preparation of learners for self-reliance and self-employment. Interpreted in the light of the third national education objective, individual development and self-fulfillment would be achieved through the production of individuals who would demonstrate the elements of self-reliance and self-employment. Hence, these two constitute the main intrinsic pillars of the 8-4-4 education policy. Any educational theory and, or practice that would deviate or depart from them would imply a substantial collapse of the policy.

Now, self-reliance and self-employment could only be realized effectively by a deliberate effort by the education system to produce learners who are critical thinkers, creative and endowed with the ability to solve (their) problems. Additionally, given the inability of the government to provide employment for all school leavers as observed by the Gachathi report of 1976, the thesis for individual survival seemed to provide self-employment as an antecedent to self-reliance. Thus, education had to develop competences within the learner that would ensure that one becomes a job creator as contrasted from a mere job seeker. However, in order for one to become a job creator, one would require "creativity and problem-solving skills as well as the ability to think critically" (Ahmad *et al.*, 2014). Hence, individual development under the tenets of the 8-4-4 policy can be said to have been synonymous with the development of these stated competences. In this way, school leavers whose lives would exhibit the realization of these goals would naturally be deemed to

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experience the consequent effect of individual self-fulfillment.

Meanwhile, in order to realize these goals, the new educational reform was to provide a “good relevant academic grounding and learning in which the student takes the initiative, rather than following the teacher” (Makau, 1985). This implied that the new education system would seek to develop the individual learner into a self-propelling person with independent thought and capable of self-direction. To this extent, curriculum focus, especially at primary and secondary levels would deliberately seek to “relate education to life (outside and also) after school” (Makau, 1985). This explains why one of the central policy requirements was that, these levels were to be heavily vocationalized in the context of the learner’s real life experiences. For instance, at the inception of the 8-4-4 education system, many primary schools were supplied with tools such as sewing machines, saws, hammers, among others. Similarly, primary school learners were engaged in both learning and examinable activities that included masonry, agriculture and cookery. Indeed, these curricular arrangements signaled a radical policy departure from the original independence policy orientation. Education was no longer to be seen as a choice of those who opted to avoid roughening activities of manual involvement.

The 8-4-4 education policy flows from the recommendations of the Mackay Commission Report (Republic of Kenya, 1981). However, it is important to note that such a major reform had not been envisaged as part of the Commission’s initial terms. The Commission had formerly been charged with the mandate of making a comprehensive consideration and thereby drawing a plan of action for the government’s intent to set up a second public university. It was in the process of this mandate that the commission recommended a major policy reform in education that came to define the 8-4-4 education system. It had been thought that the nature of the programs conceived for the second public university would naturally demand a change of the education policy. This recommendation received instant and overwhelming political backing hence, its immediate implementation. This observation perhaps explains why several critics of this system of education consider it to be a mere political *fiat* that is devoid of any initial reasoned and representative needs-assessment study and adequate planning (Sifuna, 1990; Abagi & Odipo, 1997; Amutabi, 2003; Nganga, 2010 and Mackatiani *et al.*, 2016).

In spite of the stated criticism, the original theoretical grounding of the 8-4-4 education system can be said to have been well fitted within the challenges of its milieu. For instance, the vocationalisation of the curriculum can be seen as part of the 1976 International Labour Organization call to governments to ensure that education plays a vital role in addressing the problem of

unemployment by way of targeted human resource development (Gikungu *et al.*, 2014 and Bunyi, 2013). It had been contended that this “system would impart abilities that would make it possible for learners graduating at any level to secure employment in the informal and the formal sector ... (that it would) guide the youth to self-employment” (Korir, 2016).

As Grace Bunyi further observes: “The 8:4:4 system targeted equipping learners with work-related skills for employment and self-employment with a strong vocational and technical orientation in the curriculum of both primary and secondary education” (Bunyi, 2013, p.682). Thus, the reform was intended to immerse learners into practical activities and subjects, away from what had been felt to be the earlier more academic orientation of the independence curriculum (Ambaa, 2015). This would logically have led to a focused development of the individual learner in terms of coping with the existential challenges of the time. It is important therefore to analyze how a self-reliance education policy would have addressed the element of individual development and self-fulfillment.

2.1. Individual Development through Education for Self-Reliance

The theory and philosophical foundations of the 8-4-4 education policy as an education for self-reliance can be elucidated within the purview of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere’s education thought. This educational concept had been explicitly put forth in the Arusha declaration of 1967 as a policy response to “an imminent rush for white-collar jobs especially in government” (Wabike, 2014). I proceed to explicate what this education policy entails as interpreted from Nyerere’s education philosophy.

A careful reading of the Arusha declaration document (Nyerere, 1967) reveals that Mwalimu Nyerere developed a twofold conception of the term “self-reliance”. Distinction can be made between the individual’s and the nation’s (or society’s) self-reliance. Some authors believe that Nyerere’s conception of self-reliance originally referred to the corporate mass as opposed to the concrete individual entity. However, these two interpretations are closely and mutually knit together to the extent that they are inseparable and cannot be opposed to each other. Their unity is represented by Nyerere’s later reference to the liberation of the individual learner (Nasongo and Musungu, 2009; and Sanga, 2016). The skills and abilities acquired by the individual through education “are meant to be useful in performing community tasks and for solving personal and community challenges” (Ahmad *et al.*, 2014). It is plausibly conceived that, when individuals become self-reliant, the society too and by extension, the nation becomes self-reliant. Although Nyerere was more concerned with the latter, his educational thoughts focus on the process of developing individual learners from whose educated

decisions, choices and actions, the overall societal common good is guaranteed.

Education for self-reliance implies empowering individuals through education to work for themselves by working for the community in which they belong (Nyerere, 1967). It means that learners develop and seek to actualize their individual ability to contribute to the collective societal common good. This would imply by extension that, the common good suffers once the individual effort on which it depends comes to naught. Thus, education for self-reliance refers to policy arrangements that inculcate in learners a consciousness as well as a functional ability to perceive their individual efforts as a responsibility to self and the society.

According to Mwalimu Nyerere, this policy seeks to transform individuals:

...to think for themselves, to make judgements on all the issues affecting them ...interpret the decisions made through the democratic institutions ...and to implement them in the light of the peculiar local circumstances where they happen to live. ...The education provided must therefore encourage the development in each citizen of three things: an enquiring mind; an ability to learn from what others do, and reject or adapt it to his own needs; and a basic confidence in his own position as a free and equal member of the society, who values others and is valued by them for what he does and not for what he obtains (Nyerere, 1967).

In other words the learners' consciousness about their individuality is heightened. They are empowered to critically examine their existential situatedness and become problem solvers.

For further conceptual clarity, it is important too, to indicate what education for self reliance is not. It does not refer to a simple vocationalisation and the technical orientation of educational programs for economic productivity (Ambaa, 2015). Self-reliance is not synonymous with a cognitive mastery of knowledge and facts to be applied in situations. Therefore, self-reliance cannot be guaranteed by a mere cognitive excellence and certification. These elements are inherent in, and necessary for the realization of self-reliance, however, they do not set the boundaries of what it is. Self-reliance transcends them all.

(It) ...points to the critical awareness which a student attains concerning themselves as a unique entity and the world as revealed through encounter with education content. The learner should realize that despite other impediments that may dictate their factuality ... (self-reliance affords them a) chance to determine their future

destiny, and become what they choose in life as individuals (Ambaa, 2015).

Thus, the actualization of the self-reliance education policy fundamentally involves the active participation of the individual learner in the dynamic encounter between the world and the educative process. During this encounter, the individual ought to experience a continuous inner development. Such a development has the characteristic ability of bringing one to confront situations critically and creatively with a view of transcending one's own limitations and opening the frontiers of possibilities in the world.

In Nyerere's own words:

However much agriculture a young person learns, he will not find a book which will give him all the answers to all the detailed problems he will come across on his own farm ... (instead, self-reliant individuals) judge social issues for themselves; there neither is, nor will be, a political 'holy book' which purports to give all the answers to all the social, political and economic problems (Nyerere, 1967).

This contention echoes Freire's evaluation of the Brazilian scenario when he asserts that:

...in some regions of the country universities had made a noteworthy effort to prepare technicians, professionals, researchers, and scientists. But while we could not afford to lose the battle for development, which urgently required an increase in technical personnel at all levels, neither could we afford to lose the battle for the humanization of the Brazilian people. It was essential to harmonize a truly humanist position with technology by an education which would not leave technicians naive and uncritical in dealing with problems other than those of their own specialty (Freire, 1974, p.34).

Partly, the problem of Kenya's educational experience is the urge for a continuous increment of technical personnel, coupled with the provision of skills for employment at the expense of a humanized society. A well trained manpower (in terms of skills and knowledge) that is found to be uncritical cannot be depended upon for genuine development. Thus, in the light of the self-reliance education policy, learners do not go to school to collect or accumulate answers and solutions to problems. They do not do so to collect professional or technology certification for employment neither. They go to school to develop and, or sharpen the tools in whose instrumentation is found the ultimate fountain of all answers and solutions to the challenges that face humanity. This is the essence of the humanizing role of education. Essentially, learners go to school to learn how to think critically, creatively and solve problems. These features in turn define an individual who is educated enough to be self-reliant.

Education for self-reliance policy orientation is intended to heal the limitations of the independence policy which seem to be similar in many more places. Nyerere (1967) cites four fundamental limitations. First, the independence education policy had been elitist in nature, merely championing the interests and needs of the minority over and against those of the majority. This minority would develop an assumption of having to rise and excel through higher academic levels and certification.

Thus, most school leavers develop a “feeling (of entitlement) of having deserved a prize-and the prize they and their parents now expect is high wages, comfortable employment in towns, and personal status in the society” (Nyerere, 1967). They hope to have an automatic guarantee to formal government employment. This often explains their exhibition of intellectual arrogance and superiority as the majority are thought to be inferior. However, and as can be evidenced in a few other independence societies, mere higher academic achievements cannot be a guarantee for employment. Instead, after several years of schooling, many who enter schools may not explain or demonstrate any considerable advantage of having done so. They seem to have gone to school with one principle goal, namely, to complete schooling grades.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that the problem of unemployment cannot be solved by a simple demand for more access to education and higher academic qualifications and certificates. As Nyerere puts it, “we cannot solve the ‘problem of primary school leavers’ by increasing the number of secondary school places” (Nyerere, 1967). Education must seek the empowerment of learners as individuals. This once again is the essence of education for individual development and self-fulfillment through the path of education for self-reliance.

The second limitation of the independence education policy is that learners get cut-off from the very society for which they are to be educated and whose problems they were expected to address. To this extent therefore, education for self-reliance carries both the social and individual dimensions. It is supposed to bring the learner into a practical encounter with real life experiences. Hence, and inevitably, it should be pedagogically inclined towards experiential learning, “a method of learning by doing” (Sanga, 2016).

Thirdly, most independence education policies in Africa were premised on the assumption that all knowledge and secrets to life’s success only flows from formal education. Cognitive results and certificates were used to stamp this assumption. On the contrary, self-reliance appreciates that knowledge can be sourced, stored, appropriated and complemented variedly and in a multi-disciplinary way, not excluding life’s informal wisdom.

Finally, independence education conceived white color employment as the only productive work through which school learners could contribute to national development. The path to this white color employment was silently designed to be academic performance and certificates. Meanwhile, as learners progressed along academic grades, their involvement in physical/practical activities that define real life in society tended to diminish. This is how the white color attitude that frowns at vocational and technical education seems to have been produced and sustained.

Various habits and practices in schools continue to cultivate this attitude to date. For instance, it is a common practice in most of the public schools to find learners of lower grades only, charged with responsibilities of cleaning the compound, classrooms and lavatories and being involved in many other forms of manual works. It would appear that as a learner progresses to higher academic grades one gets excused from such engagements. At the same time, such activities are often used as punishments for deviant learners in schools. It is not uncommon to find a learner being asked to clean the compound, dig the garden or weed flower beds for his punishment.

All such approaches that finally form part of what can be described as a silent hidden curriculum, serves to undermine the role that these activities would have played in developing the individual learner. Individual initiative and creativity is killed. Similarly, an attitude is reinforced to believe that as a learner moves closer to graduating at any given level, one gets to be incorporated into the “expected character” of those who have gone to school, namely avoidance of roughening manual activities of this world. In the same way, a more negative attitude is strengthened when the image of a good learner is made synonymous with the one who does not encounter these manual activities.

It is important to note at this point that it is in the constant encounter and sometimes practical involvement with the physical material world that its challenges are encountered. This encounter ignites the wealth of critical thought and creativity and summons them to overcome the limiting boundaries that these challenges seem to define. Hence, the negative attitude towards the activities that describe technical and vocational education not only undermines self-reliance but also the very core of individual development. To this extent, it is arguable that as part of growing-up self-reliant individuals who will appreciate and take up their place in vocational and technical professions, education must bring such individuals to participate both positively and actively in the productive vocational activities while at school. Therefore, every effort ought to be put in place that will ensure that an environment suitable for this goal is created in schools. This is

essentially what the initial intent for the 8-4-4 education for self-reliance sought to do in schools.

Nyerere points out two focal points around which the success of an education for self-reliance would be constructed. These are curriculum content and school organization. First, the determination of curriculum content in schools ought to be philosophically related to the actual life's experiential tasks and realities. Learners cannot simply be schooled on the basis of employment and wage expectancy. This necessitates that learning at every stage/grade, and more especially basic education "must be a complete education in itself" (Nyerere, 1967) and not a steppingstone to the next higher level. In this regard, the use of examinations both as an elimination and selection tool undermines the overall self-reliance education policy. By creating a fixation for employment through higher grades, this approach distracts the focus of education processes from individual development through self-reliance to a competition for scores.

Meanwhile, while appreciating the otherwise positive role of evaluation in an education program, Nyerere notes that formal examinations "do not always succeed in assessing (an individual's) power to reason, and they certainly do not assess character or willingness to serve" (Nyerere, 1967). What Nyerere says of an examination oriented pedagogical framework sooner than later became true of the 8-4-4 education system. For instance,

...(a) teacher who is trying to help his pupils often studies the examination papers for past years and judges what questions are most likely to be asked next time; he then concentrates his teaching on those matters; knowing that by doing so he is giving his children the best chance of getting through to secondary school or university (Nyerere, 1967).

On the other hand, learners accustomed to such a teacher develop an attitude that describes a good teacher as the one who indicates to them where and what exactly constitutes the answers and solutions to academic questions. Most often, they also regard a good teacher to be synonymous with the one who grants them the highest test scores. Such an approach fails to develop a holistic individual.

Indeed, it is important that there be a very close relationship between the examination structure, curriculum design and coverage and the chosen pedagogical orientation. Of this, Nyerere asserts that:

What we need to do now is think first about the education we want to provide, and when that thinking is completed think about whether some form of examination is an appropriate way of closing an education phase. Then such an

examination should be designed to fit the education which has been provided (Nyerere, 1967).

Regarding the question of how curriculum design and content is to be synchronized with an appropriate pedagogical approach, Nyerere guides that:

We should not determine the type of things children are taught in primary schools by the things a doctor, engineer, teacher, economist, or administrator need to know. Most of our pupils will never be any of these things. We should determine the type of things taught in the primary schools by the things which the boy or girl ought to know that is, the skills he ought to acquire and the values he ought to cherish if he, or she, is to live happily and well ... and contribute to the improvement of life (Nyerere, 1967).

Accordingly, education for self-reliance rejects the notion of education as a mere preparation of learners based on the formal job sector description. Instead, it is a policy framework of imbibing into learners the "ought" skills and competencies of survival irrespective of the situation they find themselves in life.

Besides the curriculum structure and content, the success of an education for self-reliance depends on the extent to which it is replicated within the entire school organizational structure. It is the contention of Nyerere that the relationship between teachers and learners and all those who directly participate in the life of the school must be ordered towards the self-sufficiency of both the individual and the school community. In this regard, they ought to relate in a manner to become:

... 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, 1967).

Incidentally, various studies carried out in USA, Netherlands, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Sri Lanka supports the view that the integration of ordinary community socio-economic life into the school's learning experiences can have several advantages:

...first, to build a bridge between teaching and the practical use of knowledge acquired in schools to improve local subsistence activities and pupil engagement in (and interest for) such activities; second, to induce improvement in academic performance by making theory more relevant and understandable, in particular to the pupils; and, third, to foster linkages between formal and informal education systems as a way to connect

school learning with other community institutions (Ahmad *et al.*, 2014).

In other words, learners who experientially learn to identify and solve their problems today are more likely to do the same in different circumstances tomorrow. By opening the possibilities in, and of a learning institution (school), we open the possibilities of the individual learner within that very institution. In this way we free the individual and facilitate one to become self-reliant. Learners could for instance:

... learn by practice how to use ... things to the best advantage. The farm work and products should be integrated into the school life; thus the properties of fertilizers can be explained in the science classes, and their use and limitations experienced by the pupils as they see them in use. The possibilities of proper grazing practices, and of terracing and soil conservation methods can all be taught theoretically, at the same time as they are put into practice; the students will then understand what they are doing and why, and will be able to analyze any failures and consider possibilities for greater improvement (Nyerere, 1967).

This kind of exposure brings learners into a direct confrontation with life's survival challenges in the here and now moment. They are prodded to rise from the same challenges by way of an embrace of dialectical possibilities.

This understanding demands for a pedagogical framework which places the individual learner at the centre of the decision making process in the context of learning. One becomes an actual active participant in the decisions that affect him/her. Athman Ahmad describes this mode of pedagogical relation as "teacher-guided, but pupil-managed" (Ahmad *et al.*, 2014). By enabling one to become an actual active participant in the decisions that affect him/her, education for self-reliance succeeds in developing an individual from within self. It is in this context that the 8-4-4 education system learners were to be exposed to a curriculum content that would "equip them with knowledge that can be applied by school leavers in problem-solving" and so free them from the cave of dependence (Ambaa, 2015).

2.3. The Apparent Collapse of the 8-4-4 Education Policy Framework

Notwithstanding any of its good intentions, the 8-4-4 education policy was stifled by a myriad of factors. For instance, the envisaged technical and vocational curriculum demanded the availability of qualified personnel in schools in terms of training and numbers commensurate to the rising number of learners. There were a limited number of trained vocational subject's teachers in schools. Similarly, infrastructural development in terms of technical and

vocational facilities could not be availed to match the demand. It became virtually difficult for the schools to impart the desired technical and vocational skills. Over and above these challenges, factors of political exigency had played the most important role in its implementation. At its onset, the government seemed to have been more focused on "building a historical legacy than solving the country's unemployment rate" (Nganga, 2010, p.187) as originally contemplated (Ojiambo, 2009).

At the same time, the extended 8-4-4 vocational curriculum increased negative teaching and learning pressure on both learners and teachers, thus leading to both demotivated learning and teaching (Abagi, 1997 and Owino, 1997). Furthermore, an attempt to cut down on work-pressure occasioned by an enlarged content coverage was executed by having most of the curriculum content initially intended for self-reliance gradually reduced (Ambaa, 2015). In this way, effective curriculum implementation balance between academic and vocational elements collapsed. Teachers turned their principle attention on a purely cognitive educational approach. In the same way, faced with the reality of terminal examinations through which society would determine one's success or failure in life, learners could not do better than rote memorization. Hence, both teaching and learning processes were radically undermined in their intent to develop a self-reliant individual capable of experiencing self-fulfillment.

Learning became a mere abstract academic and theoretical delivery of the curriculum content as opposed to the intended practical and life oriented approach. Greater focus was placed on academic competences and performance, both of which were to be ascertained through examination evaluations and documented through certification. Gradually the latter began to act as the climax of the educative process. All activities were geared towards successful examination performance as the measure of the acquired skills and knowledge.

As cognitive academic pursuance got more and more divorced from practical skills and the necessary job creation competences, school leavers developed a detest for manual work and instead got oriented towards white color jobs (Ambaa, 2015). Consequently, rampant and an increasing unemployment of school leavers remained evident. Gradually, the society accorded more accolades to success in examinations than the development of necessary skills, competences and dispositions in the individual learner (Ahmad *et al.*, 2014). Thus, several obstacles impeded the realization of the intended individual development of the learner towards self-reliance and self-employment. The public mental framework at independence that provided that learners would be employed on the basis of acquired academic certificates seemed to overcome the intended

8-4-4 education policy. Both teachers and learners struggled for higher academic level achievements convinced that only these would guarantee an employment. Hence, the whole purpose of education, both in theory and practice amounted to a mere screening exercise.

3.0. Policy Developments and Dilemmas after the Institution of the 8-4-4 Education Policy

Based on the stated challenges that confronted the implementation and sustenance of the 8-4-4 education system, various policy interventions have been put in place to try and to rescue its original tenets. These rescue efforts often describe a policy dilemma as crossroads as to whether the system is still sustainable or is due for a radical change. Generally, policy tensions on Kenya's education landscape, more especially in the second decade of the twenty first century seem to oscillate towards an inevitable substantial change in education policy. This section (5.5) examines the dialectics within these tensions.

3.1. Preparations for Policy Departure from the 8-4-4 Framework

5.5.1.1. The Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya

At the time the "Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya", (Republic of Kenya, 1999), (hereafter referred to as the Koech Commission) was convened, the 8-4-4 system of education had come under heavy criticism for various shortcomings (Korir, 2016). For instance, it had been blamed for the widening gap between the rich and the poor. It was also said to be undermining the development of individual curiosity and initiative in learners and instead "producing docile and dependent-minded graduates" (Korir, 2016). Additionally, the 8-4-4 curriculum was said to have become too rigid and often irrelevant to the needs of individual learners. Similarly, many graduates even after completing university level of education remained unemployed (Lelei and Weidman, 2012). No doubt that these systematic failures had compromised the original intentions of the stated 8-4-4 policy, and with it, the overall quality of education. Basically, the foundations of the 8-4-4 education policy had fundamentally been shaken to its core.

It is in this context that the Koech Commission's terms of reference were defined to focus on recommending what would be seen as necessary transformative approaches towards the provision of quality education in terms of delivery and outcomes of the education process (Mackatiani et al, 2016). Its mandate was to look into the role of education in the realization of "national unity, mutual social responsibility, accelerated industrial and technological redevelopment, life-long learning, and adaptation in response to the country's changing needs in a global environment" (Lelei and Weidman, 2012). It cannot be in doubt that education could not actualize these goals

without first having to invest in the development of the individual by whose instrumentality, these goals would be operationalized. To this extent, the commission, in its last pronouncement, recommends an education system which it describes as a "Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training" (TIQET) for the country. In the light of the commission report, "the future system of education was to become a future for the individual, a ticket to a better life and a future for the nation and the community" (Korir, 2016). Hence, education for the development of the individual was once again proclaimed as the indispensable foundation for the well-being of the general society.

The Koech Commission decried the poor linkage between educational institutions and industry, a scenario that had led to the dwindling quality and relevance of education and hence its inability to compliment the needs of industry. It would be remembered that Nyerere's explication of education for self-reliance had proposed a very clear and indispensable close relationship between educational institutions and the society. In other words, the Commission found that the individual that emerged from the 8-4-4 system of education was not competent enough for the society. In this regard, the commission seem to have been the earliest official pronouncement, though implicitly, of the fact that the original 8-4-4 education policy was basically on a collapsing slide in need of a total re-engineering.

A critical reading of the Commission's report reveal an ambitious plan, not simply to review, but essentially to effect a substantial overhaul of the entire system of education. This appears to have been the aspiration behind TIQET, a focus on the integral development of the individual for the societal good. However, having been generally viewed to be complex and expensive (Korir, 2016), the TIQET proposal did not rise to the occasion of being implemented by government. Nevertheless, in the context of politics and education, this commission report remains the last major attempt to refocus education towards individual development during the longest single political reign in Kenya's independence history. Thus, it may have defined one of the major lost opportunities to reform education at the dawn of the twenty first century.

3.2 Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 and the Kenya Vision 2030 Policy Directions

As it is often the case, the subsequent political era saw another close tie between education and politics. Educational resources, both human and non-human had already been over-stretched. Yet the impromptu introduction of the free primary education policy as the main flagship of the Kibaki administration stretched resources the more. An increase in learner-teacher ratio plus poor infrastructural and facility provision constitute samples of the experienced educational challenges. To this extent, this policy only

served in the most, a utilitarian political intention to provide the greatest educational opportunities for the greatest number of learners. However, in practice, this expansionist agenda has often been done at the detriment of quality education for the individual learner (Lelei and Weidman, 2012).

Against this stated background of challenges, the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 is presented as a policy guideline in response to the problems of quality education. Its principle focus is drawn towards access, equity, quality and relevance. The paper views education as the key human capital investment towards economic growth and escape from poverty. Thus the value of education seems to be defined in the context of its economic returns which in turn cascades its benefits into other arenas of life, especially the social aspects. Drawn as the first major education policy document at the dawn of the twenty first century, this paper defined the vision of education in Kenya to be “the development of an individual’s personality to enable her or him to fit into society as a productive and civil individual” (Republic of Kenya, 2005). Thus the place of individual learner development in this policy framework cannot be disputed.

At about the same time, in 2008, Kenya launched a socio-economic development blueprint, the Vision 2030. This was intended to be the nation’s guiding development plan from 2008–2030. Similarly, in 2010, the promulgation of the 2010 constitution necessitated a new legal framework for education and training. These two documents are the reasons for which the Sessional Paper No. 14 of 2012 was developed, following the report of the “Task Force on the Re-Alignment of the Education Sector to the Constitution of Kenya 2010”, hereafter referred to as the Douglas Odhiambo task force (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, 2012), namely, to align education and training to the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and Kenya Vision 2030.

4.0. CONCLUSION

The Vision 2030 aimed at making Kenya a globally competitive and prosperous country with a high quality of life for all citizens by the year 2030. This was to be realized by transforming the country into an industrializing middle income nation through sustainable development. This development plan pegged its transformative vision on three pillars, economic, social and political aspects of society. It cannot be gainsaid that such ambitious goals could not be without the central role of education in the lives of individuals, whether explicitly stated or not. In other words, the aspirations of this vision essentially required the concerted effort of education in developing the individual learner in the context of the twenty first century competencies. However, in spite of this apparent truism, the conception of the Vision 2030 does not provide a pronounced articulation of how education

ought to proceed in actualizing its stated goals (Ojiambo, 2009). Instead, the theme of education and training is broadly categorized and discussed under the social pillar. It is further examined through four very general strategic aspects, namely, access, quality, equity and STI (science, technology and innovation). These four aspects are intended to be addressed subject to the extent to which they affect the three pillars that anchor the vision. Nevertheless, the Vision 2030 leaves nothing in doubts in defining the place that education ought to occupy in its realization. Its role in the development of individual citizens is presented in terms of gaining the requisite skills and the ability to make informed choices about one’s life and the country at large (Kenya Vision 2030, 2007). Such individual choices which naturally imply critical thought require the creative impulse in driving the goals of the vision.

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