

First Annual Julius Nyerere Memorial Lecture presented by Naledi Pandor in 2004



Biography of Naledi Pandor

The inaugural lecture was presented by the (then) Honourable Minister of Education Naledi Pandor in 2004.

Inaugural Nyerere Lecture on Lifelong Learning by the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, MP, at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, Thursday, 9 September 2004

Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Mr Brian O'Connell

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Former President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, tells the following story about former President of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. In 1998, a year before his death, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere met with top-level staff at the World Bank in Washington.

"Why have you failed?" the World Bank experts asked him.

Nyerere answered: "The British Empire left us a country with 85 per cent illiterates, two engineers and 12 doctors. When I left office, we had 9 per cent illiterates and thousands of engineers and doctors. I left office 13 years ago. Then our income per capita was twice what it is today; now we have one-third less children in our schools and public health and social services are in ruins. During these 13 years, Tanzania has done everything that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have demanded."

And Nyerere passed the question back to the World Bank experts: "Why have you failed?"[1]

This story indicates the importance Mwalimu Nyerere placed on self reliance. It is interesting, by the way, that Nyerere was called Mwalimu (teacher) as a title. I can think of no world leader who has been given such a title.

Self-reliance was and is a two-sided coin. On the one side of the coin, is economic self-reliance. Nyerere challenged the structural adjustment programmes that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the two international bodies designed to prevent developing countries from sinking into debt, imposed on them. He saw correctly the damage that these bodies inflicted on poor countries by limiting their investment in education and health in the name of controlling inflation. He

challenged the IMF policies designed to help the rich world's private banks at the expense of the developing world's struggling economies by removing barriers to flows of trade and capital. With hindsight, and with the immense influence of Joseph Stiglitz's[2] revelations of how the IMF set about destabilising poor countries, we now have a much greater understanding of why the Bank failed.

On the other side, is educational self-reliance. Nyerere believed in lifelong education long before it became fashionable to talk about the concept. He believed that poor countries should spend more on primary education than on debt repayment.

This belief was part of his philosophy of *ujamaa* (familyhood or community in Kiswahili). It was based on the concept of equality, joint action, and unified responses. He believed there could be no freedom or social justice without equality and it was that equality that colonialism had fundamentally distorted and even destroyed. The concept of self-reliance in education, which he developed in his paper 'Education for Self Reliance',[3] was aimed at transforming Tanzania from a colonial society into a society based on the interests of all on equality and justice within the overall framework of *ujamaa*. Where colonial education was formal and took place in classrooms and schools, education for self-reliance was informal, took place throughout society, and was aimed at introducing a type of education that would prepare the youth to play a constructive role in the development of a Tanzania in which all members shared in all things equally and fairly. He believed that education had a central role to play in overcoming colonial neglect and underdevelopment, a word that was much in vogue in the 1970s after the great Grenadian historian, Walter Rodney, made it famous in his book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nyerere believed that "Education [was] not a way of escaping a country's poverty. It [was] a way of fighting it."

Julius Kambarage Nyerere was born on April 13, 1922 in Butiama, on the eastern shore of lake Victoria in north-west Tanzania (then Tanganyika). His father was the chief of the small Zanki chiefdom. He was 12 before he started school, to which he had to walk a considerable number of miles each day. Later, he went to the Tabora Government Secondary School, where Roman Catholic teachers shaped his lifelong commitment to Catholicism. He went on to train as a teacher at Makerere University in Kampala (Uganda).

On qualifying, he taught for three years and in 1949 he went on a government scholarship to the University of Edinburgh where he studied for an M.A. in history and political economy. He was the first Tanzanian to study at a British university and the second Tanzanian to gain a university degree outside Africa. In Edinburgh, partly through his encounter with socialist thinking of the Fabian kind, Nyerere began to develop his particular vision of connecting African communalism with Fabian socialism.

On his return to Tanzania, Nyerere went back to teaching and then became a politician, as he said, "by accident". Working to bring a number of different nationalist factions into one grouping, in 1954 he facilitated the formation of TANU (the Tanganyika African National Union). After independence in December 1961, he was elected President, a post he held until he resigned in 1985.

In the 1960s Tanzania was one of the world's poorest countries. Nyerere's solution to his country's poverty was set out in the Arusha Declaration (1967): "The objective of socialism in the United Republic of Tanzania is to build a society in which all members have equal rights and equal opportunities; in which all can live in peace with their neighbours without suffering or imposing injustice, being exploited, or exploiting; and in which all have a gradually increasing basic level of material welfare before any individual lives in luxury" (Nyerere 1968: 340).

In Europe and America the Tanzanian experiment with socialism was widely regarded as a failure. In fact, this failure was still the dominant theme in most of the obituaries written in European newspapers on Nyerere's death in 1999. But the moving hand of history may write a somewhat different reckoning of the man. We now live in a period in which, hopefully, different hands write and hands move on and ask different questions and receive different answers. It can now be seen that

Nyerere may well have understood macro-economic policy and exchange rates poorly, but he had a fairly clear understanding of what needed to be done as a critical move toward full national freedom.

Not much is mentioned about the importance he attached to the role of a national movement in a post-colonial society. He held the view that the party should develop the ability to pronounce on policy and to base policy on a clear national vision. When he resigned as president he engaged in a massive grassroots programme of building party structures, a programme directed at ensuring that policy formulation would become a bottom-up process and that the party would get its mandate primarily from an informed and participatory citizenship. It would be wrong to pretend that he did not make mistakes, in fact he admitted to some himself.

Nevertheless, his conception of self-reliance and community and individual liberation are important principles that continue to have merit today. As with Biko, Rodney, Garvey, and many others he fully articulated the need for Africans to become adept at determining their own destiny. He promoted mental and intellectual freedom and attempted to formulate national responses that would support such a paradigm.

He understood the concept of fair trade extremely well. And he understood perhaps better than other African leaders that the African continent was not getting a fair part of global trade.

In the 1970s and 1980s the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund did not see poverty in Africa as a threat to the planet, as they do now. They did not seek to impose democracy and good governance on those countries that they "adjusted structurally". They did not, as they do now, see the national ownership of poverty reduction programmes as essential. But Nyerere did. He was espousing just these issues over thirty years ago when all the IMF could tell him was to cut his social spending and to devalue his currency. His slogan of "socialism and self-reliance" has a powerful resonance today if understood as equity and fair trade. He was decades ahead of his time in these matters.[4]

Few African leaders understood as he did the importance of ensuring the total liberation of Africa and the vital need for the continent to utilise regional trade co-operation as a building block to continental unity, and thus as a means of positioning Africa to compete with the rest of the world. Few leaders in the early years supported or used his concept of *ujamaa* or joint community action.

There was much more to Nyerere's socialism than *ujamaa* and villagisation. His ideas on education are an essential part of his legacy and an essential part of his economic philosophy, which we would now regard as increasingly mainstream within the global justice movement.

Nyerere was concerned to counteract formal colonial education. He saw it as alienating and oriented to 'western' interests and norms. He said: 'We have not until now questioned the basic system of education which we took over at the time of Independence. We have never done that because we have never thought about education except in terms of obtaining teachers, engineers, administrators, etc. Individually and collectively we have in practice thought of education as a training for the skills required to earn high salaries in the modern sector of our economy'.[5]

Nyerere set out his vision in 'Education for Self Reliance'. Education had to work for the common good, foster co-operation and promote equality. Further, it had to address the realities of life in Tanzania. He recommended the following:

- The importance of examinations and formal certification should be downgraded.
- Children should begin school at age 7 so that they would be old enough and sufficiently mature to engage in self-reliant and productive work when they leave school.
- Primary education should be complete in itself rather than merely serving as a means to higher education.
- Students should become self-confident and co-operative, and develop critical and inquiring minds.[6]

These policies were never fully implemented. They certainly sound Utopian socialist in thought. But some of his ideas were implemented. Primary education became virtually universal; curriculum materials gained distinctively Tanzanian flavours; and schooling used local language forms.

Nyerere was not only concerned with educating children. He was also concerned about those adults whose educational opportunities were stunted by colonialism. In the Declaration of Dar es Salaam Nyerere made a call for adult education to be directed at helping people to help themselves. He had broken free from formal education. He thought of formal education as elitist. He recognised that learning does not only take place in classrooms and that due weight and recognition should be given to prior learning. His concept of adult education was essentially pragmatic:

So if adult education is to contribute to development, it must be a part of life - integrated with life and inseparable from it. It is not something which can be put into a box and taken out for certain periods of the day or week - or certain periods of a life. And it cannot be imposed: every learner is ultimately a volunteer, because, however much teaching he is given, only he can learn.

He was not talking about vocational education in which hand and head were separated:

Further, adult education is not something which can deal with just "agriculture", or "health", or "literacy", or "mechanical skill", etc. All these separate branches of education are related to the total life a man is living, and to the man he is and will become. Learning how best to grow soy-beans is of little use to a man if it is not combined with learning about nutrition and/or the existence of a market for the beans. This means that adult education will promote changes in men, and in society. And it means that adult education should promote change, at the same time as it assists men to control both the change which they induce, and that which is forced upon them by the decisions of other men or the cataclysms of nature. Further, it means that adult education encompasses the whole of life, and must build upon what already exists.[7]

In practical terms Nyerere's approach was successful. Mass literacy campaigns were initiated and various health and agricultural programmes were mounted. Adult education initiatives made a significant contribution to mobilising people for development.

When Nyerere left Tanzanian politics in 1990, he devoted his time to the South Commission, a body that set about seeking fair global trade and investment. Nyerere remained committed to equity in global economic governance. He was always a champion of the poor in Africa. In the 1990s he also took on the role of African elder statesman, working notably in conflict resolution. His role in supporting our liberation has been acknowledged and needs to be a constant affirmation by South Africans.

Rector, what did (or can) South Africans learn from Mwalimu?

In the 1990s we had to confront similar problems to those that Nyerere faced in Tanzania in the 1960s. We had to reconstruct our education system to eradicate racism. We had to undo the damage done by decades of apartheid. We had to undo the damage done to the majority of people who were denied an adequate education and we had to create a new system that would equip our children to succeed in a new world dominated by globalisation and information and communication technologies.

We inherited a fragmented and dysfunctional system and we have created a single system shaped by the imperatives of our new constitutional dispensation that is committed to equality and dignity and diversity. We had to look forward and backwards. We have to look to our children and to our adults who have only informal learning to show for themselves.

So we committed ourselves to reinventing the education and training system so as to allow all our people to realise their full potential. The vision for this was first set out in the Policy Framework for Education and Training written by the Education Department of the ANC in 1994: "All individuals should have access to lifelong education and training irrespective of race, class, gender, creed or age"

(ANC, 1994, p.3). Lifelong learning is a comparatively new paradigm that incorporates all forms of learning in society. It is not a term that Nyerere ever used, but it can easily be seen as a concept that is wide enough to fit in with his notions of indigenous and informal learning.

We committed ourselves to three basic principles in education. First, we committed ourselves to learning as central to both economic prosperity and social cohesion; learning cannot simply be driven by a need to secure economic prosperity. Second, we committed ourselves to equity and redress. All our people have to be given the opportunity to succeed.

Third, we committed ourselves to widening the access to learning in our society. We committed to updating a vocational educational system into a further educational system, in which the old skills of an industrial era are no longer as valued as they were and in which new skills required by an economy dominated by services and finance industries shape the courses on offer and the shape of institutions in which they are offered. The new educational landscape has to be responsive to the modern global world. Repeating that we must align courses with business requirements is not an instrumental mantra, but an essential readjustment to a new world that we risk ignoring only at our peril. We are committed to making our people independent economic actors through offering them a range of opportunities unheard of only twenty years ago.

In giving effect to these principles a great deal of store was placed on the construction of a National Qualifications Framework; it was to be the central lever for securing a lifelong learning system. Lifelong learning, which is not only symbolic but also has visionary, pedagogic and organisational implications, is a radical way of thinking. It requires institutional structures to work in new ways across old boundaries. There is only a limited tradition of government departments, business and civil society working in 'connected up' ways. There are efforts by government to try to do this, but we still have a long way to go.

The National Qualifications Framework is a flagship programme of our democratic government. Its objectives embrace core values in the transformation of the education and training system.

If Mwalimu were here to evaluate this transformative tool he would probably say the initiative was excellent but the tool may be difficult for the beneficiary to utilise effectively.

The NQF has a unique role because it is national in aspiration and intent. It spans the entire learning system, and it is the chosen framework in terms of which the standards of the national learning system are set and its quality promoted and assured. It is regarded by the Departments of Education and Labour as the vital aspect of the national Human Resource Development Strategy, the National Skills Development Strategy, and the transformation programmes in higher, further and general education and training.

The NQF is a highly complex and challenging programme in several respects. It embraces an extraordinary range of learning, including all institution-based education and training at all levels and all skills development in the workplace. It challenges inherited notions of learning provision, since all learning providers, assessors and certifying bodies must act transparently and put the interests of the learner first. It is thus our response to the challenge of building an education system directed at development and full realisation of national and individual aspirations.

The challenge we face is to consistently and honestly assess whether these progressive objectives are being met. Do our institutions support and promote these ideals?

Significant changes have been made to education policy generally. Much of the change overtly or at times subtly reflects the aspirations of President Nyerere. We have not arrived at the point of universal free primary education, but we do have free schooling for those whose parents cannot pay. What is actually happening in our schools? Are learners being prepared for self-reliance in a developmental state? The new curriculum framework asserts the development of such an individual, but unfortunately our schools struggle to give effect to this approach. Many of our schools do not

have an African focus, the learning materials though different do not mirror the full set of changes we need to see.

Even more telling in terms of assessment against Nyerere's philosophy is the massive challenge of adult basic education and illiteracy. The recent initiative of the extended public works programme is an interesting model of community self-reliance. The proposed link between education, skills training, and community development will make a radical difference in the education and progress of communities.

A sector that remains challenged is the higher education sector, especially our universities. The current process of transforming the institutional landscape, often reveals the lack of progressive ideals of some of our institutions.

Nyerere saw higher education as a site for intellectual growth, a process through which Africans committed to national development would progress, producing persons wise to the global dimensions of neo-colonialism, wise to the challenge of creating a strategically unified Africa, working in its own interests, wise to building African knowledge and utilising the restructuring process as an opportunity for building new universities.

The integration of education and training is a founding principle of the NQF. Education and training are recognized as elements in a continuum of learning, deserving equal respect and esteem. They must to be provided in conjunction with one another so that learning achievements are recognised within one national framework that facilitates mobility along learning and career paths. The integration principle expresses the complementary relationship between education and training.

It does not mean that education and training are the same, or that one is dissolved in the other, or that one is inherently superior to the other. It also does not mean that higher education can retain its elitist character.

Simplicity, clarity and flexibility must characterise NQF structures and operations, and form the basis for communities of trust involving providers and their respective stakeholders. Structures whose responsibilities link or intersect with one another must collaborate in terms of agreed rules of engagement.

In closing, let me say, Rector, we need to learn to work out of our silos - and this is why Nyerere's approach remains so relevant - to have an integrated and holistic approach that is implement

[1] Kenneth Kaunda, "Africa has paid its dues many times", *New Statesman*, 17 April 2000.

[2] Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (W.W.Norton, New York, 2002)

[3] *Freedom and Socialism. A Selection from Writings & Speeches, 1965-1967*, (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968). This book includes the Arusha Declaration; education for self-reliance; the varied paths to socialism; the purpose is man; and socialism and development.

[4] Gerry Helleiner, "The legacies of Julius Nyerere: an economist's reflections" (University of Toronto, Canada)", 2000.

[5] *Freedom and Socialism. A Selection from Writings & Speeches, 1965-1967*, (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 267).

[6] I take this summary from Y. Kassam, 'Julius Nyerere' in Z. Morsy (ed.) *Thinkers on Education*, Paris: UNESCO Publishing 1995: 253.

[7] Julius K. Nyerere "'Development is for Man, by Man, and of Man": The Declaration of Dar es Salaam' in Budd L. Hall and J. Roby Kidd (eds.), *Adult Education: A design for action*, Oxford: Pergamon, 1978.